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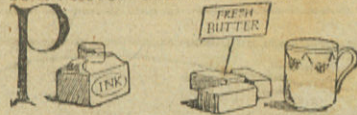
NO. 56. VOL. 2.



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T	K	E	A
S	O	R	E

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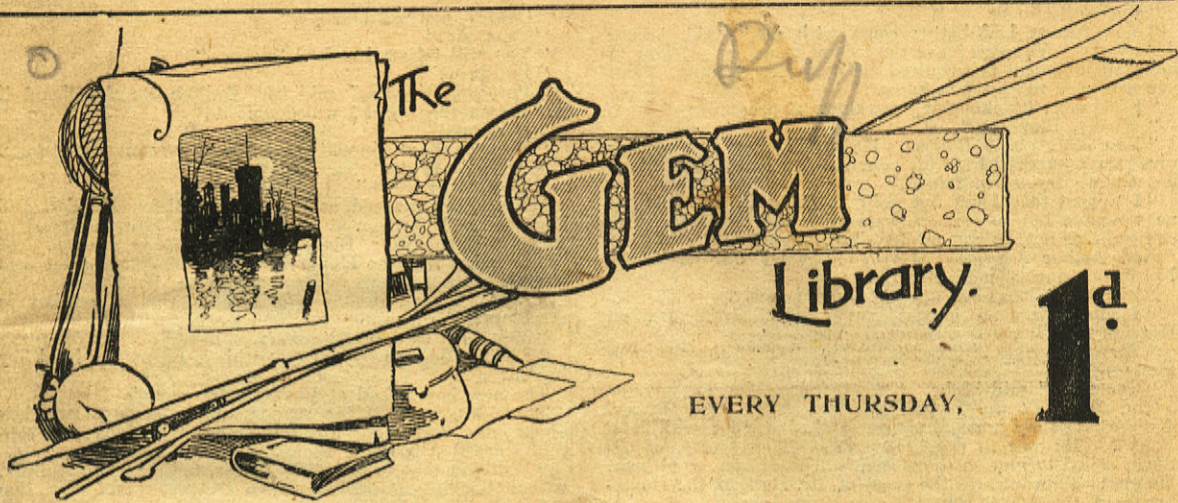
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NEXT THURSDAY..

56
"THE FEUD OF THE FOURTH."

A Tale of the Boys of St. Jim's.
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A Splendid, Long
Complete
School Tale

of TOM
MERRY
& Co.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER I.

Arthur Augustus Remonstrates.

"I SHALL wefuse to stand it!"
"But——"
"Pway don't argue about the mattah, Blake. I shall wefuse to stand it!"
"But——"
"It is quite useless to talk about it, Dig. I wepeat that I shall wefuse to stand it."
"But——"
"Pway don't pursue the topic, Hewwies, deah boy. For the last time, I shall uttably wefuse to stand it."
And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House at St. Jim's, jammed his monocle into his eye, and screwed up his brow into an expression of determination worthy of Ajax when engaged in defying the lightning.
"But it can't be helped, ass," said Jack Blake. "We don't like it any more than you do. It's rough on us——"
"I wegard it as uttably wuff, and I wefuse——"

"Not much good refusing," said Herries. "You see, Railton's House-master, and he's got old-fashioned notions about having his own way, without consulting the juniors."
"Pway don't attempt to be funny, Hewwies. We get enough of that fwom Lowthah. I shall wefuse to stand anythin' of the sort."
"Then you'd better go and tell Mr. Railton so," grinned Digby.
"Vewy well."
"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Jack Blake, in alarm, as the swell of St. Jim's turned towards the door, with the evident intention of going direct to the House-master's study. "Don't be an ass, you know."
"I wefuse to be called an ass, Blake. I am goin' to Mr. Wailton's study——"
"I tell you——"
"I wegard it as my duty to wemonstwate. There is an old maxim about wesiistin' the begiunin'e. If we stand this, we may have othah things to stand. I am not goin' to take it irvin' down, at any wate."

ANOTHER DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.
No. 56 (New Series).

"But—"
 "You fellows had better come with me," said Arthur Augustus. "You can leave the talkin' to me, as a fellow of tact and judgment is required for that sort of thing. But you can back me up, you know."

"I feel more like knocking you down at present—"
 "Weally, Blake—"
 "You can't go to Railton. He would sling you out, or give you a hundred lines for your cheek. Now, don't be an ass, Gussy, if you can help it."

"I wepeat that I am not goin' to stand it, and there is no weseource but to wemonstwate with Mr. Wailton. You can come or not, as you pwefer, deah boys."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched out of Study No. 6, very much on his dignity.

Blake & Co. looked at one another helplessly.
 "I suppose it's no good arguing with him," grunted Herries. "It'll mean a hundred lines."

"Serve him right!" growled Digby. "Of all the obstinate asses—"

"Come on!" said Blake. "We'll follow him, anyway."

The chums of the Fourth left the study after D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus was going down the corridor with long strides. He was in deadly earnest. Tom Merry, of the Shell, called to him on the stairs, but he did not even hear. He marched on towards the study of Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, staring at Blake as he came by. "Anything wrong with Gussy?"

Blake grinned.
 "Yes, he's going to lecture Railton, and we're going to bring the pieces away when Railton has done with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake, Digby, and Herries hurried on. Arthur Augustus had reached the door of the House-master's study, and raised his hand to tap.

"Stop it, you shrieking ass!" said Blake, in a shrill whisper. "I tell you—"

"I decline to stop it."

Tap!

"Come in!"

Arthur Augustus opened the door and marched in.

Mr. Railton, the House-master, was sitting at his table. A lad of between fourteen and fifteen was standing on the hearthrug, and the House-master had been speaking to him when the tap came at the door. He was a slim—or, rather, thin—boy, with a thin face and prominent cheek bones, dark keen eyes, and curly hair. He was a stranger to St. Jim's, and this was evidently his first interview with the School House-master, but there was no lack of self-possession in his manner.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, was too preoccupied to notice the presence of the stranger.

He walked up to the House-master's table, and Mr. Railton viewed the signs of excitement in his face with some astonishment.

"What is it, D'Arcy? You are interrupting me."

"I am extremely sorry, sir, to intewwupt you."

"Well, state your business, please."

"I have taken the liberty, sir, of comin' to see you, to wemonstwate—"

"Eh?"

"To wemonstwate, sir," said D'Arcy firmly. "I have just heard from Blake, sir, that there is a new fellow comin' into the Fourth Form at St. Jim's—"

"That is correct."

"And he is put into the School House—"

"Quite so."

"And Blake informs me—I could scarcely cweedit my ears, sir—that he is to be shewed into Study No. 6, sir!"

"Exactly."

"May I point out to you, sir, that a new boy has already been put into No. 6 this term? We are four there already, and the quartahs are vewy crowsded with four. Young Ballantyne made five, and it was too many."

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Yaas, wathah, sir. Now, young Ballantyne has gone, sir, and it's all wight again. Now here comes a new boundah—"

"D'Arcy!"

"And he is to be put into No. 6. I appeal to you, sir, as a sportsman. Oughtn't some of the other studies to be given a turn first?"

"D'Arcy!"

"I am quite aware, sir, that No. 6 is the largest study in the Fourth, but there are four chaps in it already, and Hewwies is a big one. The new fellow could be put into Mellish's study. Mellish is wathah a wottah, but there's woom in his study. Weally, Mr. Wailton, I am quite aware that this shovin' of an outsiders into our study is an awah-sight. But I appeal to you to have it set wight."

"D'Arcy, you will take—"
 "Yaas, sir!"
 "You will take a hundred lines—"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "For impertinence," said Mr. Railton sternly, "and if you say another word I will double it!"

"Bai Jove!"
 "Two hundred lines!" said the House-master sternly.
 "Now you may go."

"Yaas, sir, but—"

Mr. Railton glanced at the door. Blake, Herries, and Digby were lookers-on at the scene. Mr. Railton signed to Blake to come in. Blake entered gingerly enough. A junior going into the House-master's room felt a great deal like Daniel must have felt going into the lions' den.

"Blake, I have already informed you that a new boy in the Fourth Form would share No. 6 Study with you—"

"Yes, sir," said Blake meekly.

"This is the new boy. Clyne, this is Blake, the head boy in your study."

The new boy looked at Blake coolly enough.

There was none of the shyness of the average new boy about him, and there was something in his extreme self-confidence that irritated Blake.

"Will you take Clyne to Study No. 6," said Mr. Railton, without looking at the crestfallen D'Arcy, "and show him about the House, Blake. I have told him that you will look after him at first."

"Yes, sir!" murmured Blake.

"You may go, boys. Go with Blake, Clyne. He will show you your quarters, and tell you anything you wish to know."

"Thank you, sir!" said Master Clyne.

The juniors left the House-master's study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy lingered behind.

"You may go, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton very distinctly.

"Yaas, sir! But—"

"Go!"

"Yaas, but—"

"One word more, sir, and I shall cane you."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Railton, rising to his feet.

"Weally, sir—"

But the House-master looked so dangerous that Arthur Augustus thought that he had better hold out his hand. He received a severe cut that made him wish he had reflected a little more before coming to remonstrate with Mr. Railton.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's nose was very high in the air as he followed his chums down the passage.

CHAPTER 2.

What is the Secret?

"I 'M getting fed up with this sort of thing," growled Jack Blake, looking round for sympathy. "Blessed if they don't seem to take me for a blessed dry nurse in this school. This is the second helpless duffer I've had dropped on my hands this term."

"It's rough," said Herries. "But the worst of it is that he's coming into the study. I don't see how we can stand it."

"It's hard cheese," said Digby.

They made these remarks with the charming candour of schoolboys, regardless of the new boy, who stood listening to them.

But Master Albert Clyne did not seem at all discomposd.

He only grinned, and appeared to be amused by the situation more than anything else. His grin was very irritating to the deeply-injured chums of the Fourth. They had had Study No. 6 to themselves for so long that they had come to look upon the place as their own private property. As Blake, who had been to America, remarked in American phraseology, it was rough having one's claim jumped in this way.

"It wouldn't be so bad," went on Blake, much incensed, "if it were a decent chap coming into the study, instead of a grinning monkey with a face like a kite."

"Just so!" agreed Digby. "Still, if he grins at us, we'll jolly soon change his face for him."

"Better bump him to start with, just to teach him manners," remarked Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, coming up. "I have just weceived a vewy severe blow fwom Wailton, and it is all through this new beast! I wegard it as the pwopah capah to bump the wottah!"

The new boy retreated a pace.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "Pax, my sons! You are not going to bump me. As for your old study, I don't want to come into it."

"You've been to school before?" exclaimed Blake immediately.



"You're trying to bother Railton because he is run down and you think you can fool him!" said Tom Merry, with blazing eyes. Clyne shrugged his shoulders; "You ought to be a detective!" he sneered.

The new boy nodded.

"Yes, rather!"

"And why did you leave your old school?"

A faint trace of red came into the new boy's cheeks.

"It didn't suit me," he answered, "and my guardian took me away. That's why I've come here—"

"Well, you won't find this school suit you if you don't mind your P's and Q's," said Blake warningly. "As head of the Fourth Form—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut up, Gussy! As head of the Fourth Form, I have to look after you youngsters. I don't stand any cheek from any member of the Form. If you're going to be in our study you'll have to be quiet and civil—awfully civil—and make yourself useful. You can cook, I suppose?"

"I dare say I could, if I liked."

"And clean a cornet?" asked Herries, with interest.

"Possibly."

"And look after white mice?" asked Digby.

"Shouldn't wonder."

"And bwush a silk toppah?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, perhaps we sha'n't mind your coming into the study, then," said Blake magnanimously. "I can get on with a chap who likes to be useful and obliging. We shall see! This is Study No. 6. Come in!"

They entered that famous apartment.

A junior was sitting on the corner of the table swinging his legs. He looked round and grinned as the chums came in.

But Jack Blake did not return his grin. He did not like Mellish, of the Fourth. He stared at him with grim inquiry.

"What do you want here?" he demanded.

"Yaas, wathah, Mellish deah boy. We bah boundahs in this study, you know."

"Oh, rats!" said Mellish. "I hear you've got a new chap coming into this study—chap named Clyne—Albert Clyne."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I wanted to see him. I used to know a chap of that name, and—"

"Well, here he is," said Digby.

Clyne followed the chums into the study. He started as he saw Mellish, and the colour came into his cheeks.

Mellish, the cad of the Fourth Form, looked at him with a slow smile.

"By Jove! Clyne!"

"So you know him?" said Blake. "Blessed if I see why you shouldn't have your old friend in your study. If you asked Railton, he would very likely give you permission."

"Yaas, wathah! And we would back you up, deah boy. We object to havin' this stwanganh thwust in upon us, you know. It isn't only that the study isn't large enough for five, but the pwesence of a stwanganh distwacts me in my new studies—"

"Blessed if I know what you're talking about!" said Clyne, who was looking very uneasy. "I've never met that chap before."

Mellish laughed unpleasantly.

"Haven't you? I can recall the circumstances to your memory, if you like. I had a cousin at Redclyffe when you were there."

Clyne turned scarlet. Mellish's shot seemed to strike home, and the chums of the Fourth looked on in wonder. It was clear that Mellish knew something about the new

boy which the latter was far from willing should become public.

"Bai Jove, there seems to be a mystery here!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking from one to the other through his eyeglass. "I weally considah—"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Mellish airily. "I know this chap, that's all. I had a cousin at his old school, and when I visited my cousin one day, I happened to find out that—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Clyne.

"All right! I say, I'll have a stroll round with you if you like," said Mellish. "I'll show you round St. Jim's."

"Good!"

And the two left the study together.

Blake & Co. looked at one another in amazement.

"Bai Jove, deah boys, I hardly know what to make of that, you know!" remarked Arthur Augustus. "There seems to be some secret between Mellish and that new kid."

"Something that won't bear the daylight, I expect," grunted Blake. "Clyne looked nervous when he saw Mellish. Still, it's no business of ours."

"No, wathah not, but—"

"If we can manage to shift off the new chap into Mellish's study it will be all O.K.!" said Blake. "We'll try, at any rate."

"Yaas, wathah! The pwesence of a stwangeh distwacts me in the pwactice of my singin'—"

"Your which?"

"I have already told you, Blake, that I have discovered that I have a voice—"

"You've told me so," said Blake, in a tone which implied that he had strong doubts on the subject, all the same.

"Weally, Blake, I do not want any wibald wemarks on the subject. My Aunt Adelina told me once that I sang like a bird."

"What kind of a bird—a raven or a crow?"

"I uttably wefuse to be compared with a waven or a cwow!" said D'Arcy, with dignity. "You fellows have no taste. You ought to have recognised the fact long ago that I have a wemarkable tenah—"

"A tenner!" exclaimed Blake. "My hat! Come to my arms! We'll have an outing to-morrow afternoon, with a lutch-basket—"

"Ham-and-tongue and rabbit-pies," said Digby.

"And sausage-rolls," said Herries.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"You told us you were expecting a fiver from your governor," said Blake; "but a tenner is ripping! When did you get it?"

"I wefuse to believe that you are weally undah a mis-apprehension, Blake. I am weferrin' to a tenah voice."

"Oh!"

"I have a wemarkably sweet and cleah tenah, deah boys, and I have decided to sing at the opewah when I grow up. Meanwhile, I am goin' to twain."

"You're not going to train in this study," said Herries.

"Why, you objected to my bulldog here because you said he was noisy."

"Weally, Hewwies, I twust that you do not mean to institute a compawison between my tenah voice and the growl of your wotten bulldog. I wegard it as a duty to cultivate my gift. It is difficult to pwactise without a musical instwument—"

"Oh, if you mean you'd like me to accompany you on my cornet, I don't know that I should mind."

"I don't mean anythin' of the kind, Hewwies. I shall try to obtain Mr. Wailton's permish to use his piano, and in the meantime I have purchased a tunin'-fork."

"What on earth are you going to do with a tuning-fork?" demanded Blake.

D'Arcy smiled the smile of superior knowledge.

"That will enable me always to sing in tune, deah boy. Fwinstance, I am taking up Waltah's song in the first act of the 'Meistersinger' as a start—"

"My hat! Why don't you try something like 'Bill Bailey'?"

"I should uttably wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I should wefuse even to considah the suggestion!" said D'Arcy frigidly. "I like Wagner's music, and I considah Waltah's songs quite up to my abilities—"

"Ye-e-es, but are your abilities up to the songs?"

"As I have a wemarkable tenah voice, I wathah think so, deah boy. Now, I have a tunin'-fork that gives the A. Waltah's song is in D, so I have only to go up the scale fwom A to D to get into the wight key. See?"

"Yes, it's as clear as mud!"

"Then as the song commences on the mediant—the third note of the scale," explained D'Arcy patronisingly, "I have only to wun up fwom D to E, and there's the note to start on. See?"

