At break, Max showed us the present his godmother had given him: it was a printing set. It’s a box with lots of little rubber letters in it, and you put the letters into a frame and make any word you want. Then you press it down on a pad full of ink like in the post office, and then on a piece of paper, and there are the words, all printed like the newspaper Dad reads and he gets cross because Mom has taken the pages with clothes and special offers and recipes out. Max’s printing set is terrific!

Max showed us what he’d already done with it. He took three pieces of paper out of his pocket; they had “Max” printed on them lots and lots of times, in all different directions.

“It’s much better than when I write my name with a pen,” said Max. He was right, too.

“Listen, everyone!” said Rufus. “Why don’t we start a newspaper?”

That was a really fantastic idea, and we all agreed, even Cuthbert, who is teacher’s pet and doesn’t usually play with us at recess, he does revision instead. Cuthbert is nuts!

“What shall we call our paper?” I asked.

We couldn’t agree about that. Some people wanted to call it *The Superb* and some wanted to call it *The Victor* or *The Fantastic* or *The Fearless*. Max wanted to call it *The Max*, and he
got annoyed when Alec said that was a stupid name and personally he’d rather the paper was called The Gourmet, which is the name of the delicatessen near his house. So we decided to settle the name later.

“What do we put in this paper, then?” asked Matthew.

“The same kind of thing they put in real newspapers,” said Geoffrey. “Lots of news and photographs and drawings, and stories all about robberies and murders, and the stock exchange prices.”

We didn’t know what stock exchange prices were, so Geoffrey explained that they were lots of numbers in tiny little print, and his Dad was more interested in them than anything else in the paper. But you can’t believe everything Geoffrey says; he’s an awful liar, he’ll try anything on.

“I can’t print photographs,” said Max. “I’ve only got letters in my printing set.”

“But we can do drawings,” I said. “I can draw a castle with people attacking it, and airships, and planes dropping bombs.”

“I can draw a map of France showing all the different regions,” said Cuthbert.

“I once did a drawing of my Mom putting her rollers in,” said Matthew, “only my Mom tore it up. Dad laughed a lot when he saw it, though.”

“That’s all very well,” said Max, “but if you fill up the paper with your scruffy old drawings there won’t be any room left to print the really interesting things.”

I asked Max if he wanted to be thumped, but Jeremy said Max was right, and he, Jeremy, had written a composition about Spring and he got seven out of ten for it, and it would look great in print, it was all about the pretty flowers and the birds going tweet-tweet.

“You don’t really think we’re going to use Max’s letters to print your soppy birds going tweet-tweet, do you?” asked Rufus, and there was a fight.

“I could set sums, and we’d ask people to send us in the answers,” said Cuthbert. “And we’d give them marks.”

That made us laugh a lot. So Cuthbert started to cry. He said we were all very naughty, and we were always laughing at him, and he was going to complain to our teacher, and we’d all get punished, and he wasn’t going to say another word, and it would jolly well serve us right.

What with Jeremy and Rufus fighting and Cuthbert crying, we could hardly hear ourselves speak. It isn’t easy, running a newspaper with your friends!

“What do we do with the paper once it’s printed?” asked Eddie.

“Talk about daft questions!” said Max. “Sell it, of course! That’s what papers are for; you sell them and you get rich and you can buy yourself lots of things.”
“Say that again about sticky fingers!” shouted Alec.
“Sticky fingers! Sticky fingers!” shouted Matthew.
“I’m the editor, Max,” said Eddie, “and you’d better admit it if you don’t want a punch on the nose!”
“You think I’m scared of you?” asked Max, and personally, I think he was, because while he said it he was taking little steps backward, so then Eddie pushed Max, and he dropped the printing set and the little letters went all over the place. Max went red in the face and flung himself on Eddie. I tried to pick the letters up, but Max trod on my hand, so when Eddie had made a bit of room for me I hit Max, and then Old Spuds, who is one of the teachers but that isn’t his real name, came to separate us. And that wasn’t much fun, because he confiscated the printing set, he told us we were all a disgrace, he gave us detention, he went to ring the bell, and he took Cuthbert, who was feeling ill, off to the sickroom. One way and another, Old Spuds was kept pretty busy. So we won’t be printing any newspaper after all. Old Spuds isn’t going to give back the printing set till the summer vacation.

Anyway, there wouldn’t have been anything to put in the paper. Nothing ever happens to us.