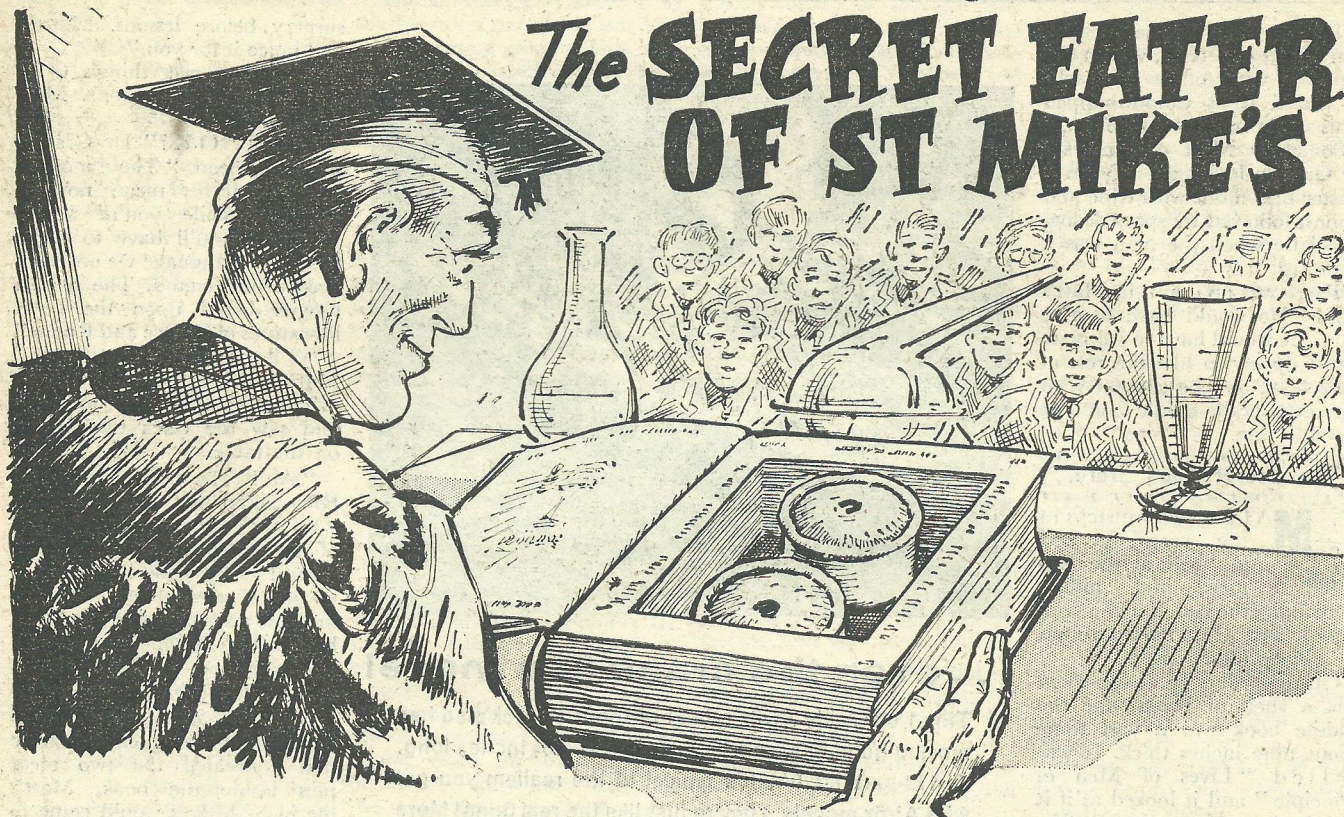


Laughs galore in this new story about Britain's hungriest schoolmaster!

# The SECRET EATER OF ST MIKE'S



**M**ATT CRANNIS, the new science master at St Michael's, sat on the platform at the end of Big Hall, and wondered just what he had let himself in for! Facing him were some three hundred sons of Britain's nobility and gentry. He felt sure that six hundred flinty eyes were staring at him.