"Oh, yes. What a good wheeze!" said Blake patiently.

"Now, I'll show you." D'Arcy jerked a tuning-fork out

of his waistcoat-pocket, and struck it on the nearest article, and the fork gave forth a deep-toned A. "That's A. Now I am going to sing—"

"Mercy!"

Disregarding that appeal, the swell of St. Jim's remorselessly proceeded:

"Now, wegardin' that A and the 'doh' of the tonic sol-fa scale, I have only to wun up to 'fa' and I've got the D. That's the key! See?"

"I believe I've got an appointment in Tom Merry's study—"

"Pway wait a minute, deah boy—"

But Blake was gone.

"Now, you see, I'm in D," said D'Arcy to Herries and Digby. "That's my key. Now, for my first note I want the mediant—that's F. I just wun up fwom D to F—Where are you goin', Hewwies?"

"I am going to run, too."

"Pway hold on a moment. I am explainin'. Now, I've got F—"

And Arthur Augustus sang F. He had the note correctly enough, but as for the quality of the voice, that was a matter of individual taste. It pleased D'Arcy, anyway.

"There you are, deah boys! There's my note. Now I will sing the song in the cowwect key, just to show you—Pway don't wun away, Hewwies!"

But "Hewwies" had "wun away."

"After all, Dig, you are a much more musical chap than those silly asses," said D'Arcy, placing himself between the unfortunate Digby and the door. "Now listen, and you will see that I am in the cowwect key."

And Arthur Augustus sang:

"Am stillen Herd, in Winterzeit,
Wann Burg und Hoff mir eingeschneit—"

"Pway don't buzz off, Dig. I will sing it in English, if you pwefer it."

"By silent hearth, in winter-time,
When town and hall in snow were hid—"

Arthur Augustus ceased singing all of a sudden. Digby had made a rush to escape, and Arthur Augustus received a charge that bowled him quite over. He sat down on the carpet, and his tuning-fork flew into the grate. It struck the fender, and sent forth a musical A unheeded.

Arthur Augustus looked round him rather dazedly. Digby was gone, and the musical junior had the study to himself. He rose to his feet and brushed the dust from his trousers.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "It's vewy hard on a chap to have to live among a lot of feahfully unmusical duffahs. But I weally think I had bettah cultivate my voice as a mattah of duty. I dare say Cawuso had to contend with difficulties when he was my age, and he sings now quite as well as I do."

And, comforted by the reflection, the amateur tenor picked up his tuning-fork and resumed practice.

CHAPTER 3.
A Leader in Evil.

WALLY D'ARCY, the younger brother of the one and only Augustus, came along the Fourth Form passage whistling shrilly. Wally was in his usual state—untidy hair and soiled collar and inky fingers. The contrast between Wally and his major was always painful. Once or twice D'Arcy minor had attempted to reform, and had been seen, for the space of two or three hours, in a clean collar. But then there was certain to be a backsliding.

Wally's shrill whistle rang through the passage, and a group of juniors standing at the corner turned angrily to look at him. They were of the Fourth Form and the Shell, and the cheek of a Third-Former, in sauntering along the passage with his hands in his pockets, and whistling like a locomotive, naturally raised their ire.

"Shut up!" yelled out Gore, of the Shell.

Wally glanced at him, cocked one eye mockingly, and whistled.

If Gore had asked him civilly, Wally might have left off—possibly—but anything in the shape of bullying—always, as D'Arcy minor expressed it, put his back up.

The group of juniors glared at him. They were Gore's set—Sharp and Mellish, of the Fourth, and Crofton, and the new boy, Albert Clyne. Clyne, though his first meeting with Mellish had not been exactly friendly, seemed to have chummed up with him and his friends very quickly. It

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was only his second day at St. Jim's, and he was already admitted to the full honours of a member of Gore & Co.

Clyne, in fact, had made his mark already in the lower Forms.

According to his own account, he had been, what he called a "coughdrop" at his old school, and had carried on pretty much as he liked there.

He would tell thrilling yarns of masters japed and pre-fects defied, prefacing them with, "When I was at my old school, you know."

The St. Jim's juniors believed as much as they chose of his narratives. But if half of them were true, it was clear that Clyne was an accomplished young blackguard for his age.

What good there might be in the boy it was not easy to see. He had no scruples about lying, and he was addicted to all the petty vices of the worst class of fags, such as smoking in secret, washing only the parts of his person that met the public eye, and playing ill-natured tricks, of which he usually contrived that the blame should fall upon innocent parties.

His influence was wholly bad on others. But thoroughness is a quality that always appeals to boys, and Clyne was such a thorough young rascal that he was certain to have an admiring following. Mellish and Gore were the two worst boys in the School House, probably; but they seemed only bunglers in the arts in which the new boy was a master.

Clyne looked at Wally now, and then at his companions.

"When I was at my old school," he remarked, "we didn't stand cheek from a fag in the Third Form."

"Oh, didn't you?" growled Gore, feeling that his dignity as a Shell fellow was assailed. "Well, I don't either."

"We should have rocked him," said Clyne.

"What do you mean by rocked him?" asked Gore, eager to learn something new in the noble art of bullying.

"That's new here."

"Collar the young cad, and I'll show you!"

"Right-ho!"

Wally was surrounded in a moment. Gore and Mellish collared him. Wally was only in the Third, but he was a pugilist of dreaded skill among the Infants, and he had a left-hander that was known and feared. Clyne had the pleasure of making its acquaintance now, Wally's left catching him on the point of the chin and sending him with a crash against the wall. He bumped on the wall with what a novelist would describe as a sickening thud, and slid down to a sitting posture, looking somewhat dazed.

Wally struggled furiously as the others grasped him, but he had no chance against the odds.

He was pinioned by Gore and Mellish and Crofton, and Clyne staggered to his feet, with a face like a demon.

"Hold him!" he panted. "Hold the young cad!"

"We've got him!"

"Now we'll rock him to sleep! Sit him down, and tie his wrists to his ankles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" muttered Sharp. "You can't work that in the open passage. You'll have a prefect down on you when he begins to yelp. Bring him along into the box-room!"

"Good!"

Wally was dragged along the passage, his boots scraping on the linoleum. He was too proud to call for help, and he was not given much time. The lower Form bullies had him in the box-room in a few seconds, and the door was shut.

"Now, then," said Clyne, his eyes gleaming. "Tie him up! His necktie and hanky will do."

"Look here—" began Wally.

"Shut up!"

"I won't shut up! I'll make you sit up for this, you cads!"

"Give us a licking all round, won't you?" sneered Gore, as he proceeded to carry out Clyne's instructions.

The new boy lent him aid. He was evidently an old hand at the game. Wally was forced into a cramped sitting posture, and his arms were crossed, his right wrist being secured to his left ankle, and his left wrist to his right ankle. A more helpless and uncomfortable position could hardly be imagined. He set his teeth grimly to endure it. He knew that he was "in for it," but the hero of the Third Form was not "soft." He was tough enough to stand a great deal.

"Good!" said Clyne. "Now we'll rock him to sleep."

"What's the game?" said Gore.

"You stand round him and shove him over, and shove him back, and keep it up as long as you like," grinned Clyne. "Not your hands, duffer, your feet!"

"I see! Ha, ha, ha!"

Rocking to sleep was evidently a name applied in irony to this peculiar form of amusement.

Wally was certainly rocked, but it was not to sleep.

The first push of Clyne's foot sent him over helplessly backwards, and his head bumped on the floor with a crack that made him see stars.

The gasp he gave brought a yell of laughter from the bullies.

Clyne hooked his boot behind the fag's neck and righted him with a skilful twist. And so the game proceeded.

Every time Wally went over backwards, he knocked the back of his head, and so he soon learned to remain upright, as far as his confinement allowed him.

Then the real fun commenced.

Every shove of a boot sent him reeling, and then another shove would send him back, so that he was "rocked" in every possible direction, till every bone was aching, and his senses were swimming.

It was bullying—the real thing, common enough in some public schools, though to this extent little known at St. Jim's.

Wally hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. He had been bullied before, by Gore and his set, by Knox the prefect, by Sefton the bully of the New House. He had been kicked and cuffed and pinched and knuckled. But this was quite a new experience to him. He had started with the determination not to yell; but after five minutes of the rocking process his determination faded away. He yelled, not for mercy, but for help.

Clyne chuckled.

"Thought he'd soon start," he remarked. "This is where you jam your hanky into his mouth."

And Gore promptly did so.

Wally's yells were muffled now, and died away into gasps and squeaks. And all the time that dreadful rocking went mercilessly on.

"My word!" said Sharp, at last, as he saw two big tears roll down Wally's cheeks—cheeks that had not been so wetted since he came to St. Jim's. "He's had enough. Let him off, now."

Clyne sneered.

"If you're going to be a mollycoddle, Sharp—"

The junior flushed red.

"I'm not. You can go on if you like. After all, the young cad deserves it. Give him some more!"

And Sharp, by way of showing that he was not a mollycoddle, gave Wally an extra brutal shove with his boot.

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and the junior of the Third crashed over backwards, and his head bumped on the floor.

"That's enough!" said Gore uneasily.

"Oh, all right!" said Clyne, with a grin. "You ain't through-going here. We used to make 'em squirm at my old school. We've kept it up with a fag like this for an hour in the gym., you know, and then we used to make 'em sing 'Rule Britannia' at the finish. We'll make this young cad sing."

He jerked the crammed handkerchief from Wally's mouth.

"Now, you young whelp, are you sorry you were cheeky?"

"No!" howled Wally.

"Oh! Not had enough yet! Will you sing 'Rule Britannia?'"

"No, I won't!"

"Give him some more!"

"Here, hold on!" said Sharp.

"You shut up!" said Mellish. "We're teaching this cub a lesson. Rock him!"

And Wally was rocked.

He yelled in good earnest, and the handkerchief was thrust back into his mouth. His efforts to spit it out, and his gasps and squeaks were greatly diverting to Gore & Co. They yelled with laughter, as they prodded the unfortunate Third Former with their boots, and sent him spinning to and fro.

The handle of the door suddenly turned, and the laughter stopped suddenly. The handsome, cheerful face of Tom Merry, of the Shell, looked into the room.

"Hallo, what's the row?" asked Tom Merry.

Then, as his glance took in the scene, his expression changed.

His eyes blazed as he strode forward.

CHAPTER 4. Catching It—Hot!

GORE and his friends looked at one another and at Tom Merry. Wally lay on his side dusty and dishevelled, and gasping for breath. There was a painful silence in the box-room.

Tom Merry's eyes seemed to be on fire.

There was not one of the bullies who did not shrink uncomfortably from the anger and scorn in his glance.

"You—you cads!" said Tom, in measured tones. "What are you doing to Wally?"

"Mind your own business!" said Gore.

"Who the dickens are you to interfere here?" said Clyne, who did not yet know Tom Merry. "Clear out, can't you!"

Tom Merry looked at him.

Then, without a word, he let out his right, and Clyne went heels-over-head into a corner of the room.

Tom Merry's flashing eyes challenged the bullies.

"Any more of you want some?" he demanded.

There was no reply.

"Set Wally loose!"

They did not move. Tom Merry's voice was imperious. Gore flushed a dull red.

"I'll see you hanged first!" he stammered. "Set him loose yourself!"

"Set him loose!"

Mellish bent, and untied Wally.

The hero of the Third staggered to his feet.

He looked a sorry object. His clothes were grimed with dust, his collar was loose at one end, his hair wildly towzled.

"Thank you, Merry!" he gasped. "I'm—I'm done up, or I'd make these beasts squirm now! I'll make you sit up yet, Gore, you coward!"

The Lower Form bullies made a movement towards the door. Tom Merry promptly planted himself in their path.

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"Hold on," he said quietly. "You're not going yet."

"Who's going to stop us?" demanded Gore fiercely.

"I am!"

The words were quietly spoken, but clenched fists and flashing eyes backed them up. And there was no one there who cared to attempt to rush Tom Merry.

"You'll stay here till I've finished," said Tom quietly.

"You've been bullying young Wally. I don't care what he's done, or whether he's done anything at all. You have been bullying him like a set of cowards and cads. This sort of bullying has gone on in the Upper Forms, till Kildare stamped it out. I've heard so, at least, but it was before I came to St. Jim's. But it hasn't been tried in the Lower Forms. Whose idea was it?"

"Oh, rats!" said Gore. "I suppose you're not our father-confessor, Tom Merry? Mind your own business."

"Whose idea was it?"

"Find out!"

"I'm going to. Whose idea was it?"

Clyne staggered up. His nose was swollen, and his eyes looked watery.

"Why don't you go for him?" he snarled. "You're four to one."

Tom Merry laughed scornfully.

He would not have feared to encounter the four of them single-handed. He was the finest athlete in the Lower Forms at St. Jim's, and Gore & Co. were all more or less of slackers. Tom Merry would have given a very good account of himself against the quartette.

"Why don't you?" snarled Mellish.

"Whose idea was it to bully young D'Arcy like this?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Well, it was Clyne's, if you particularly want to know," said Crofton. "I don't see that it's any business of yours, though."

"It's the business of any decent fellow to put down bullying."

"If you're going to set up as a moral reformer—" said Gore, with a sneer.

"I am going to put a stop to caddishness like this. I've noticed that young rotter already"—with a glance towards Clyne. "He's a cad who oughtn't to be let into any decent school. He's put you up to this, and he's going to smart for it."

"Look here—"

"You can come into the gym. with me, Clyne, and put the gloves on, or—"

"Take a fellow your own size," said Clyne uneasily.

"Well, I'm not much bigger than you are, and you've got to take a licking, anyway. But it's all right on that point. I'll speak to Jack Blake, and he'll take it on willingly enough. You can have a stand-up fight, or you can be rocked as you've been rocking Wally. Take your choice."

"What business is it of yours?"

"Never mind that. Take your choice."

Clyne cast a hunted look at his friends.

They did not seem inclined to back him up.

"Look here, I'm not going to fight," he said. "I'm not a boxing man. I was only putting the kid through it a bit."

"And now you're going to be put through it yourself."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Gore, feeling that he was called upon to say something. Gore, bully as he was, was not without a certain amount of dogged courage. "You're not going to rag Clyne. We're all together in this."

"Then you can all take the same gruel," said Tom Merry. "I'll call Manners and Lowther, and the three of us will be enough to wipe up the floor with you five."

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Gore. "We've had enough of this gas! Rush him!"

The juniors rushed forward. They didn't like the task much, but it was safer to settle with Tom Merry before Manners and Lowther arrived on the scene.

Tom Merry faced them without flinching, his fists up.

But before the combat could commence, a stern voice rang out:

"Stop!"

Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, was looking in at the open door of the box-room.

The House-master's usually calm and good-natured face was dark with anger.

Tom Merry swung round, his hands dropping to his sides. Gore & Co. changed colour.

From the House-master's look they could see that he had been a spectator of the scene for some minutes, and that he knew all that had been going on.

Mr. Railton advanced into the room.

"You have done quite right, Merry," he said. "I am glad you interfered here. But the matter is serious enough to be taken into my hands. You boys have deliberately bullied a younger lad, and adopted one of the cruellest forms of bullying in addition. You will follow me to my study. You may go, Merry, and D'Arcy minor."



The Terrible Three looked at one another with sickly expressions, and left the Form-room.

The House-master walked away, and the amateur bullies of the School House slowly and unwillingly followed him.

D'Arcy minor grinned.

"I rather think they'll catch something now," he remarked. "Serve them jolly well right. I say, that new kid in the Fourth is a rotter, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, with compressed lips.

They left the box-room. The five delinquents were going down to the House-master's study. Their faces were decidedly lugubrious. Mr. Railton entered the study, and turned round to fix his eyes on the quintette as they reluctantly followed him in. He selected a thick, strong cane.

"I need not enlarge upon the cowardice and the brutality of bullying a younger boy, especially with so many of you attacking him at once," he said. "I think, upon reflection, you will realise that. I hope the punishment I am about to inflict will help you to realise it. Hold out your hand, Gore."

Gore received six severe cuts, and left the study with his hands under his arms, squeezing them hard in a vain attempt to assuage the pain.

Mellish, and Crofton, and Sharp had four each, and they also seemed to be seeking to fold themselves up like penknives as they left the study in turn.

The new boy was left to the last.

He was looking nervous and uneasy, but there was a gleam of impudence in his eyes at the same time, which the House-master was not slow to observe.

"I have left you to the last, Clyne," said Mr. Railton quietly, "because I wish to speak to you. You are a new boy at this school. You seem to have learned some customs at your previous school which are not in accordance with our traditions. You will understand that you are not to

impart this valuable knowledge to your associates here. I shall keep an eye on you, sir. As a warning, I am about to inflict a punishment more severe than that awarded to those you have led into following your own evil example."

"If you please, sir——"

"Not a word! Take off your jacket!"

