



What was Mr. Ratcliff, the sour-tempered New House master of St. Jim's, like in his own schooldays? A page from one of his old diaries makes startling reading

MR. RATCLIFF, the present irascible New House master, was himself educated at St. Jim's, and in some mysterious manner Baggy Trimble has obtained possession of a page from one of Ratty's old diaries, evidently written when he was a humble member of the Fourth Form. It makes startling reading for those who have imagined the master as being studious, a weakling, and a spoilsport in his youth! Here are one week's entries:

MONDAY.—Up with the rising bell. Poured a jug of cold water down Swallow's neck. The fat young hog would have been late for brekker if I hadn't routed him out, so this counts as my good turn for the day. Beastly Latin this morning in class, and old Butterby slanged me for mucking up my construe—as if anyone could understand Virgil's tripe! French this afternoon. Slingsby and I played noughts and crosses while Mossoo was wagging his chin. After tea I was going to play cricket, but it started to rain in buckets and didn't clear up till prep-time. What a life!

TUESDAY.—Got into a row with Butterby for not doing my prep. last night. I was busy making toffee and you can't do two things at once, but old Margarine didn't seem to see

it. These Form-masters are a pretty thick-headed crowd, in my opinion. Had a postal-order from home, and stood treat to all comers in the tuck-shop. Swallow was in the first flight, of course! After tea I had a scrap with that big blighter Boggs for borrowing my bike without permission. Anyhow, I licked him, and then Margarine came along and gave us each 500 lines. I'm getting sick of Marge!

WEDNESDAY.—A half-holiday. The junior side played Rookwood this afternoon, and I was in the team. Rookwood went in first and scored 160. Welland, our skipper, said I missed two simple catches, but the ball didn't come within yards of me. Welland's a fathead. Anyhow, I got a wicket—and I only had one over, too. It was a special delivery—a sort of swerving leg-break with a touch of googlie about it, and a dash of yorker. The Rookwood batsman thought it was a wide and didn't bother to strike at it, but the ball broke in and bounced off his bat into the wicketkeeper's hands. Welland said something about a "gigantic fluke," and wouldn't let me bowl again. Jealousy, I expect. The St. Jim's innings only totalled 99. So Rookwood beat us by 61. I went in first with Welland and got 2.



... I had a scrap with that big blighter Boggs for borrowing my bike, and licked him.

THURSDAY.—I am a mass of aches this morning, after the exertions of yesterday. Welland says I won't be in the team to play Greyfriars next week, and I told him I wouldn't be seen dead with his set of fumblers after the way they threw away the Rookwood match. I spent the rest of the day in writing impots. If I were a Form-master I'd abolish all lines, lickings and gatings, and treat my boys with gentle kindness. The days of these barbarous punishments ought to be over by now!

Ragged the New House dormitory at night. Welland said Westwood & Co. were putting on airs and it was time they were taken down a peg. We went over in force, armed with pillows and bolsters. Silently we crept up to our rivals' dormitory door, and then suddenly burst in on them. They were taken unawares by our onslaught, and we pasted them before they could even leave their beds. For five minutes we flogged the cheeky bounders all over the room, and then, at Welland's command, we slowly retreated from the dorm., leaving the New House wasters in a state of chaos.

FRIDAY.—Terrific excitement! I've had a grand flare-up with Margarine. I cut prep. last night because I was busy writing the lines so brutally inflicted upon me during the last day or two. Butterby got mad when I told him this, and gave me a stinger on each hand. He was going to give me some more,

but I jerked back my hand and he whacked his own ankle instead. Then he grabbed me by the collar and bent me over a desk. But when he started laying into me, I hacked his shins. After that, he took me before the Head, and the Beak said he would consider my case, and that I was to report to him in the morning. I hope it isn't the push!

SATURDAY.—Up before the Beak after breakfast. Butterby and the Head looked frightfully grim, and there was a chill in the atmosphere which I didn't like. The Head slanged me for ten minutes, and then gave me four wallops on each hand and said I could go. I'd expected a flogging at least. That fat sneak, Swallow, listened at the door afterwards and heard the Head tell Margarine that he had acted very injudiciously in losing his temper and trying to flog me off his own bat, and that it served him jolly well right to have his shins hacked. Those weren't the exact words, but that was what he meant. The Head's a decent old stick.

SUNDAY.—Peace once more. This afternoon Slingsby and I strolled along the banks of the Rhyl, chose a sunny spot and snoozed until tea-time. We had tea at a farmhouse. Strawberries and cream, hot buttered scones, two kinds of jam, jam-tarts, cake, and an apple-pie to round off with! Ah, well, life isn't so bad really.

Oh, Ratty, can we really think this of you!



Butterby was going to give me another stinger, but I jerked back my hand and he whacked his own ankle instead!