Matt shared the platform with the Dean of St Michael's and all the other masters. The Dean was making his usual beginning-of-term remarks to the assembled school and in the course of them he introduced Matt to the boys.

"The Government are asking for more scientists," Dr Gustavus Granite said. He spoke the word "scientists" as though it meant the same thing as "scallywags" or "bounders."

"As always, throughout its long and honourable history," Dr Granite went on, "St Michael's will do its duty by this dear land of ours. This term we have opened a science laboratory for those boys who feel the call of their country. In charge of this new enterprise will be Mister Matthew Crannis, a qualified scientist!"

He bowed frigidly towards the end of the line of masters where Matt was sitting. Matt looked down at the boys.

No smile of welcome down there. Three hundred faces, each with an identical stiff upper lip. Three hundred grimly-set mouths, each determined to do its duty even if it meant learning science!

"Some parents have written to me to say that they wish their sons to take science this term," Dr Granite continued. "Naturally that will mean the end of their delightful studies of the noble Greek language. But if our country needs us, it behoves every St Michael's man to make whatever sacrifice is necessary!"

The Dean paused and the school took the hint. Masters and boys stood up and

solemnly sang all twenty-three verses of the famous "St Michael's Beagling Song," starting with—

"For there's always St Michael's,

When everything else has failed."

While the stiff upper lips waggled in unison, Matt Crannis stole sidelong glances at the other masters. He had certainly bitten off a lot to chew, even though he had an outsize appetite!

For Matt was not the type usually found in such famous public schools as St Michael's. He had started at a primary school in the Midlands, and by sheer hard work and

## The teacher with a book of secrets—it's full of food!

brains had ended with a scholarship to the university. Qualified as a science teacher, he had already done several years as an assistant master at a grammar school.

When he applied for the vacancy advertised by Dr Granite, he never thought he would get the position.

But he was a good science master, even if his rugged nature didn't fit into the elegant surroundings of St Mike's, where earls fagged for dukes, and to be a mere "honourable" almost meant washing dishes after meals.

At last the school came to the end of the "Beagling Song" and the masters filed off the platform. Matt trailed along behind, and found that everyone was going to their rooms until the first period began.

He bounded up the marble stairs towards his own quarters, which were in the attics. He burst into the pair of rooms that had been allotted to him, and found Fossil, his servant, unpacking his luggage.

Fossil was an aged retainer who had been at St Mike's man and boy for nearly seventy years. He, too, had the stiff upper lip that was the badge of all the school, and he

regarded Matt through solemn eyes set in a lined face.

"Will you be needing this, sir?" he asked.

"This" was a particularly crusty, heavy, meat pie. Matt had bought three of them at the station in case he felt hungry. Now Fossil held one up by one corner, wrinkling his nose. He might have been holding a decomposing dead rat!

"Er, no!" Matt said quickly. "You can throw it away, Fossil. And don't bother to do any more unpacking. I'll see to it."

"But I always unpack my gentlemen!" Fossil said, still holding the horrid yellow pie at arm's length.

"Er, yes," Matt muttered. "Of course. But come back later, if you please. I've—I've some work to do!"

Fossil walked out of the room, still holding the pie out and his nose up. He obviously disapproved of the new master!

The moment he was alone, Matt dived into his suitcase and brought out two more of the pies, buried among his shirts. He sat down on his bed and breathed a sigh of relief. Thank goodness they were safe.

For Matt had an awful secret, one that had dogged him all his life. He suffered from an insatiable appetite. He just had to eat far more than any normal man.

The trouble was that the craving attacked him in a peculiar way. When he felt an insane desire to eat, it had to be certain things. Not fancy cakes and delicate dishes prepared by master cooks. No, when Matt had the urge to stuff himself to bursting point, it was solid food he wanted!

Massive helpings of fish and chips, cooked in oil and eaten out of newspaper. Matt had to eat meat pies, all dripping with grease and cased in pastry as heavy as lead. Or handfuls of cockles and whelks steeped in vinegar.

Tripe and onions boiled in a bucket would satisfy him. Or he could stave off the pangs of hunger with a yard or two of black pudding, well rammed down by a layer of faggots and peas.