Clyne started.

"My jacket, sir!"

"Yes. You require a severe lesson, and you are about to receive it. I intend that this punishment shall be a warning to you."

Clyne hesitated. The House-master repeated the order in a voice of thunder, and then the jacket came slowly off.

Then followed a punishment which Clyne was not likely to forget for some time.

Mr. Railton took him by the collar, and gave him a caning across the back that made him writhe.

The customary cuts on the palm were nothing to it.

Clyne was hurt, and he filled the study with his yells. His face was white, and his eyes glittering like a rat's with rage and pain when the House-master pushed him away.

"You may go!"

Clyne struggled into his jacket, and went. The look on his face was not pleasant to see. He gritted his teeth savagely as he went slowly and painfully down the passage.

CHAPTER 5.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Tenor.

"Y AAS, let me like a soldier fall——"

"No objection, as far as I am concerned."

"Pway do not intewwupt me, Blake."

"I thought you were speaking to me," said Blake innocently. "Was it Digby?"

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"I've no objection to his falling like a soldier," said Digby. "Blessed if I care whether he falls or not."

"Weally, Dig., you are perfectly well aware that I was not addressin' you."

"Oh, was it me?" grunted Herries. "Well, I'll let you fall like a soldier, if you're set on it. I should recommend a cushion to fall on."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

The three chums had just entered Study No. 6, and they found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy standing in a pathetic attitude on the rug, with a tuning-fork in his hand.

He had just started on the song of Don Caesar in "Maritana," and really, he was not singing so badly; but Blake & Co. chose to take it all in a humorous spirit.

"Go it," said Blake. "Where are you going to fall? You've got full permission from everybody present."

"It is vevy hard for a chap to study singin' with a lot of howwid unmusical boundahs awound him," said Arthur Augustus. "On second thoughts, I find that the song in the 'Meistersinger' does not suit me so well as the Soldier Fall from 'Mawitana,' so I have changed ovah. I weally think I get this tenah vevy nicely. Of course, it's hard to sing without an instwument—"

"Oh, that accounts—"

"If that is meant as a dispawagin' remark concernin' my voice, Blake, I hurl it back in your beastly teeth. I am perfectly convinced that I am a wippin' tenah. Of course, I am not yet the equal of Caswio."

"Don't be too modest, Gussy. You were getting an effect then that Tamagno never got."

"Yaas, wathah! But I shall require some more pwactice before I am weally fit to go on the opewatic stage," said D'Arcy. "Just listen to me while I show you how I sing Don Ceasah's song. Yaas—yaas—yaas— Bai Jove, I've lost the note! The beastly thing's in C, you know, and it begins on the tonic—the tonic's the first note of the scale, you know," D'Arcy explained patronisingly. "If I had a tunin'-fork to give the C it would be easiah, and I think pewwaps I had better get one."

"Good. And you can put off the pwactice till you get it."

"Not at all, deah boy. This is an A fork, so I have only to wun up—"

"To C. I see."

"No, deah boy. C is sharp in the scale of A," said D'Arcy, with the condescension of superior knowledge. "And I find it vevy difficult so fah, to sing chwomatic intervals. I shall get the C by tweatin' this A—"

"What A?"

"The tunin'-fork A, duffah. I shall tweat it as the 'lah' in the tonic sol-fa, and wun up to 'doh,' and the 'doh' will be the C I want."

"Ripping."

"You will observe," said Arthur Augustus, with quite the air of a professor, "I stwike the tunin'-fork. That gives A—now, lah, te, doh! That doh is C, and the note I want. See?"

"Yes, I see. Good wheeze for beginners."

"Well, I have only been studyin' singin' for three days, so I suppose I am weally a beginnah," said Arthur Augustus modestly. "It was the discovery that I have a fine tenah voice that set me on the track, you know."

"Go it, Caruso II.! On the bawl!" said Blake encouragingly.

"Now I'm on the C."

"Off your rocker?" asked Herries, staring. "I was under the impression that you were ashore. Think you're still on the Ethiopia?"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I've often noticed that chaps who take up singing go rocky in the crumpet," said Herries, looking round. "If this sort of thing grows on Gussy, he'll have to change into another study."

"Hewwies, I wegard you as an uttah ass. The C I am alludin' to is the C on the piano. I am on the C now, and that is my first note. Pway shut up."

And Arthur Augustus started again:

"Yaas, let me like a soldier fall,
Upon some open plain,
This bweast expandin' for the ball,
To blot out evvey stain—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus broke off with a glare of indignation. A dusty and dirty face was looking in at the door. It belonged to Wally, and it was he who had given vent to that irresistible burst of merriment.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared D'Arcy minor. "Sorry; but I couldn't help it. I can imagine a chap who was going to be shot singing like that. I don't think!"

"I wegard it as extwemely wealistic."

"Well, it's realistic in one way—it's apt to make your learners wish they were shot instead."

"I wefuse to listen to such wibald remarks. And, by the way, what do you mean by thwustin' such a dirty face into a wespactable study? I have nevah seen even you in such a disgustin' state before."

Wally chuckled.

"It's not my fault. Your precious new study-mate and his friends have been ragging me, and you have been kicking up a row here instead of coming to help."

"How was I to know they were waggin' you?"

"You might have heard 'em if you hadn't been kicking up—"

"I wefuse to have my singin' alluded to as kickin' up a row. I have discovered that I have a wemarkable tenah voice, and I am thinkin' seriously of givin' a sewies of wecitals at St. Jim's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at in that remark, Wally. I should take it as a personal favah if you would kindly wettire, and wendah yourself a little more wespactable before coming here."

"I was coming to speak to you when those rotters collared me. Jameson and Gibson have got their birthdays this week."

"Weally, I am not wespensible for a set of Third Form fags havin' birthdays."

"They both come on the same day," said Wally. "It's a coincidence, isn't it?"

"I dare say a good many people have birthdays on the same day," Jack Blake remarked. "I suppose they must, as there are more than three hundred and sixty-five people in the world. Do you want the remarkable coincidence inserted in 'Tom Merry's Weekly'? If so, you'd better go along to Merry's study."

"Yaas, wathah, and let me get on with my pwactice."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Blake. "You see—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"But I must speak to you about it," said Wally. "You see, it's awfully curious two birthdays coming on the same day; and there's another coincidence, too—neither Jameson nor Gibson has any tin to keep it up with."

"That's less surprising still," said Blake. "You fags never do have any tin a couple of days after you receive your weekly pocket-money, I believe."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, Jameson and Gibson put it like this. It's their birthdays, and so it's up to me to stand a feed," said Wally.

"I'm broke—"

"Your usual state, I believe."

"Well, I'm stony now, anyway, and I thought Gussy would be willing to stand the feed for the hozour of the family."

"I decline to do anythin' of the sort."

"Now, look here, Gus, I've practically promised for you."

"I wegard it as cheek on your part, Wally. I lent you five shillings on Monday."

"That went towards a new footer."

"You had a new footer only a fortnight ago."

"Ye-es, but Pongo got hold of it in the Form-room, you know. He's shockin' rough on a football."

"I have pwviously wecomended you to dwon that wotten beast, Wally."

"Look here, Gus, if you like to make it half-a-sovereign—"

"I wegard the wrequest as uttably unweasonable."

"Five bob, then."

"Wats!"

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"Half-a-crown," said D'Arcy minor desperately.

"More wats!"

"Well, of all the mean monkeys," said Wally, "I think you Fourth Form chaps take the giddy biscuit. It's a bit up against me, having a brother in the Fourth. The Third Form don't like it, but Jameson and Gibson have been very decent about it."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, seat! I say, you chaps, how much can you stand?"

"I think we've stood about as much as we can stand," said Jack Blake sweetly. "We can't stand too much from a Third Form fag. Outside!"

"But—"

"Outside!"

And Blake, Herries, and Digby gently placed the hero of the Third in the passage. Arthur Augustus viewed this proceeding with approval.

"Very good," he remarked; "now I can resume my practice." And he struck the tuning-fork.

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at one another, and then, like the hunter of the Snark in the ballad, they "suddenly, silently vanished away."

CHAPTER 6.

The New Boy's Scheme.

FIVE sore and smarting juniors gathered in a deserted class-room, and groaned in chorus. Mr. Railton, when he was in earnest, knew how to lay on with the cane, and he had been in earnest that time. Gore & Co. were hurt, and greatly inclined to revile the new boy, who had led them into that unfortunate adventure.

Clyne made the least noise of all, though he was the most hurt. There was an evil glitter in his eyes, however, that spoke volumes. It was plain that all the hatred and uncharitableness of his nature was aroused, and that thoughts of vengeance were passing in his mind. He looked at the groaning quartette with a sneer on his face.

"Blessed lot of row you're making!" he sneered. "You haven't had half what I got."

Gore scowled at him savagely.

"It's all your fault we've got anything," he snarled. "After all, young D'Arcy hadn't done much, and there wasn't any reason to rag him like that."

"When I was at my old school—"

"Oh, blow your old school! We've heard enough of that."

"Bah, there's nothing to whine about in this! We used to get lickings that nearly fetched the skin off, and laugh. You are a pretty soft set here."

The imputation of being "soft" is never an easy one for a boy to bear. Even among these "wasters" there was a little pride left, and they resented it.

Gore left off groaning, and there was a perceptible slackening in the chorus of anguish from the others.

"At my old school," said Clyne, "we shouldn't have whined about a licking. We'd have made the master who licked us sit up."

"I suppose you can't jape a House-master."

"Why not? I've japed the Head at my old school."

The others looked at him with awed respect.

"The Head!" said Gore.

"Yes. What do you think of laying a booby trap for the Head, and upsetting a pail of whitewash over him?"

"My hat!"

"Well, I did that—I and others," said Clyne coolly. "Of course, there was a row; but never mind that. A chap's never caught if he's careful. I could tell you—"

"You've told us a good many things already," said Gore rudely; "but suppose you do something, for a change, to show that it's not all gas."

"Good! I'll make Railton sit up for licking us."

"You can't do it."

"I'll jolly soon show you. Look here, will you back me up?" said Clyne, raising his voice. "I've got a good wheeze, and I've seen it worked off before, and it went like a clock."

"What is it, first?"

"I noticed that Railton was looking rather overworked and worried," chuckled Clyne; "that makes it all the easier, of course. If you fellows will back me up, we can put him through a course of surprises that will make his hair turn grey."

The complaint of the sufferers died away at once. All were eager for a chance of avenging their injuries, if it could be done in safety.

"Go it!" said Mellish. "I'm game, if there's a chance for us."

"It will need nerve, that's all."

"I've got plenty of nerve, for one," said Gore sullenly. "Railton is always down on me, and I should be glad of a chance of getting even."

"Out with it!" said Sharp.

"Well, this is the wheeze. It has to be worked by a

number of fellows, but I think five will be enough. I'll do the first bit of the work, to show you how it's done. We'll begin to-morrow."

"Begin what?"

"The wheeze. This is the idea. I march into Railton's study to-morrow, and show up fifty lines of Virgil he's set me."

"Has he set you any lines?"

"No, he hasn't; and that's the scheme," chuckled Clyne. "He'll think he's suffering from absent-mindedness, loss of memory, and so on. He'd never dream that a junior would do lines he hadn't had given him."

"True enough. But—"

"Wait a tick! Then later on he discovers you, Gore, waiting for him in his study—when he's been out some time, you know. You tell him he sent you there to wait, and he won't remember it."

"But—"

"Then Mellish stays in the class-room till six one evening, and explains when called upon that Railton ordered him to; calls Crofton to witness, and Crofton swears he heard Railton tell him."

"My hat!"

"You see the idea now? In the long run we shall make Railton think he's really going off his rocker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I saw that worked off on a French master till he went nearly dotty," chuckled Clyne. "Railton will be a harder subject, but we'll fix him. It's only a question of having nerve enough to do it; and now he's in a worried state of mind is just the time."

"Good!"

"But, in case of suspicion, we mustn't be seen too much together," went on Clyne. "We can meet in the studies or out of doors, but in the common-room and the passages we'd better appear a bit stand-offish. In fact, we might as well work up a quarrel for the public benefit, and stop speaking to one another."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By George, you do think of things, Clyne!" said Crofton admiringly.

The cad of St. Jim's chuckled.

"At my old school we had a good many japes that you chaps have never heard of," he said carelessly. "I'll tell you some more later. We'll jape that chap Merry next, for his cheek in interfering with us. We can fix something on him that will make him look small before all the House. But we'll finish with Railton first."

"Good!" said Mellish. "You chaps go out first, and I'll follow with Clyne, and we'll keep our distance in public."

Gore, Crofton, and Sharp left the room.

Clyne looked quickly and suspiciously at Mellish, evidently not liking the private interview with the cad of the Fourth. But Mellish's manner was very friendly.

"I haven't given you away," he remarked.

"What do you mean?" growled Clyne.

Mellish laughed unpleasantly.

"I mean about your being expelled from your last school."

"Hush, you fool!"

"Well, you asked me. I guessed it was you when I heard that it was Albert Clyne coming here, as I happened to be at Redcliffe to see my cousin the day you were—"

"Hang you! Shut up!"

"Certainly. I'm your friend."

"Well, then, leave that subject alone. Somebody might hear you."

"And that would be awkward," smiled Mellish. "Dr. Holmes would never have allowed you to enter St. Jim's if he had known that you were expelled from your previous school, especially if he had known what it was for. Your people must have kept it dark very carefully."

"I suppose they did."

"Yes, and if it came out now—"

"I suppose I should have to leave St. Jim's. I never dreamed that anybody here would recognise me," snarled Clyne. "But I don't see why you want to harp on it, Mellish. We get on pretty well together; you're my sort."

"I know. You're welcome at St. Jim's, as far as I'm concerned. But one good turn deserves another, you know. Can you lend me a half-crown?"

"I lent you two bob yesterday."

"I know you did, and I want you to lend me a half-crown to-day," smiled Mellish. "I will let you have both back next week—if I can."

Without a word Clyne drew a coin from his pocket and passed it to Mellish.

"Thanks," said Mellish, as he slipped it into his pocket. "It's lucky for a chap to have rich people, isn't it, Clyne—jolly lucky in some ways."

And he quitted the room.

Clyne's face was not pleasant to look at as he stared after Mellish. His teeth came together with a sharp click.

"Just wait a bit!" he murmured. "Wait till we've carried out this jape on Railton, and then you'll be in it as deep as I am. It's expulsion for the lot if we're found out, and then—then I'll settle with you."

From which it will be seen that Mellish, cunning as he was, was hardly up to the form of the new boy at St. Jim's in that peculiar line.

CHAPTER 7.

A Fearful Thashing.

"I only ask of that pwould was,
Which ends its blaze in me,
To die the last, and not disgwace
Its ancient chivalry—"

"My only maiden aunt!" said Clyne, as he came into Study No. 6. "What's that shriek? What the dickens are you doing, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus, tuning-fork in hand, was standing on the rug, getting the second verse of the "Soldier's Fall" off his manly chest. He ceased, and glared at the new boy with a glare that should have frozen him.

"Weally, Clyne—"

"Anything wrong?" asked Clyne. "If you're ill, I don't mind going for a doctor."

"I am not ill."

"Is it a sudden pain, then, or the tooth-ache?"

"It is not a sudden pain or the toothache."

"Then you ought to be quiet."

"I was singin'—"

"Oh, don't be funny, you know."

"I was singin'," said Arthur Augustus deliberately. "I have a remarkably good tenor voice."

"More rats!"

"I cannot expect an unmusical ass to recognise that fact," said the swell of St. Jim's quietly. "But I have a wight to expect a certain amount of courtesy, especially from a new fellow whom I cannot but regard as an intwudah in this studay. I think you had better apologise for your wude remarks, Clyne."

"Oh, rats!"

"Orhahwise, I shall have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Go and eat tinctacks!"

Arthur Augustus slipped the tuning-fork into his pocket, and pushed back his cuffs. His cuffs were the whitest in the School House, or in the whole school for that matter. But he was willing to soil even them for the sake of upholding his dignity—a most important point with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Clyne watched this proceeding rather uneasily.

He was not a fighting man, when he could help it, usually contriving to wreak his little epites and revenges in underhand ways that did not call for pluck or personal exertion.

He had certainly not imagined that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was a fighting man, either, or he would have been a little more careful in his mode of address.

D'Arcy, judging by appearances, was about the last fellow in the world to be taken for a fighting man, and Clyne in this case had judged by appearances.

But, like many other persons at various times, he was deceived in the swell of the School House.

D'Arcy carefully pushed his cuffs back, and came towards the new boy.

"I regard your pwesence in this studay," he remarked, in measured tones, "as a beastly bore and an imposition. I have wemonstated with Wailton in vain on the subject; and for the sake of courtesy to a stwngah, I have made up my mind to gwin and beah it. At the same time, I cannot help remarkin' that you are a wotten cad, and unfit to entah any decent fellow's studay."

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NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE FEUD OF THE FOURTH."

**A Tale of the Boys of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Clyne.

"You are a bully!" said D'Arcy. "You bully smaller boys, and at the same time you ewinge in the most disgustin' way to big fellows."

Clyne turned red.

D'Arcy's words were quite true, and he knew it; but it was not exactly gratifying to have his little weaknesses stated in such plain English.

He looked at the slim, graceful swell of St. Jim's, and then down at his own much bigger limbs, and his manner became more truculent. It seemed impossible that he should not be able to lick this elegant youth, who was younger and smaller than himself.

"I have also observed," went on D'Arcy, in the same tone, "that you are a feahful pweyawicator. I will not use the word liah, but if I could bying myself to uttah that objectionable word, I should certainly chawactewise you as a feahful liah. I have heard you tellin' yarns about your old school that I know cannot be half twue; and, if twue, they only pwove you to be a wank outsidah and a feahful young blackguard!"

"I suppose you're looking for a thick ear?" Clyne remarked.

"Moreovah," resumed D'Arcy, "you are a beastly pwactical jokah, and you let the blame of your wotten jokes fall on othahs. I am convinced that it was you who thwew the inkball in class this mornin', and sat there sayin' nothing while young Hancock was canded for it."

Clyne grinned.

"It is not a laughin' mattah. Undah the circe, I have already turned ovah in my mind whethah I ought not to give you a feahful thwashin', as a warnin' to you. Now that you have added personal wudeness to your other offences, I have made up my mind. I wegard you as a wottah!"

"Oh, ring off!" said Clyne. "You go on like a gramophone."

"Will you pway take off your jacket?"

"Yes, rather; and I'll wipe up the floor with you," said Clyne.

"Vewy good. Pway go ahead, deah boy."

And Arthur Augustus stood waiting while Clyne rolled his jacket off.

Then the new boy rushed at him.

Clyne was not a courageous lad—courage does not often go with meanness and treachery. He would as soon have fought a tiger in the jungle as Jack Blake; and he was very careful to give Digby and Herries a wide berth. But he knew very well that a successful fight would give him a better footing in the study, and Arthur Augustus seemed a safe subject.

Never was a fellow more deceived.

His rush at Arthur Augustus did not sweep the swell of St. Jim's off his feet.

D'Arcy stood like a rock.

Clyne's fists were knocked up and aside, he never knew how, and his face came into contact with hard knuckles.

His own impetus gave most of the force to the blow.

He reeled back from D'Arcy's fist with a gasp of surprise and pain, and went down on the floor with a bump.

There, with his elbows on the carpet, he panted, and stared up at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Pway allow me to assist you to wise," said D'Arcy, extending a hand politely to his fallen adversary. "Then I shall have great pleasure in knockin' you down again!"

Clyne glared at him and gritted his teeth. He imagined that his fall was a fluke, and he was not finished yet. He grasped D'Arcy's extended hand to rise, and as he rose he brought his other fist round with a swoop, and caught Arthur Augustus on the side of the head.

It was the foulest of foul blows, and D'Arcy, who never dreamed of treachery, was taken quite unprepared.

He reeled, and fell against the table, and slid to the floor, with his head singing and buzzing.

Clyne's eyes glittered. He leaped straight at the reeling junior, and went down on top of him, pommelling hard.

"You—you coward!" gasped D'Arcy. "Pway allow me to wise. I—Ow! Ow!"

But the new boy was punching away as hard as he could go, and the fallen junior had no chance.

There was a sudden shout as the study door was flung open. Jack Blake rushed in, his eyes ablaze.

"You—you cur! Get off!"

Blake's boot in Clyne's ribs sent him reeling off D'Arcy, and he rolled on the carpet. Blake helped D'Arcy to his feet. The elegant junior was looking very rumpled and dusty and dazed.

"Bai Jove, deah boy!" he gasped. "I'm glad you came in. He was hittin' me when I was down, you know—the howwid wascal!"

"And now you'll hit him when he's up!" said Blake



"Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "I—I—!" An upper-cut from Clyne and a body-blow from D'Arcy caught Skimpole at the same moment, and he rolled on the carpet. His peace-makin' was abruptly finished!

grimly. "You're going to fight this out, Clyne, with me to see fair play."

Clyne staggered up, leaning breathlessly against the table. He had punished D'Arcy pretty severely before his cowardly attack was interrupted.

Arthur Augustus unexpectedly shook his head.

"I am afraid this can go no furthah," he remarked, rubbing his nose.

Blake stared at him.

"What do you mean? He was pommelling you like fun. You've got to give him a lickin', or I'll jolly well give you one!"

"I should uttably wefuse to be licked, Blake. I admit that that wotten cad deserves a feahful thwashin', and it was my intention to give him one—"

"Well, go ahead, then!"

"Upon wefflection, I feel that I cannot go ahead. It is unworthy of a gentleman to soil his hands upon such a wottah!"

Clyne sneered. He did not know the little idiosyncrasies of the swell of St. Jim's, and he jumped to the conclusion at once that D'Arcy was afraid.

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Weally, Blake, I am afraid it cannot go any furthah. You see, the wottah stwuck me a foul blow, and then hit me while I was down. He is not fit for a decent chap to touch. I feel that I cannot lay hands on him without a sewious infwaction of my dig. I twust you see the point."

"I can see that you're an ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"He's afraid!" sneered Clyne.

"Bai Jove, if you put it like that, I think I shall have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'!" said D'Arcy, with a gleam in his eyes. "It nevah occurred to me that the cad would doubt my personal couwage. Yet,

upon wefflection, what does the opinion of such a low wottah mattah to me?"

"The other fellows will say the same!" hooted Blake.

"I shall weward their opinions with pwopah contempt! Besides, as they are decent chaps, I shall have no objection to fightin' them, to show that I am not afraid!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Look here, Gussy, you're going to lick this pig, or I'm going to lick you! My Aunt Matilda! I've got it! You see your hatbox there?"

"Yaas, wottah!"

"Well, if you don't start licking Clyne before I've counted five, I'll jump on it!"

"I uttably wefuse to have my hatbox jumped on! It contains my Sunday toppah!"

"One!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Two!"

"Undah the circs., Clyne, I have decided to forgo any considwations of personal dig., and I shall give you that thwashin', aftah all!"

"Three!"

"Come on, you wottah!"

And Arthur Augustus danced up to the cad of St. Jim's, brandishing his fists.

In a moment more they were at it hammer and tongs.

"Good!" exclaimed Blake. "Go it! On the ball!"

"Hallo! What's the row?" exclaimed Herries, coming into the study with Digby. "Gussy on the warpath?"

"I am thwashin' a wotten cad, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, looking round. "Ow!"

Clyne's fist crashed into his eye as he looked round, as might only have been expected. The juniors roared.

"Look out, you ass!"

"Bai Jove!"

And D'Arcy gave all his attention to the fight.

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE FEUD OF THE FOURTH."

A Tale of the Boys of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The exclamations of the juniors and the trampling of feet attracted other fellows from up and down the corridor. Tom Merry looked into the study, and Manners and Lowther looked over his shoulders. Skimpole's spectacles blinked over Lowther's shoulder. The crowd thickened.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Skimpole. "A fight is going on!"

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther. "How long did it take you to find that out?"

"Really, Lowther, this is very brutal! As a sincere Socialist, I am opposed to all personal violence," said Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, and a firm believer in every "ism" he had ever come into contact with. "I cannot but consider it my duty to separate these misguided boys."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A display of brutal fistical force and rancour is no laughing matter, Lowther! I must observe that I am surprised at you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pray allow me room to pass, so that I can put an end to this brutal display!"

The Terrible Three grinned at one another, and made room for the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's to pass. Skimpole rushed between the combatants.

"Here, sheer off!" shouted Blake.

"As a sincere Socialist, Blake, I cannot sheer off; it is my duty to oppose violence in every shape and form!"

"Shut up!"

"Impossible! A sincere and earnest Socialist never shuts up! Companions and schoolmates, I entreat you to cease this brutal display!"

Skimpole's companions and schoolmates did not cease. They were hitting out as if they mistook one another for punching-balls, and they did not even hear Skimpole. But Skimmy was not to be denied. He rushed between. Hammering blows fell on him from both sides. Clyne knocked him towards D'Arcy, and D'Arcy knocked him back again towards Clyne.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "Go it!"

"Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "I—I—"

An upper-cut from Clyne and a body blow from D'Arcy caught Skimpole at the same moment, and he rolled on the carpet. His peace-making was abruptly finished; the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

D'Arcy and Clyne were fighting hard.

But the new boy, discovering that his adversary was in earnest, and that D'Arcy was really not wanting in courage, weakened from that moment. A coward only needs to be confronted with courage for all his bluster to desert him. Clyne would have given several weeks' pocket-money to be well out of the combat. And at last, when D'Arcy knocked him down, he refused to rise.

"I'm done!" he gasped.

Jack Blake shook his head.

"No, you're not," he replied coolly; "I'll tell you when you're done! You'll go on till I give the word!"

"I won't!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is that exactly playing the game, Blake?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" exclaimed Blake, considerably ruffled by the suggestion that he was not "playing the game." "You Shell fellows can bunk! This is a Fourth Form affair! Scoot!"

"Yes; but—"

"Pway don't let your angry passions wise, deah boys! Tom Mewwy is undah a misappwehension! This wottah is only malingewin', Tom Mewwy!"

"Yes; but a chap ought to be let off when he says he's had enough."

"He requires a feahful thwashin' for educational purposes. He stwuck me a foul blow and piled on me when I was down!"

"Oh, I didn't know that! Go it!"

"I won't go on!" groaned Clyne.

"Yes, you will!" said Blake. "If you don't get up, I'll hold you up by the back of your collar while Gussy lathers you!"

"I could not stwike the wottah undah those cires. Blake!"

"Very well; I'll do it myself, as you're so particular! Give me your dog-whip, Herries!"

"Here you are!"

"Let him alone!" called out Mellish, behind the crowd.

Blake looked round.

"If you want to interfere, Mellish, come in! Make room there for Mellish to come in!"

The fellows made room, but Mellish did not come in. He walked rather quickly down the passage, instead.

"This new chap has come into our study and disgraced us," said Blake. "If he stays here we're going to educate

him. He's going to fight now till he drops, or I'll give him a dog-whip licking that will take his skin off!"

There was no doubt that Blake meant it. His eyes were blazing. Clyne saw it, and he staggered to his feet.

"Come on!" he muttered.

And he followed that with a word that was not usually heard among juniors, and which showed that he had learned to curse, among his other accomplishments, at Redclyffe.

D'Arcy's eyes glittered, and any hesitation he might have had vanished. The swell of St. Jim's was good-natured to a fault in some things, but there were some he could not stand, and swearing was one of them. As he explained, it wasn't only the wickedness of the thing, but it was such an offence against good form, you know.

"Yaas wathah, I'll come on!" said D'Arcy grimly.

And he came on. The way he wired in then was a revelation to the joyful and admiring spectators.

He sailed round and round the cad of St. Jim's, knocking him right and left, and getting hardly a tap in return.

D'Arcy with his blood up was a new D'Arcy, and not a safe person to encounter with or without gloves.

Clyne fought like a cat, but his punishment was severe, and at last he went down again, and this time it was clear even to Blake that he was done.

"Gentlemen, the performance is now over!" said Monty Lowther.

And the Terrible Three went down the passage.

Blake looked contemptuously at the wretched junior on the carpet. He could always pity a fallen champion, but in the case of Clyne his disgust was too great.

"You'd better cut along to a bath-room!" he said. "You don't look pretty!"

"I'll make you all smart for this some time!" groaned Clyne, as he went unsteadily out of the study.

Blake laughed scornfully.

"Bai Jove, he's an uttah wottah, you know!" said D'Arcy. "I have given him that feahful thwashin' for his own good, and he seems to be a worse cad than evah!"

"Have you seen my spectacles?"

It was Skimpole who asked the question. Blake picked up his spectacles from the corner they had rolled into, jammed them on his nose, and pushed him out into the corridor. And the amateur Socialist drifted away, feeling that perhaps, upon the whole, he would think twice before he acted the gentle peace-maker again.

"Asd now," said Digby, "how did the trouble start between you and Clyne?"

"He wudely intewwupted me when I was pwactisin' my tenor solo. If you fellows would care to hear—"

"Thanks, no!"

"I will wesome, and give you the second verse of 'Soldier Fall.' I should like your opinion on the A in the third line. That's the highest note, you know, and I think I get it pwetty well. I—"

"You look jolly dirty and untidy," said Blake. "Suppose Wally were to come in and see you now. It would encourage him in his untidy ways, and—"

"Bai Jove, you're wight; and it's vewy thoughtful of you, Blake! I will buzz off at once!"

And D'Arcy hastily left the study. And Blake, Herries, and Digby chuckled.

CHAPTER 8.

The First Blow—Law and Order.

"CLYNE! What do you want?"

Mr. Railton looked up rather wearily. There was a great deal of work upon the House-master's shoulders just then. It was mid-term, and at any time a House-master had plenty to do. In addition to his own work, however, Mr. Railton was doing a great deal for the Head, who was indisposed, with a slight but troublesome attack of the "flu." Mr. Railton was a strong man and a hard worker, but even the keenest worker is not immune from fag. And the House-master at the present moment was feeling tired, and had, in fact, had a tired feeling for a week past.

Clyne had tapped and entered the study with an air of great meekness and respect.

His face showed very clearly the signs of his late combat with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Mr. Railton's eye did not fail to note them.

His brow grew a little severer; but, as a rule, the House-master did not take notice of fighting among the juniors, unless the case was a very flagrant one, and so he made no remark upon that.

He asked Clyne what he wanted, and the new boy assumed an expression of surprise.

"You told me to come, sir."

It was Mr. Railton's turn to look surprised then.

"I do not remember telling you to come, Clyne."

"Yes, sir. It was for fighting with D'Arcy, sir."

The late circumstances had led Clyne to modify his original scheme somewhat. Mr. Railton looked more and more surprised.

"I do not understand you, Clyne. Have you been fighting with D'Arcy? Did I tell you to come here?"

"Yes, sir."

"I certainly do not remember."

Mr. Railton might have suspected that it was a "jape"; but it seemed inconceivable that a junior should come up for punishment without being compelled by direst necessity.

"Yes, sir," said Clyne meekly.
"When did I tell you, Clyne?"

"In the passage, sir—about an hour ago."

Mr. Railton passed his hand over his brow. He had certainly come along the passage about an hour ago, and he remembered having spoken to Tom Merry there. He did not remember having even noticed Clyne.

"Well, I do not recall the circumstance, Clyne," he said.
"You can go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Clyne, with real relief. He was willing to take a caning for the purpose of carrying out his scheme, but he was glad enough to escape it. He left the study.

Mr. Railton leaned his head upon his hand, and his puckered brow grew very dark and troubled.

"Is it possible that I am becoming so absent-minded?" he murmured. "That was never a failing of mine. I have not the slightest remembrance of having told Clyne to come here, yet it is evident that I did so."

There was a tap at the door. Mr. Railton was too immersed in thought to hear it, and the tap was repeated, and the door opened.

Tom Merry looked in.

"Merry!" Mr. Railton came to himself with a start.
"Yes; come in. What is it?"

"My lines, sir."

"Your—er—lines?"

Mr. Railton looked at the imposition Tom Merry laid before him. The hero of the Shell looked a little surprised.

"Yes, sir; my lines—the fifty from 'Virgil.'"

"Ah, yes!" said Mr. Railton. "I had forgotten. I remember now. I gave you fifty lines for sliding down the banisters, to the danger of your limbs."

Tom Merry smiled.

"There wasn't any danger, sir."

"H'm! There are two opinions about that, evidently. You may leave the lines, Merry."

Tom Merry left the study.

Mr. Railton rose, and paced the room.

"There is no doubt about it," he muttered. "I suppose it is a case of brain fag. I had forgotten giving the lines to Merry, though I now recall the circumstance. In the case of Clyne, I cannot recall it yet. I must be careful."

Tom Merry left the study, feeling a little troubled in his mind. Although Mr. Railton sometimes came down on the juniors with a heavy hand, the House-master was very popular in the School House. And Tom Merry could see that he had something on his mind.

"Railton looks ill," he remarked, in reply to a query from Monty Lowther, as to whether he was practising for a funeral mite.

"Yes; I've noticed that," said Manners. "Suppose you write to your old governess for some medicine, Tom?"

"Good wheeze."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Tom Merry. "It isn't as if it were Rateliff, of the New House. Railton is all right; and I'm sorry he's seedy."

"So are we," said Lowther seriously. "We'll make an agreement, if you like, to bar all japes till he pulls round, and keep the other chaps in order—excepting rows with the New House, of course."

"Good! We'll stick to that!"

It seemed a good idea, though the role of peace-makers and guardians of law and order came rather strangely to the Terrible Three. As a rule, there was very little mischief went on in the School House without Tom Merry and his chums having some sort of a hand in it. But the role had the attraction of novelty, at all events, and the chums of the Shell took it up quite keenly.

It was surprising the amount of disorder a fellow could find in a house when he was really bent on finding it and putting it down.

The Terrible Three had finished their prep., and nothing seemed more advisable than to make a round of the house, to see that the other fellows were quiet and orderly.

A sound of scuffling from the Third Form-room attracted their attention at once, and they bent their steps in the direction of the row, with the praiseworthy intention of

remonstrating with the fags, and, if necessary, licking them all round, in the interests of order and peace.

The row grew louder as they neared the Form-room, where the fags of the Third were wont to foregather after lessons. They preferred it to their share of the junior common-room, and fellows of both Houses gathered there, to work or play or fight, as their humour moved them.

"Get up! Get off my chest, young Jameson!"

"Hallo! That's young Wally's voice!" said Tom Merry, grinning, as he pushed open the Form-room door. "There's a rift in the lute!"

"Rats, young D'Arcy!"

"Keep that ink away from my face, Gibson, or I'll jolly well mash your features when I get up!"

"Rats, young D'Arcy!"

"G-r-r-r-r!"

Wally D'Arcy was extended on his back on the floor. Jameson was sitting on his chest, and four fags were holding him by the wrists and ankles. He was absolutely helpless, and could only glare at Curly Gibson, who was tilting a



bottle of ink over his face. The ink had just commenced to flow when the chums of the Shell looked in.

"Hallo! What's the row?"

"Mind your own business, you Shell-fish!" said Jameson.
"What are you poking into here for? But if you want to know, it's a rag. D'Arcy minor has failed to play the game."

"I've done my best."

"Silence, D'Arcy minor! I'm ashamed of you!"

"Look here, Jim—"

"Oh, don't talk to me! To-day's my birthday, and young Gibson's birthday, and there's not the ghost of a spread on the double occasion!"

"Beastly!" said Gibson.

"We're stony!" said Jameson indignantly. "And we relied on you to stand something. The Form expects it. You haven't played up."

"But—"

"Your father's a duke—"

"He ain't. He's only a giddy lord!"

"Well, I don't care whether he's a lord, or a duke, or a millionaire. I know jolly well he's got lots of tin, and you

ought to be able to stand a Form-room brew on the occasion of a double birthday."

"Ow! Steady with that ink, you young beast, Gibson!"

"Serve you right, D'Arcy minor! You're barred by the Form, unless——"

"I blued all my tin on a new footer. It's as much yours as mine."

"That's all very well; but you've got a brother in the Fourth who's rolling in filthy lucre!"

"I've tried——"

"Oh, rats! You ought to have made a raise. You can't say that we haven't treated you decently about him. Lots of fellows would have cut you dead for having a brother in an upper Form, and you know it. We've taken it kindly, and never set it up against you. We've looked over it."

"I know you have; only——"

"And now you can't stand a Form-room brew on the occasion of a double——"

"Ow! Keep that ink away, you beast!"

Wally struggled desperately, and the fags of the Third and the ink-bottle were mixed up on the floor in an inky scramble.

The Terrible Three were laughing heartily; but the din was growing great, and they remembered all of a sudden that they were the champions of law and order.

"Here, this won't do!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Stop that, you kids! We're keeping the House in order."

"Yah! Who's made you prefects?"

"Don't you ask rude questions, kid. Stop that row!"

"Rats! Get out!"

"Yah!"

"Boo!"

"This looks like a case of suasion," said Tom Merry. "Pile in!"

They piled in.

Three sturdy fellows in the Middle School could account for a host of fags. Wally & Co. were knocked right and left. Wally was freed from the ragers, but, curiously enough, he did not side with the rescuers. Form feeling was too strong. He placed himself at the head of the Third in a desperate resistance.

"Line up!" shrieked Wally. "Knock 'em out! Down with the Shell-fish! We'll teach 'em to come and play at being prefects here!"

The noise the fags had been making was considerable. The noise that resulted from the efforts of the champions of law and order was terrific. But it was all in the good cause.

An angry face looked in at the door. It belonged to Kildare, of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's.

"Stop that row!" he roared.

"Eh? What's the matter, Kildare?"

"What do you mean by kicking up this hullabaloo?"

"We're—we're keeping the fags in order, Kildare."

"If you don't stop it, then, I'll keep you in order."

"Look here——"

"Get out of the Third Form-room!"

The Terrible Three looked at one another with sickly expressions, and left the Form-room. The dusty fags sorted themselves out. Kildare gave them three minutes of fluent abuse, and retired. Wally chuckled.

"It's all right, my sons——"

"Is it all right?" growled Jameson. "I've a jolly good mind to finish that ragging."

"Hold on! I mean it's all right about the feed."

"Oh, I see! What——"

"I've got a wheeze!"

No more was needed. When Wally announced himself as being equal to an occasion, his friends knew that it was all right. And the late ragers, dropping all hostility on the spot, hugged Wally, thereby transferring a considerable amount of ink from his person to their own, and D'Arcy minor explained his "wheeze."

CHAPTER 9.

Wally's Wheeze.

PONG!

Pong!

"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally, as he drew near Study No. 6. "What on earth's that?"

Pong!

Pong!

"Lah, te, doh! Got it! That's my C," came the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Now for a little pwactice while those unmusical wottahs are in the gym., and I sha'n't be intewwupted."

Wally grinned. The pong was the A of the tuning-fork, assisting Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to find his key.

"Yaas, let me like a soldier fall,

"Upon some open plain,

"This bweast expandin' for the ball—— Weally, Wally. I wish you would not come twampin' into the study just as I am on my top note!"

"It's all right, Gus——"

"It is not all wight. That note is an A, and I am not vey stwong on the top A's. I was gettin' that one beautifully when you came wushin' in like a Wed Indian."

"That's just what struck me, Gus."

"What stwuck you, Wally?" asked D'Arcy, looking at him.

"What a ripping top A you have," said Wally unblushingly. "I wish I could sing as you do, Gussy."

"I dare say you do, Wally. It isn't evewy fellow who is born with a remarkable tenor voice."

"But you oughtn't to keep it all to yourself, Gus. Why don't you give a sing-song, you know, to the fellows?"

"I am thinkin' of givin' a concert."

"Good! Then perhaps you wouldn't mind giving us a sort of rehearsal in the Third Form-room," explained Wally.

"That's what I was thinking of. You see, we've got a lot of musical chaps in the Third, and we never get a chance to hear any good music. If you'd come and sing to us in the Form-room, it would be as good as—as hearing Caruso."

"Weally, Wally, you are impwovin' vewy gweatly in some respects," said the unsuspecting swell of the School House. "I am glad to see it. I did not notice before that the Third Form were at all musical."

"Oh, yes, they are you know, awfully! You should hear young Gibson doing the Bridal Chorus from 'Lohengrin' on the paper and comb."

"I have heard him, and I wegarded it as a feahful wow."

"Well, perhaps it was," assented Wally, who was unusually docile; "but it shows a taste for music, doesn't it? Lots of fellows would be buzzing 'Bill Bailey' instead of the 'Bridal Chorus.'"

"Yaas, there is somethin' in that."

"If you'd give a little singing entertainment in the Form-room, Gussy, the Third would appreciate it. You see, if you're thinking of giving a concert, this would be a ripping good pwactice—a sort of preliminary canter, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! If you are weally desiwous of impwovin' your minds——"

"That's it, exactly. You see, we want to improve the whole Form—give 'em lessons in taste and—and musical feeling. All the fellows who don't want to come must be made to come and listen. That's the idea."

"Yaas, but how are you goin' to make 'em come?"

"Well, young Jameson thought that if there was a bit of a feed, they'd all come, and then we could bung the singing at them, and they really couldn't help themselves. They wouldn't leave so long as the grub lasted."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You think it's a good wheeze?"

"Yaas, certainly."

"There's only one difficulty in the way——"

"Pwallow me to assist you in any way poss.," said Arthur Augustus. "I am only too anxious to waise the musical tone of the coll."

"Well, it's about the funds," said Wally glibly. "I'm stony, and most of the fellows are on the rocks. If we could raise——"

"Oh, that's all wight; I can lend you a soweiveign."

"Good!" exclaimed Wally, delighted. "Then I'll manage it all right. What time will you come along?"

"Any time you like, deah boy! I've done pwep."

"Then we'll say half an hour, and that'll give me time to get the feed going. We'll have the music along with the grub, you know."

"Vewy good."

"The Third Form-room, then, in half an hour," said Wally; and he quitted the study.

He ran to the Form-room like a whirlwind, and burst into it, and seized Jameson and Gibson round the neck, and

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"THE MARVEL"—1d.



"Get up! Get off my chest, young Jameson!" "Hullo, that's young Wally's voice!" said Tom Merry, grinning, as he pushed open the Form-room door. "There's a rift in the lute!"

waltzed them round the room till they crashed into a form, and went rolling on the floor.

"You raving lunatic!" gasped Jameson "What the—"

"It's all right."

"What's all right?"

"The feed."

"Oh! Made the raise?"

"Yes. The only trouble is that Gussy's going to sing to us, but it's worth that for a birthday feed."

"You bet! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the heroes of the Third were quickly busy in preparing for that birthday feed.

CHAPTER 10.

The Plot Progresses.

"WHAT is it, Gore?"

Mr. Railton asked the question in a slightly irritable tone. Gore's manner, as he came into the House-master's study, was very respectful, but there was a curious lurking glimmer in his eyes.

"My lines, sir."

"Your—your lines?"

"Yes, sir."

And Gore laid a carefully-written imposition on the table. Mr. Railton laid down his pen, and looked steadily at Gore. The cad of the Shell met his glance without flinching.

"I gave you this imposition, Gore?"

"Yes, sir."

"When?"

"Just after afternoon school, sir."

"Indeed! I had quite forgotten. You may go."

Gore left the study. Mr. Railton took up the impot. and

looked at it. There were fifty lines from Virgil, well written out. Mr. Railton knew the lines almost by heart, but he stared at them now, as if they were a ghastly and startling sight. Then he pressed his hand to his forehead.

"There is no doubt about it," he muttered, "my memory is going. Is it a case of mental fag—or what? Worse, perhaps."

The House-master's look grew almost haggard.

To a man already in a worried and nervous frame of mind, it was terrible to discover that he could no longer rely upon his own faculties, that his mental powers were tottering in the balance.

There was a tap at the door.

"Come in," said Mr. Railton, in a hollow voice.

Sharp entered the room.

He was looking a little nervous, having not the gift of nerve that Gore and Clyne rejoiced in; but as juniors often looked nervous—and with reason—on entering a House-master's study, there was nothing to excite suspicion in that.

"Well, Sharp, what is it?"

"My lines, sir."

Mr. Railton almost jumped.

"Your what?"

"My lines."

Sharp laid an imposition on the table, as Gore had done. Mr. Railton looked at him, and signed to him to go. He realised that it would not do to betray himself to a junior. But his expression was sufficient to show the boy how the plot was working, and he felt a pang of remorse as he left the study.

Gore, Clyne, and Mellish were waiting for him at the corner of the passage. They grinned gleefully as he came up.

"Well, how did he take it, Sharpey?"

"He looked knocked into a heap," said Sharp uneasily. "I—I say, you chaps, I—I don't half like this."
 "What's the matter?" demanded Clyne. "It's going to be all right, isn't it?"
 "Ye-e-es, but—but—"
 "Oh, you're getting frightened?"
 Sharp turned crimson.

"I'm not getting frightened, only—only—well, never mind. I'm game if you are. I'll stick it out."

"Of course you will!" said Clyne, sneeringly. "We're in too deep now for sliding out, my pippin! We've got to go through with it. And it's safe enough. We'll make his hair turn grey before we've done with Railton."

"Oh, will you?" said a voice at his elbow, as Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came round the corner. "What's the little game?"

Clyne was taken aback.
 "Eh? I didn't know you rotters were listening."

Tom Merry flushed.
 "We weren't listening, and you know it," he said sharply. "We couldn't help hearing what you said. You've got some game on, I can see—something up against Railton."

"Nothing to do with you."
 "Quite a mistake!" drawled Lowther. "Railton is seedy, and we're looking after the law and order of the House to save him worry just now."

"Precisely," said Manners, with a nod.
 "So you see," went on Tom Merry, "whatever your little game is, you've got to drop it. Railton is not to be ragged while he's off his form."

"Mind your own business!"
 "Haven't we told you that we've made this our business? I don't know what game you're playing, but I can guess that it's something beastly mean. I warn you to drop it. We've got our eye on you."

And the Terrible Three walked on.
 Gore & Co. looked at one another uneasily.
 "That was beastly unlucky," said Clyne, with a short laugh. "Still, they haven't found anything out. If they did it wouldn't matter; they couldn't sneak of us without being sent to Coventry by the House."

"Right enough. It's Mellish's turn next. Go on, Mellish."

"Better leave it for a bit."
 "You're not going to funk it," said Gore. "I've done a bit, and now you're going to do yours."

"Yes, but—"
 "You'll go straight to Railton's study, or take a licking."
 "Oh, it's all right; I'm going."

And Mellish went. He passed Manners and Lowther in the passage. They were standing at a window looking out. Tom Merry was not with them. The cad of the Fourth tapped at Mr. Railton's door, and entered, with a meek and smug expression on his face. He started a little as he saw that Tom Merry was in the study.

Tom was at the table, with a Latin exercise before him, upon which he was evidently asking Mr. Railton's advice. The House-master was always willing to help any lad who took his work seriously, and Tom Merry was one who worked hard as well as played hard. Mellish would gladly have left his errand over till Tom Merry was gone, but that was impossible. Mr. Railton had pushed the exercise aside for a moment to attend to the newcomer.

"What is it, Mellish?"
 "If you please, sir, have you done with my fountain-pen?"

The House-master stared at him.
 "Your fountain-pen, Mellish?"
 "Yes, sir."

"What do you mean? Why should you suppose that I know anything about your fountain-pen? What are you talking about, Mellish?"

The junior looked amazed.
 "Yes, sir. Don't you remember you borrowed it this morning, sir?"

"I certainly do not remember!"
 "Why, there it is, sir, on your inkstand."

The House-master turned white.
 "Ye-e-es—yes, Mellish! Take it, by all means, and thank you. Stay a moment! I do not quite remember! When did I borrow it, and where?"

"After first lesson, sir," said Mellish glibly. "You wanted to write something, and you told me to ask you for it."

"I do not remember! Was it in the class-room?"
 Mellish hesitated a second. He meant to say "Yes," but he wished Tom Merry had not been there. Tom's eyes were fixed steadily on his face, with a glance that Mellish did not quite understand, and which alarmed him a little. But he remembered in a moment that a Shell boy could

not possibly know what had passed in the Fourth Form room after first lesson, and he regained courage.

"Yes, sir."
 The answer came out without a tremor.
 "Ah, yes, no doubt you are right. I had forgotten. You may go."

Mellish slipped the fountain-pen into his pocket, and left the study. Mr. Railton sat silent, lost in painful thought, and Tom Merry was quite still, not caring to interrupt him.

The House-master came to himself with a sudden start.
 "Ah! I was forgetting your Latin, Merry. I am growing very forgetful lately."

"Don't let me bother you now, sir. I—"

"Nonsense! We will finish."
 And the exercise was gone through. Then Tom Merry thanked the House-master and withdrew. He caught a glimpse of the master as he closed the door, and he saw that Mr. Railton's face was white and almost haggard. His heart was heavy as he rejoined Manners and Lowther.

"There's some underhand business going on here," he said. "Those cads have a plot of some kind up against Railton, and they're bothering him. I just heard Mellish at it, and I am almost certain he was lying."

And Tom Merry explained what he had heard, and what he suspected. Manners and Lowther wrinkled their brows over it.

"Blake can tell you," said Lowther. "He will know whether Mellish was lying or not. But—but what could be his motive if he was lying?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I don't quite catch on to it," he confessed. "But it's a mean game, I'm certain of that, and that new fellow Clyne is at the bottom of it. As guardians of the law and order of the House—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't start cackling on a serious subject, Monty! Apart from joking, I think we ought to look into this. Railton's seedy, and if those cads have got up any dodge to bother him, we ought to put a stop to it."

"Yes, rather, that's all right."

"I'll ask Blake, anyway. Come along and look for him."

CHAPTER 11.

The Top B Flat.

JACK BLAKE had just come in from the gym., with Digby and Herries. They were looking very healthy and rosy after arduous exercise, when the Terrible Three met them near the door of Study No. 6. Strange sounds were proceeding from the study. At any other time the juniors might have supposed that someone was being cruelly and remorselessly slain, and was gasping out shrieks for mercy. But as they knew that it was the swell of St. Jim's practising his top notes, they were not alarmed.

"I say, Blake, do you remember—"

"Certainly," said Blake immediately, and without waiting for the rest of the question. "Ah, distinctly I remember, it was in the bleak December, and—"

"Oh, don't be funny now. I—"

"I'm not being funny. I'm practising my recitation for D'Arcy's show. D'Arcy is going to give a selection of tenor solos from Wagner, Puccini, Berlioz, Gounod, Wallace, and Dan Leno!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not quite sure, but I think I've got the list about right. We're going to back him up. I'm reciting 'The Raven'! 'Ah, distinctly I remember, it was in the bleak December, and each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor! That's the style. You don't often hear 'The Raven' recited like that!"

"No!" said Lowther. "Praise be!"

"Look here, Lowther! If you don't like the way I recite—"

"Oh, it's ripping," said Tom Merry hastily. "But—"

"You wait till I make the raven croak," said Jack Blake confidently. "I'll make the audience shudder then, I tell you. It comes in this verse:

"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven,
 Thou, I said, 'art sure no raven."

Ghastly, grim, and ancient raven, wandering from the nightly shore,
 Tell me what thy lordly name is on the night's Plutonian shore."

Quoth the raven, 'Never more!"

Jack Blake brought the "Never more!" out in a deep bass voice, and Lowther gave a dramatic shudder.

"Good!" he said. "Is that what you call making the raven croak?"

"That's it."

"Shouldn't wonder if you make the audience croak, too, if you do much of that."

Blake glared. Lowther was using the word "croak" in its slangy sense, as an equivalent for the verb "to die."

"If you came along here to be funny," said Blake, "I can only say—"

"We came to ask you a question," said Tom Merry. "Don't mind Lowther; he was born like that. Do you remember—"

"Ah, distinctly I—"

"Cheese it for a minute! Do you remember in the Fourth Form-room this morning, after first lesson, Mellish lending his fountain-pen to Mr. Railton?"

Blake, Herries, and Digby stared blankly at Tom Merry.

"What the dickens are you getting at?" demanded Blake. "Is that a conundrum?"

"No, it isn't. I want to know. It's important."

"Well, he didn't! Railton was taking the Fourth Form for first lesson, as Lathom has made it a special point to catch the flu and get laid up. But I didn't see any fountain-pen business. Mellish never did anything of the sort, as a matter of fact. Mr. Railton wrote a note to the French master, but he used a pencil he borrowed of young Hancock."

"Yes, I remember that," said Digby.

"Well, I just heard Mellish tell Railton he had borrowed his fountain-pen to write a note after first lesson, in the Form-room."

"Then Mellish was—mellishing!" said Blake, inventing a new word on the spot. "I always knew he was a fearful prevaricator, also a wonderful fabricator, not to say a beastly liar; but I'm blessed if I can see where there was any use in telling that fib to Railton. What's the game?"

"But his fountain-pen was lying on Mr. Railton's inkstand, just as if Railton had laid it there absent-mindedly."

"Well, Mellish could easily have put it there himself, I suppose, when Railton wasn't in the study, some time?"

"Ye-es, I suppose so."

"That was it," said Lowther. "Now, the question arises, my beloved hearers, what on earth is Mellish trying to mystify Railton about it for?"

"Blessed if I know," said Blake.

"That fellow Clyne is at the bottom of it," said Tom Merry, with conviction. "We came upon them—the whole gang—jawing over something they're plotting up against old Railton. This is part of the wheeze. It's some plot to worry the old boy, and he's so run down just at present that he's easy game. See?"

"Beastly caddish!" said Blake.

"We're going to stop it," said Tom Merry, his brows coming together in a straight line. "It's a dirty trick. I wouldn't play a game of that sort even on a rotter like Ratty of the New House!"

"We'll look into it, if you like?" said Blake.

"Don't trouble; we'll look into it," said Tom Merry. "This is a matter that requires fellows older than you."

"Two months and seven days older!" jeered Blake.

"Well, yes, counting by the calendar, but years and years older if you go by experience and—and wisdom," said Tom Merry loftily.

"And gas," suggested Blake.

"Ah-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-ah!"

It was a prolonged note from Study No. 6. The Terrible Three, stopping their ears dramatically, walked away swiftly. Blake kicked open the study door, and the chums of the Fourth went in.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing with his mouth wide open, and a top note was streaming forth.

"Ah-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-ah!"

"What on earth are you doing?" roared Blake. "You'll alarm the house!"

"Pwaw don't intewwupt me!"

"What do you mean by shrieking like that? You'll have fellows come along to ask if we're slaying you."

"And we shall have to truthfully answer 'Yes,'" said Digby darkly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your wibald laughtah intewwupts me feahfully," said D'Arcy, screwing his monocle into his eye, and regarding the chums with an icy glare. "I should be obliged if you would wotire. I am due in the Third Form woom in a few minutes, and I am pwactisin' my top B flat."

"Your which?"

"My top B flat. I am goin' to sing the 'Flowah Song' fwom 'Carmen' to the fags."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to excite your laughtah, deah boys. Wally has wewpresented to me that the fags have musical aspivations, which I can encouwage by singin' to them."

"He was pulling your leg."

"I wefuse to admit the possibility of anythin' of the sort. If there are any musical fellows in the Third, I weward them as worthy of encouwagement. I am goin' to sing the 'Flowah Song' fwom 'Carmen.'"

"Ha, ha! In French?"

"No. Out of considewation for the pwobable lack of knowledge on the part of the fags, I shall sing the twanlation."

"There'll be a row!"

"Weally, Blake!"

"Keep off the top B flats!" said Blake, with a warning wag of the head. "Suppose you were to burst a boiler, or something?"

"I can get the note quite simply. I have been pwactisin' it. Unfortunately, I have not studied long enough to have yet attained the accuwate pitch without the aid of a musical instrument or a tunin'-fork. It is only lately that I have discovahed that I have a wonderful tenah voice. But by stwikin' A on the tunin'-fork, and tweatin' it as the 'to' of the tonic solfa, I get to B flat without difficulty. As far as pitch is concerned, I mean, of course. It is wathah difficult to get weally good pwoduction on top notes at first. I am not yet a Cawuso."

"No—no, I don't think you are—quite."

D'Arcy struck the A fork, and the usual "pong" resounded. He sang "Ah!" to the note, and Blake, Herries, and Digby staggered against the wall. Then he went up a semitone, and sang the B flat, and the three juniors sank to the floor in attitudes of great agony. D'Arcy glared at them indignantly, but proceeded to practice his B flat regardless of their contortions.

"That's Cawuso's top note in the 'Flowah Song,'" he said triumphantly.

"Wonderful!" said Blake feebly. "Tamagno couldn't sing like that."

"Do you weally think so, Blake?"

"Of course! He's dead, you know."

"Weally, Blake—"

"If you're going to work off that B flat on the fags," said Blake, "I can only say that there'll be a row—in a double sense."

"If you fellows like to come along—"

"Not much! We've stood it once, but you never know how it might turn out if we went through it again."

"I weward your wemarks as uttally wotten and fwivolous," said D'Arcy. "I have no time now, or I should pwobably give you all a feahful thwashin'. I am goin' to the Third Form now, where I am eagahly expected. They don't find a wemarkable tenah to sing top B flats to them ewevy day."

And Arthur Augustus left the study and slammed the door.

CHAPTER 12.

The "Flower Song" from "Carmen"—with Variations.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was certainly expected in the Form-room, but perhaps not exactly with eagerness.

The Third Form had received the news of the feed with eagerness enough. When they were informed that D'Arcy, of the Fourth, would be singing tenor solos at the same time, they cheerfully acquiesced. It wasn't a very high price to pay for a good feed, and, as Jameson said, they could stand it.

"Besides, he may be late," said Gibson.

"And then the feed won't last so very long," added Wally. "We sha'n't be bound to listen to anything that isn't got through while the feed lasts."

"Oh, we can stand it," said Baker III. "Only let's hope he'll be late."

D'Arcy was late. His top B flats detained him in Study No. 6 till the feast had been in progress for nearly ten minutes, and a very considerable diminution was apparent in the supplies.

The feed was at its height when the swell of the School House appeared in the doorway of the Form-room with a tuning-fork in his hand, and a roll of music under his arm.

"There he is!"

"Come in, Gussy!"

"You can sing!"

Arthur Augustus entered the room. There was a becoming blush of modesty on his face. He turned his eyeglass on the fags with a benevolent expression.

"I am vewy pleased to come and sing to you chaps," he said. "I hope it will be the beginnin' of a new ewah in the history of the Third Form. I am vewy pleased to find that you young wascals are musical. Shakespeare has wemarked—"

"Pass the sardines."

"Shakespeare has wemarked—"

"Jam this way, old chap."



This picture depicts an amusing incident in the grand, long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co., by Frank Richards, in "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, now on sale. Price One Halfpenny.

"Shakespeare has remarked that the man that hath no music in his soul is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils. He further remarks—"

"Where's the pickle-jar?"

"He further remarks 'Let no such man be trusted.' My dear fellows, you will usually find in this world that a man who cares for music is a much more decent chap than a man who doesn't, and therefore I weep—"

"Shove along the cream-puffs, you young pig."

"I weep that I am pleased and flattered by this invitation to sing to you. I shall begin with the 'Flowah Song' f'rom 'Carmen'—"

"Coffee this way."

"I do not wish to stand upon ceremony," said D'Arcy. "I will sing just where I am, but as there is no accompanist, I will ask your permish to use my tunin'-fork to get my note."

"Go ahead," said Wally.

The Third-Formers were going ahead, and Arthur Augustus could not help noticing that more attention was paid to the feed than to the founder thereof. But that was all to be changed when the singing commenced, of course. Then he would see the fags forgetting sardines, and strawberry-jam, and currant-wine, and listening open-mouthed to the song—perhaps.

The tuning-fork ponged, and Arthur Augustus, after several false starts, found his note. Holding up the music with both hands, he started:

"See here, thy floweret treasured well,
Its odour cheered my prison cell—"

"Pass the marmalade."

"Open another bottle, will you?"

"'Tho' withered, dead, the cherished flower,
Its perfume kept its magic power—"

"Look here, young Baker III, don't you wolf all the cream-puffs! Give a fellow a chance."

"Oh, you go and eat coke!"

"I'll jolly well give you a thick ear if you don't pass the cream-puffs!"

"Next my heart it softly reposed,
And how oft, with eyelids half-closed,
I drank its perfume with delight—"

"If you drop your rotten sardines over my rotten trousers, young D'Arcy minor, I'll jolly soon bung the tin down your neck!"

"And saw thy smiles illumine the night,
Sometimes I cursed the hour I met thee—"

"Jolly lucky for you your Form-master ain't here, D'Arcy major. 'I say, D'Arcy minor, your brother's swearing!'"

"And tried all vainly to forget thee,
Sometimes I asked, in senseless wrath,
Why did fate bring her in my path?"

"Blessed if I know, D'Arcy major! Who's he talking about?"

"Give it up! It must be Cousin Ethel."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or the girl at the draper's in Rylcombe."

"He, he, he!"

"Oh, let him rip! Pass the pepper."

"Weally, deah boys, I don't see how I am to sing if you keep on intewwuptin' me with wemarks that I can only chawctawesie as wibald," exclaimed Arthur Augustus, breaking off at last.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Wally. "Fellows will jaw, you know. Keep it up."

"That's right. On the bawl!"

"Go it!"

"Vewy well! But weally——"

"Any more sardines?"

"No; they're done."

"Any more tarts?"

"All gone."

"Any more anything?"

"No, apparently not."

"Then I'm off!"

"Here, wait and hear the rest of the song!" said D'Arcy minor. "Don't be a cad, you know. Gussy's stood the feast, and so it's only fair that we should stand the song."

"Weally, Wally, if you put it like that——"

"Oh, go ahead, Gussy; you're improving our minds, you know."

"Oh, all right! Let him improve our giddy minds. Prestissimo, Gussy, please."

"Very well! I will begin again at the beginning——"

"Here was a yell of protest."

"No! Go straight on!"

"Finish your innings!"

"Kick off, do!"

"Vewy well, I will go stwaight on, but I considah——"

"Go ahead!"

"On the ball!"

"Then, my curse recalling with shame——"

"I should think so, D'Arcy major! Where were you brought up?"

"Fondly, tenderly breathed thy name,
And felt——"

"Why, there's that young villain Baker III. got his jacket stuffed with scones! Roll him over, and have 'em out!"

The remainder of D'Arcy's solo was lost in the din as Baker Tertius was forced to disgorge. But the noise died away as Arthur Augustus sailed on to the climax, and reached the famous top B flat.

"Oh, my Carmen!
My life, my soul be given to thee!"

On "thee!"—at any time an awkward word for a top note—D'Arcy came to the B flat. The Third-Formers listened, and stared, and shrieked. Then, with one accord they bolted for the door.

In the twinkling of an eye almost Arthur Augustus was left alone with the remains of the feast. He lowered his music, and stared round him.

"Bai Jove!"

Slowly and sadly he left the room. He could not help realising that he had been done, and that the Third Form at St. Jim's was, after all, as unappreciative of really good music as it had ever been. In Study No. 6 he found Blake, Herries, and Digby, roaring and eating chestnuts.

"Blake, deah boy, will you tell me weally and twuly what you think of my top B flat?" asked D'Arcy seriously.

"C'ht, old chap!" said Blake affectionately. "It would hurt your feelings; and, besides, there's no words in the English language to express it."

D'Arcy looked thoughtful.

"Upon the whole," he remarked, presently, "I shall let Casuso's songs alone for the pwsent, and stick to easy things like the 'Soldier Fall.' I can get the A all wight. It's remarkable how much difference a semitone makes at the top of the voice. You think I get the A in 'Soldier Fall' all wight, don't you, Blake?"

"Oh, ripping!" said Blake. "Good enough for the Fourth Form, anyway."

And with that rather doubtful commendation D'Arcy had to be satisfied.

CHAPTER 13.

Arthur Augustus Issues Invitations.

"PLEASE, sir——"

Mr. Railton stopped, as Clyne spoke in his meekest and most submissive tone. The House-master, with a cloud upon his face, was coming away from the Sixth Form-room. Mr. Railton's face had rarely been unclouded for the past few days.

"Yes, what is it, Clyne?"

"Please, sir, may I leave my lines till after prep., as I want to go down to Rylcombe to get my new football boots, sir?"

Mr. Railton stopped short, and stared at Clyne, the harassed expression intensifying upon his face. His features looked very worn in the morning sunlight.

"What lines are you referring to, Clyne?"

"The hundred from Horace, sir."

"Did your Form-master give them to you?"

Clyne looked astonished.

"Mr. Lathom, sir? Oh, no, sir! You gave them to me! Don't you remember, sir? It was for skylarking in the passage."

"You may leave them till after tea," said the House-master.

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Clyne.

He scudded off. The lines were an invention of his own, and he felt pretty certain that Mr. Railton would never ask to see them, so he had committed himself to nothing.

He strolled out into the quadrangle, and stopped sharply as a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder. He turned to see Tom Merry and Manners. It was Tom who had caught him by the shoulder with a graep like iron.

Clyne looked at him defiantly.

"What do you want, Merry?"

"I want a word with you, you cad!"

Clyne wrenched his shoulder free, and was inclined to walk away; but Tom Merry looked as if he meant business.

Clyne did not want to come to blows with the hero of the Shell if he could help it. He had had enough of that kind of thing with Arthur Augustus; and Tom Merry was a more redoubtable adversary than the swell of the School House.

"Well, you can go on," said Clyne, with a sneer.

"I heard what you just said to Railton——"

"Listening again!" sneered Clyne.

The blood rushed into Tom Merry's face, but he made no reply to the taunt. He went on very quietly.

"You were lying to Mr. Railton. I have been watching you lately—ever since I knew you and your friends were plotting something against our House-master. Mr. Railton never gave you lines for skylarking in the passage. It's a lie—and Mellish was lying to him yesterday about the fountain-pen. You are planning all this to bother him, because he's run down, and you think you can fool him."

Clyne shrugged his shoulders.

"You ought to be a detective," he remarked.

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

"Isn't what I've said true?"

"Perhaps."

"You cad! You know it is!"

"Are you going to turn sneak?" demanded Clyne. "Can't I jape a master if I like, if I choose to take the risk? What business is it of yours?"

"It's different, japing a master. This is a cad's game, and no decent fellow would play it. Even Gore wouldn't, if he weren't led on by you."

"Any more to say on the subject?" asked Clyne, yawning. Tom Merry's eyes blazed. He had hard work to keep his hands off the sneering, mocking face before him.

"Yes," he said. "You've got to stop it—all of you!"

Clyne laughed.

Tom Merry made a step towards him, and his laugh died away. Manners passed his arm through Tom's, and Clyne walked away. Tom Merry was breathing hard.

"The cad!" he muttered. "I shall pulverise him yet! He ought to be kicked out of the school!"

"Tom Mewwy——"

"Hallo, Gus! Are you up to pitch this morning?" asked Tom Merry cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had his tuning-fork in his hand—in fact, he was seldom seen without it now. He was beaming with smiles, too.

"Yaas, wathah!" he replied. "I found my top B flat all wight when I wose this mornin'. All the same, I am goin' to keep the 'Soldier Fall' for the piece de wistance this evenin'. The top note is A in that, you know."

"What are you doing this evening, then?" asked Manners.

"I am givin' a sort of wecital to the fellows. Only an informal sort of thing, you know," explained D'Arcy modestly. "No charge for admission, and no tickets required."

CHAPTER 14.

Exit Clyne.

"I see—we just roll up in our thousands, and roll in."
 "I am afraid there wouldn't be woom for thousands," said D'Arcy. "You see, I'm givin' my little entertainment in Study No. 6. We're bowwowin' chairs fwom all quartahs, and I am to stand on the table for a platform. I shall sing half a dozen tenor solos. I mustn't wun the wisk of twivin' my voice, you know. Tenors have to be awfully careful with their throats."

"Ye-es, I suppose so. Only half a dozen?"
 "Yaas, wathah! And Blake, and Hewwies, and Dig. will fill up the intervals. Blake is goin' to wecite the 'Waven,' you know, and Dig. will give a cake-walk. I weward a cake-walk as wathah unworthy of the occasion, but Dig. won't give anythin' else, and he says he'll wefuse to support me on any othah terms. Hewwies is goin' to give a cornet solo."

"Very much solo, I expect," grinned Manners. "There won't be anybody but Herries there at the time."
 "Well, weally, I anticipate somethin' of that sort," said D'Arcy confidentially, "so I have put Hewwies last on the pwogwamme. He has been pwactisin' to-day, and I admit it is somethin' feahful. I couldn't hear myself singin' B flat."

"Then it must have been awful."
 "He's at it now," said Manners, looking up at the window of Study No. 6, from which strange, weird sounds were proceeding. "Awfully like a steamer's syren, isn't it?"
 "Yaas; the wesembleing is weally quite stwikin'."
 "What is he playing—'The Lost Chord,' or 'We Won't Go Home Till Morning'?"

"He is playin' 'On the Ball,' awwanged as a cornet solo," explained D'Arcy. "I know, because he told me; othah-wise, I should nevah have wecognised it. I advised him to give it a new name, and pwetend that it was an extwact fwom somethin' vewy classical, and then the audience would natuwally expect to have a headache, and wouldn't gwumble. But he only said wude things. But I stopped to ask you chaps if you were comin' to the show aftah tea."

"Quite sure Herries will be last?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "And members of the audience are allowed to leave before the finish?"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

"Then you can rely on us."
 "Vewy good. Bettah come early and avoid the cwush."
 "Ha, ha! Certainly! We'll be among the first at the pit door."
 "I wathah think you will be surprised," said D'Arcy, with much satisfaction; and, with a graceful nod, he walked away.

His course lay across the quad in the direction of the New House. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were sunning themselves in the porch there, and they looked up as the swell of the School House bore down upon them.

"When did you get out?" asked Figgins cheerfully.
 "Bai Jove, Figgins—"
 "And how did you dodge the keepers?"
 "I did not come here to bandy wude wemarks," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I came to extend an invitation to you."

Fatty Wynn pricked up his ears at once:
 "We have tea in No. 6 at five sharp."
 "Good," said Fatty Wynn. "We don't mind! I get awfully hungry in this spring weather. We can have tea in our study, too, when we get back."
 "We have tea at five sharp, so as to get it ovah—"
 "Oh!"

"And allow time for the little entertainment I am givin'." There will be half a dozen tenor solos, beginnin' with 'Let me like a soldier fall,' fwom 'Mawitanah.' There will be othah items—"

"Any preparations made in case of casualties?" asked Figgins sarcastically.
 "Weally, Figgins—"
 "I think I ought to go," remarked Kerr. "I've learned first aid to the injured, you know, as a boy scout."
 "Weally, Kerr—"

"And there isn't a blessed feed," said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "We're asked to go and listen to a chap squealing, without anything to eat at the finish! My word!"

"Weally, Wynn—"
 "I'd be jolly glad to come," said Figgins, winking at space. "But I've got to see a man about a dog, you know. I'll look in after the tenor solos are over, if possible."

"I shall instruct the stewards to wefuse admittance to any New House boundah whatsoever," said Arthur Augustus, with great dignity; and he marched off with his nose very high in the air, leaving Figgins & Co. chuckling.

"WHAT shall I do?"
 Mr. Railton muttered the words feverishly. He was pacing to and fro on the short turf in the Head's garden. He had gone to that quiet spot to think out his problem. To the worn and worried master of the School House it seemed certain that he was losing his mental balance—that he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He had been hard driven by his work, and additional work, of late. Once or twice he had forgotten things, though usually a most methodical man. Now he had taken to forgetting things without being able to recall the circumstances at all—a much more serious matter.

What was he to do?
 The Head was only just recovering from an attack of influenza, and Mr. Lathom was still very unwell. Much work fell upon the School House-master, but he did not care for that. He was a keen worker. But what if he were in no fit state to do the work? Matters seemed to be going from bad to worse. What was he to do?

The House-master's face was worn and worried. He was trying to think things over—to pull himself together. But the mere feeling that he no longer had full control of his faculties was enough to unnerve him. He had been there half an hour, or more, pacing on the grass under the trees, silent, his footsteps making no sound. Suddenly, through the still quietness, came the sound of a voice he knew—the voice of a junior of his own House.

"Clyne! I've been looking for you, you skulking cad!"
 Mr. Railton smiled slightly. He knew Tom Merry's voice. The juniors were on the other side of the fence, and only the palings and a mass of rhododendrons were between them and the House-master.

"What do you want?"
 Clyne's voice was sullen, with a trace of fear in it.
 "I want to speak to you—about Railton."

Mr. Railton started.
 He had been about to walk away quietly, not caring to be the hearer of, perhaps, some private matter between the juniors. Now he paused. Was it possible that the juniors had noticed his peculiar state already?

"Oh, keep off that!" said Clyne. "It's no business of yours."
 "I'm making it my business. You're not going to bother old Railton any more. You can see how ill he's been looking lately, and if you were anything but an utter cad, you'd let him alone."

"I'm not the only one."
 "Gore and Mellish and the rest would stop if you did. You know jolly well that you're the ringleader."

A strange look came over Mr. Railton's face. He walked quietly towards the gate, to pass the fence and reach the spot where the two juniors were speaking.

"Perhaps I am," said Clyne, little dreaming whose ears were taking in his words. "Perhaps I am not. Railton was rough on us—"

"Because you were bullying a fag?"
 "Anyway, we're going to do as we like, without being dictated to by you. If you were to sneak, you'd be cut dead by the whole House, and you know it."

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.
 "Perhaps so. I don't mean to sneak. You're going to stop this cowardly game without my sneaking. I can see now what you're driving at. You'll make Mr. Railton think he's loose in the head—that's your little game. He isn't the kind of man to suspect fellows of lying wholesale."

"It's a good jape."
 "You're going to stop it. I'm not going to sneak—don't be afraid of that. But if you don't drop this game, I'm going to thrash you within an inch of your life!"

Clyne drew a quick, hissing breath.
 "I won't! I tell you I won't!"

"Then take off your jacket!"
 "I'm not going to fight you!"

"You are, or I'll ask Blake for that dog-whip."
 Clyne panted.

"Hang you—you—you bully! I—"
 "Will you take your jacket off, or will you fight as you a.e?" asked Tom Merry determinedly.

"Hang you! I won't fight! I—I—"
 Tom Merry struck him in the face.

"There! Now will you come on?"
 Clyne turned quite white. But even then he did not accept the challenge.

"Hang you! I—"
 "Stop that," said Mr. Railton, quietly coming through the gate. "I will deal with you over this matter, Clyne."

Tom Merry turned pale.
 "Oh, sir! I—I—"

"You need not apologise, Merry. You have acted like a decent and right-minded boy. As for this wretched lad, I

hope he will never experience the trouble he has caused me in the past few days. I have had a long experience with boys, but I thank Heaven I have never come across so much baseness in one so young before. Follow me, Clyne!"

Clyne reeled against the wall. Tom Merry sprang towards him, for the wretched boy looked as if he were going to faint.

Clyne muttered a savage word.

"Don't touch me! This is all your fault!"

"It's all your own fault. I'm sorry Mr. Railton heard us, but you've only got yourself to thank."

Tom Merry walked away without another word. Clyne followed the House-master with a sullen face and a slow, reluctant step. In the House-master's study, he stood with his eyes on the floor, and a sneer on his lips. Mr. Railton regarded him long and steadily.

"You have treated me in a cowardly and disgraceful manner Clyne," he said quietly. "I have observed already that you are a boy of evil influence, and this last discovery proves conclusively that you are not fit to associate with decent boys. It is impossible for you to remain here. I shall not punish you myself. I shall lay the whole facts before Dr. Holmes. Meanwhile, please tell me the names of your associates in this matter."

Clyne was silent for a moment. A rag of honour he had left made him hesitate to betray his friends, and from bravado he was inclined to refuse to reply. Then he thought of Mellish, and grinned.

"There was Mellish of the Fourth, sir," he said.

"And the others?"

"I'd rather not say, sir."

Mr. Railton was silent.

"Very well," he said, at length, "if you have a shred of self-respect left, I will not tear it from you. Let the others go. I have a pretty clear idea as to who they are, but I know they were little more than your dupes. Mellish, however, was probably almost as bad as you were. He shall answer your charge."

And the House-master called a fag in the passage, and sent him for Mellish. The end of the Fourth entered the study a few minutes later, looking somewhat scared. At the sight of Clyne, with sullen and downcast face, and of Mr. Railton's stony brow, his knees knocked together.

"You—y-you sent for me, sir," he stammered.

"Yes, Mellish. I have discovered the plot against me, and Clyne names you as his accomplice."

Mellish caught at the table for support.

"I—I— He—he— It's a lie, sir—I—I mean it's not true, sir. I—I knew he had been expelled from his last school—"

"Expelled!"

"Yes, sir! He—"

"Is that true, Clyne?"

Clyne shrugged his shoulders. He knew that there was no hope for him, and his impudence stood by him to the last.

"Yes, sir, it's true. I don't care!" he said carelessly. "Mellish is lying. He was backing me up all the time. He extorted money from me for keeping my secret."

"Oh, sir! I—I—"

"I cannot but believe Clyne's statement, from what I have observed of your character, Mellish," said Mr. Railton sternly. "Yet on his word alone I cannot condemn you. I would not condemn a dog on the evidence of a boy like Clyne. I shall not punish you, Mellish. I only tell you to take warning by the punishment of this boy. He will be expelled from the school. You may go—and remember that I have my eye upon you."

Mellish staggered rather than walked from the study. He knew that he had been within measurable distance of expulsion, and he was thoroughly scared.

Mr. Railton fixed a stern glance on the sullen Clyne.

"You will go up and pack your box at once, Clyne," he said. "I will not allow such a character to mingle a minute longer with the boys of my House. I only hope that you have not succeeded in sowing corruption too effectively already."

And without a word in reply, Clyne went. For a quarter of an hour after that Mr. Railton was shut up in the Head's study. Some of the boys noticed a box being taken down and put into Taggles's trap. But only Mellish knew what had occurred until the Fourth Form went into class that afternoon. Clyne's place was empty. The truth gradually dawned on the juniors of the School House.

There had been no public expulsion; but the cad of St. Jim's was gone, and the school never saw him again.

CHAPTER 15.

D'Arcy Like a Soldier Falls.

"YAAS, let me like—"
"Hallo! Tuning up already, Gussy?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Bag the front seats!" said Tom Merry; and the Terrible Three rushed into the study.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Remember the tenor solos! On an occasion like this I prefer to be modest. I'll take a back seat."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Order, you Shellfish!" exclaimed Blake. "None of your Shell rowdiness here. This is a respectable Fourth Form study. Here they come, Gussy—in thousands! I never thought recitations were so popular in the School House."

The fellows were certainly coming in, taxing the accommodation of Study No. 6 severely. D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked at Blake with a great intensity of gaze.

"Weally, Blake, if you imagine that the fellows are comin' here to hear a wotten recitation, you are—"

"Well, what the dickens do you think they're coming for?"

"Gussy's right," broke in Digby, before Arthur Augustus could reply. "Recitations are really only a stopgap, you know. What fellows really like is a lively cake-walk."

"Weally, Dig—"

"Now, when I do 'Come and Kiss Me, Honey,' you'll see—"

"I wegard you as an aas! The fellows are weally comin' in for—"

"My cornet solo," said Herries. "I've been thinking about that, Gussy. One cornet solo ain't much to compensate the chaps for listening to all the piffle you three fellows are palming off on them—"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"So suppose you shove down three or four? I shouldn't mind! I can do 'On the Ball,' and 'Waltz Me Round Again and the World is Mine.'—"

"Ha, ha!" roared Blake. "That sounds rather mixed."

"I mean—"

"I welfuse to considah any such fwivolous suggestions. The fellows are comin' here to listen to a remarkable tenah voice—"

"Hallo! Any room left?" demanded Figgins & Co., with one voice, shoving themselves in at the crowded doorway.

"Yah! Get out!"

"New House boudners not admitted."

"Rate! We're here by special invitation. We want to see Gussy fall like a giddy soldier!"

"He came over to the New House to invite us," said Kerr. "We're coming in."

"I hope there's refreshments in the interval," gasped Fatty Wynn, squeezing his ample proportions into the crowded study, shoved from behind by Figgins and Kerr. "Ow! Go easy, Figgy, old chap!"

"House full!" bawled Jack Blake into the corridor, along which fellows were coming thickly. "Standing room only! You can stand in the passage."

"Gentlemen, pway be quiet! The concert is about to commence."

"Go it, Gussy!"

"On the ball—or on the table, rather."

"Owin' to the unavoidable absence of a piano, there will be no musical accompaniment."

"Hear, hear!"

"A gentleman pwesent has offahed to accompany the songs on a cornet, but in the intewests of the audience the kind offah has been wefused."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!"

Something like silence was restored. Arthur Augustus made a prominent figure on the table, which was the only available platform. There was no denying that the swell of the School House made a handsome and elegant figure in evening-clothes. His trousers looked as if they had just come from the press, his white waistcoat fitted him like a glove, his shirt-front showed a snowy expanse of white, from which gleamed a diamond stud, and his tie was tied as only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy could tie a dress-tie. His collar was the highest and whitest ever seen in the school, not even his desire for top B flats being sufficiently strong to make Arthur Augustus content himself with a loose collar.

"Silence for Gussy!"

"Go it, Caruso!"

Pong!

"Yaas, let me like a soldier fall,

Upon some open plain,

This bweast expandin' for the ball—"

The top A on the word "ball" seemed to cost D'Arcy dear. The audience rose to the occasion—literally! Figgins & Co. made a desperate dash for the door. Some of the School House juniors followed their example. Fatty Wynn was rolled over in the rush, and lay gasping.

But Arthur Augustus was fairly started now. The din was nothing to him. Like the dying gladiator in Byron, he heard it but he heeded not, his eyes were with his heart, and that was far away.

"To blot out every stain!
Bwawe manly hearts confer mi-y doom,
That gentlah one-e-e-es may tell——"

"Bravo!"
"On the bawl!"
"Hear, hear!"

The cheers were ironical, but hearty. Arthur Augustus had not taken lessons in breathing for singing, and he was pretty well pumped when he arrived at "tell." He was taking in fresh supplies, and the audience seemed to think that he had finished. But little cared the amateur Caruso.

"Howe'er forgot, unknown my tomb——"

He was going again!

There was a chuckle in the room as two juniors were seen to rise from under the table—behind it, and behind D'Arcy. They were Lowther and Reilly, and evidently out for fun.

Blake jumped up.
"Here, stop that!"
"Go it, Gussy!"

"I like a soldier fell!
Howe'er forgot, unknown my tomb!
I like a soldier fell—
I like a so-o-o-o-o-o-oldier fell——"

"Ow! Wow! Ow! Bai Jove!"

It was an unwritten and untraditional ending to the tenor solo, but Arthur Augustus could not help it.

For just as he reached—"fell," the two mischievous juniors tilted up the table, and the amateur tenor—fell!

Whether it was like a soldier or not, he certainly fell.

"Ow! Wow!"

D'Arcy's feet slid along the table, and he fell—and the last note came to a sudden and wobbling conclusion.

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Caruso II."

Arthur Augustus reclined gracefully upon the rug. He looked round him rather dazedly. The study was in a roar.

Slowly the swell of St. Jim's regained his feet. His own elbows were yelling as loudly as the rest, and there was sympathy nowhere. Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye and glared round him.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Weally——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He like a soldier fell!" sobbed Figgins. "His legs expanding on the table, he like a soldier fell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Brave manly hearts conferred his doom!" gasped Tom Merry. "Howe'er forgot, unknown his tomb, he like——"

"He like a soldier fell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of unmusical asses, and I uttably refuse to waste my remarkable tenor voice upon you. A hurdy-gurdy is about your mark! I shall retire from this scene of wibald mewwiment."

And Arthur Augustus retired, and shook the dust of the study, so to speak, from his patent leather shoes. But down the passage a roar of Homeric laughter followed him.

"Ha, ha, ha! He like a soldier fell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE END.

NEXT THURSDAY!

"THE FEUD OF THE FOURTH."

A Grand Long, Complete School Tale of

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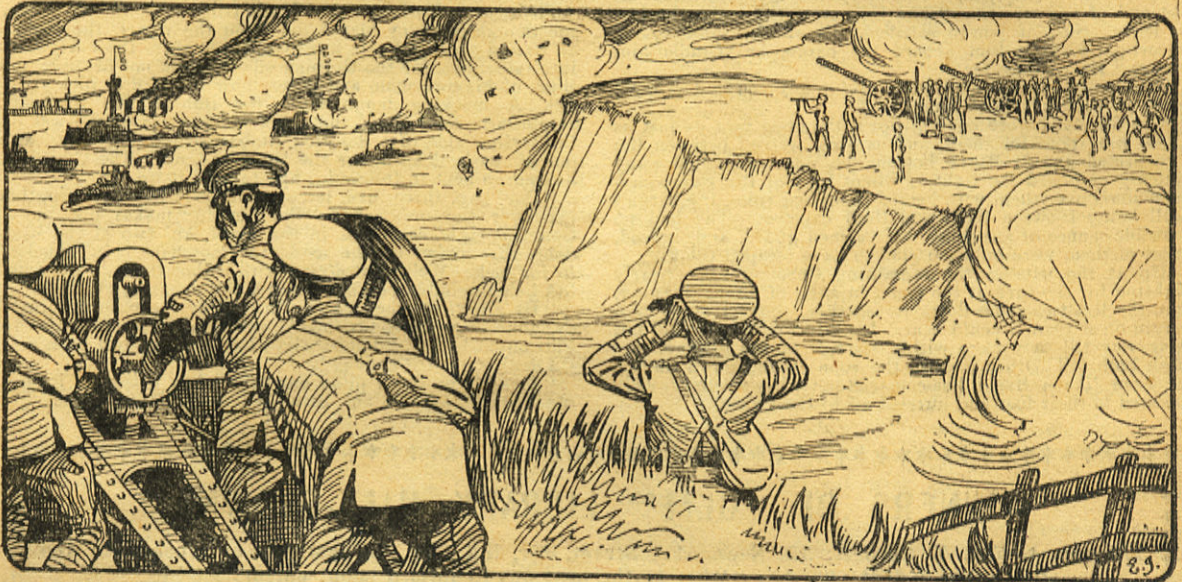
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"BRITAIN AT BAY," Another Grand War Story will commence Next Week.—Ed.

BRITAIN INVADED!



A Powerful and Stirring War Story.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

The Greyfriars School Cadet Corps, commanded by Captain Sam Villiers, scout, are standing about in small groups, talking anxiously, when the clattering of hoofs is heard, and a young farmer from one of the homesteads on the cliffs comes galloping in on a sweating horse, and reins up hastily.

"The hurriners are on us!"

he cries. "There's a whole fleet o' tugs an' barges an' ships o' war headin' in for Frinton Gap, wi' thousands o' men aboard! They're Germans, an' they're goin' to land!"

Captain Sam Villiers was at his side in a moment.

"How far off are they?"

"Four mile out when I left, and comin' in fast. I've tried to send messages at the telegraph-offices, but none can't get through. They tells me all the wires is cut. Let me go! I must push on!"

Nearly all the boys are killed or captured when the first German column attack and capture the school.

However, Sam Villiers and his brother, Steve, manage to escape and gain the British lines.

General Sir Sholto Nugent manages for a time to keep the Germans in check.

At last Sir Sholto has enough men to fight a decisive battle, and makes a glorious victory of it. Bad news, however, comes from the north. There the British have suffered a terrible defeat.

The British Army retreats on Harlow in order to fight a decisive battle—as the German forces have commenced their march on London.

The battle opens, and in spite of heroic efforts, the Britishers are forced to retreat before the huge force of the Germans, who later on in the day fight their way into London.

The British forces retreat south of the river; but Sam and Steve, the two

Boy Scouts,

with the assistance of half a dozen civilians, trap a party of the invaders into a riverside warehouse. The building is set on fire, and the Germans, who are in the top storey, madly appeal to the Britishers for help.

(Now go on with the Story.)

The Barge and Its Cargo!

"It vos barbarism! Ve shall be burned to death!" screamed the German lieutenant. "Ve vas helpless!"

"Why, yes, that's what I intended you to be," said Sam. "You are my prisoners. P'raps we'd better get to work, as this old house is burnin' faster than I thought."

"Ve surrender if you can get us outd! But dere is no vay!" yelled the German, in despair.

"You needn't worry about surrendering; I've got you all right. Now listen to me."

"Ja, ja! I vas listening. Be quick, for der floor he gets hot!"

"Nothing surprisin' in that, is there? You'll find a rope on top of the cupboard."

The lieutenant disappeared with wonderful swiftness, and his men pressed round the window with scared faces, lit up by the glow from below. A loud crash was heard as the whole of the first floor fell through.

"Got it?" called Sam.

"Ja! Here he vas!"

"Then fix it on to the bars of the fireplace, an' let the other end through the window. It's long enough to reach the ground. I should look sharp if I were you, unless you want to be frizzled up into a sausage stew altogether."

"Better tie the knots tight, duckies," added Stephen cheerfully. "It'd be a sad loss if any of you came down flop."

With feverish haste the rope was made fast, and flung out of the window. It might have taken a good deal in the general way to make the German squad surrender to a little knot of citizens, but the prospect of being roasted to death was too much for them.

"You won't come to any harm if you keep your heads, my giddy raiders!" called Sam. "One at a time, please, an' leave your weapons behind you. The first who plays any tricks will be accommodated with a free funeral down here."

The first of the Germans—a huge, beefy man, slid hurriedly down the rope, all the way to the ground, making the

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE FEUD OF THE FOURTH."

A Tale of the Boys of St. Jim's.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

hempen line quiver as he did so. He was received at the bottom by the warehouse-owner, who grimly placed a rifle-muzzle against his tunic, and marched him off.

"I s'pose they sent you to try the strength of the rope," said Sam to the bulky German. "If it'll stand that it'll stand anything. Shove him aboard the lighter, an' four of you go on her as prisoners' guard."

The disarmed soldier was marched on to the barge, and at the same time another German came slithering down the rope with all the speed he dared. It was the officer of the raiding-party.

"This ain't etiquette," said Stephen, receiving him on the end of his carbine. "The skipper ought to be the last to leave. Still, if you're satisfied, it's all the same to us. Escort-party, take him aboard the barge, an' handle him tender. He's a hossifer!"

"Go over 'em all for weapons. Keep any you find. They'll come in useful," added Sam.

The Germans were coming down the rope now as fast as there was room for them, and as each arrived between the two armed guards at the bottom, he was marshalled away quickly on board the lighter, where four of the warehouse-men stood over them with loaded repeating-rifles, the barge's well being between them and their captives. Thy had no possible chance of attacking their armed guard, and, indeed, most of them were only too glad to have escaped the fire.

Up at the window the remaining Germans were nearly fighting for the turn at the rope, in spite of Sam's warning, and the last two came down it together, putting more of a strain on it than it could bear. Luckily for them it did not give way till they were within six feet of the ground, and then both fell with a thump, the rope coiling down on top of them like a lively boa-constrictor. They were quickly boosted to their feet and hurried off to the lighter.

"Fire away, my hearties!" called Sam, in the same language. "You'll bag more of your own men than ours."

The officer danced with rage and helplessness on the wharf, for he knew that Sam was right. It was too dark to distinguish friend from foe at that distance out upon the river, and the lighter was now drifting along rapidly, outwards and upwards.

"I shall fire if you do not return!" he yelled frantically. "I'll leave it to you!" shouted Sam coolly, helping to man the sweeps. "Please yourself."

"Only a bluff," murmured Stephen. "He daren't fire. Wouldn't get us back if he did."

The next few minutes proved the truth of Stephen's words, for though a volley blazed out from the wharf, the bullets all passed overhead. It was intended to scare the navigators into returning, for the German officer dared not fire into the thick of his own men, and it was now too late to pick them out. A mocking laugh from the lighter was the only response to the volley, and a few moments later she was on the farther side of a deserted timber-barque at anchor, and out of reach of harm for the time, at least. The Germans, having no boat to follow in, had to give it up.

"One, two, three, five, ten of 'em," said Sam, running his eye over the prisoners; "the hossifer makes one more. Countin' eight casualties in the street, an' two at the back door, that makes up the score, the lieutenant bein' chucked in for luck. We've got a man with a shot through the arm, but he's the only one hurt. Not a bad average, eh, boss?"

"By glory, it's the smartest thing I ever saw in my life!" exclaimed the warehouse-owner enthusiastically. "You two kids ought to be field-marshal! I've got my own back now - I don't care if it snows!"

"I hope you don't mind our takin' 'em prisoners instead of shootin' 'em all an' bein' wiped out," said Sam. "I

WINNERS OF "GEM" LIBRARY HALF-CROWNS.

2/6 goes to Wm. S. Corbett, 52, Newmarket Street, Ayr, N.B., for the best answer received to the question set in "GEM" No. 48: "What is the best way to form a scout patrol?"

2/6 goes to John Furneaux, III, Stockwell Park Road, Brixton, S.W., for the best answer received to the question set in "GEM" No. 49: "2/6 for the best reason why you should have 2/6."

2/6 goes to Frank L. Herbert, 7, Burton Avenue, Albert Road, Withington, Manchester, for the best colour design for a D'Arcy Waistcoat. This competition was set in "GEM" No. 50.

"Got the lot!" announced Stephen triumphantly, and as he said it a warning call came from those who guarded the alley-way.

"Company of Germans comin', sir, with fixed bayonets!" A couple of shots rang out, and the sound of running feet was heard.

"Cast off the ropes an' shove out!" ordered Sam, springing on to the barge. "Come aboard, the guard! Two of you man the sweeps! Get her out into the stream."

Another brace of shots were exchanged at the alley-way, and those who guarded it then came running up and jumped on to the lighter as she drew away from the quay.

The squad of prisoners, who had remained in sullen silence up till then, now pulled themselves together as they heard their comrades approaching, and were about to try a rush in the hopes of overpowering their captors.

"The first of you who moves will be shot down without warning," said Sam cheerfully. "Tug away at those sweeps, you chaps. Put your backs into it!"

The prisoners hesitated as they looked into the black muzzles of the five rifles. They could not nerve themselves for the rush—the certainty of being shot was too great. The lighter had rapidly widened the space between her and the wharf, and was now fifty yards off, and driving along fast on the flood tide as it swept her up the river.

Down the alley came a full half-company of Germans, rushing on to the wharf, and caught sight of the barge and her freight. Sam at once moved his men along the lighter's well till they were close to the prisoners, still holding them covered with the rifles.

How the Brothers Held Blackfriars Bridge.

"Barge ahoy!" yelled the leader of the Germans on the wharf, as he realised what was happening. "Return instantly, or we fire!"

His men levelled their rifles for a volley.

know you felt rather blood-thirsty about it after your losses."

"Rather not; this is good enough for me!" said the owner, looking grimly at the sullen knot of captives. "We've got 'em all safe as birds, an' unhurt. You see, I only expected to bag a few before they got us—never dreamed we could score off 'em."

"Scoring off Germans is what you might call an acquired habit," said Stephen. "It ain't half so hard as it sounds, as we've proved several times. It's extra pleasant to do it just now, while they've got nearly everything their own way. There's the little raidin'-party, anyhow, all shipped ready for export."

"What are we goin' to do with 'em?" "Hand 'em over to headquarters as prisoners of war—they'll do to balance up the prisoner account. They'll be sent into the southern counties somewhere—we've got a good few already."

"That'll suit me well," said the owner; "it reconciles me to seein' my old warehouse go up in smoke." He took out a pipe and filled it. "Now my occupation's gone, I'll attach myself an' these chaps of mine to any sharpshooters' corps that's goin', and chalk up a few more marks against the Kaiser."

"Good egg!" said Sam. "If they'd only organised the chaps who were ready an' willin' to use rifles months ago, the Kaiser an' his precious troops would never have got here at all. Give way at those sweeps! Put your weight into it! We'll land at the wharves on the other side there, an' hand the prisoners over."

It did not take any great time to edge the barge across the river with the sweeps, and presently they brought her alongside a wharf, and Sam marshalled the prisoners ashore with the armed escort round them. A crowd had collected, most of them furnished with any sort of weapons they could get hold of, to meet the lighter, and when they learned what had happened three cheers were given for the boys.

Sam, taking no notice, marched the men through, and the

warehouse-owner announced that he wished to see the last of the raiding-party, so he accompanied the boys. Sam inquired at once for the nearest military post, and learned to his delight that Colonel Warren, with the second battalion of the Fusiliers, had been sent in to keep guard over the south approaches to the Tower Bridge.

Hither the boys and their escort went at once, and not till the warehouse-owner had seen the squad of prisoners handed over to the guard did he say farewell to the boys, whom he thanked earnestly, and wished them the best of luck. Then he marched away with his men, to join the first freeshooters' corps that offered.

Sam and Stephen were admitted at once to Colonel Warren's quarters, and he greeted them warmly.

"I haven't seen you since the smash-up at Epping, my lads," he said. "The old corps was almost the only one to hold its own that day—thanks to you and your looted gun. Grim work for all of us now, isn't it? Where did you pick up those prisoners?"

Sam reported what had happened across the water, and the old warrior, despite his worries and anxieties, laughed till his sides shook, at the recital.

"You young rips see all the fun!" he said. "We old stagers have to plod away till we wear out. I'll send those prisoners south into concentration-camp, at once—it's not fair feeding Germans here when the poor citizens themselves are half starving. That was a very neat bit of work—quite in your old style. What are you going to do now?"

"We're all pretty near the big crisis, aren't we, sir?" said Sam.

"Yes. It's Lion or Eagle now—an' we're fightin' in the last ditch," said the colonel grimly. "Whoever wins the next heat will be on top for good. We're goin' to beat 'em, of course, but— However, don't let's talk about it. Would you like to stay here with me? I've got four guns here, and my battalion to guard the Tower Bridge. We can keep them off it, even from this side. The bridge is hauled up and open, but we can still control it, and let it down when we like. Of course, there's always a place for you with the Fusiliers—or any other corps, for that matter."

Sam hesitated.

"I know what you mean," nodded the colonel; "it won't be exciting enough here for you. More sport farther west. Well, I'll give you a tip—Ripley will probably want scouts to nip over one of the bridges outside the town, when they get a chance, to report on the enemy's movements round the outskirts. The riskiest sort of work, but just in your line."

"I think we ought to offer, sir," said Sam. "That's where we can do most good, if any. Thank you for the tip!"

"Be off, then!" said the colonel, shaking hands with them warmly. "The siege of London has begun, and the old Lion has taken his last stand. He'd be a bold man who would wager on any of us meeting again once we part. Good luck to you!"

The boys departed jubilantly, but were prevailed upon to stay and feed with the Fusiliers' mess, the colonel being called away just then. Devine was there, and glad to exchange notes with the boys. They were tired and hungry, and the meal, rough as it was, was enormously welcome. They did full justice to their share before they rose to depart.

"Short commons for all of us these days," said Devine, as he saw them past the sentries, "and it'll be shorter yet. Kaiser Billy thinks he's got us—fancies it's all over bar the shoutin'. He hasn't begun yet to learn what the useful Briton's like when you get him at bay. Goin' west, are you? Lucky kids! So long!"

"I hope we're doin' the right thing," said Stephen, rather regretfully, as they walked away. "The Fusiliers generally contrive to be in the thick of it, whatever Warren says. There'll be hot times here."

"We've got to go where we're most likely to be any use," replied Sam, "and scoutin' an' cuttin' out despatches is what we're handiest at. Ripley won't snub us, I think. He won't be sorry to get any information that's to be won on the other side, an' I fancy we can get him some. Better go for our horses; it's no great way, an' we may want 'em badly outside."

Stephen was willing enough, and they made the best of their way at once to the place where the horses were stabled. They found both mounts in fairly good condition, and very fresh for want of exercise, but it took most of Sam's remaining cash to pay the bill for their keep.

"That chap's on the make," said Sam to his brother, as they cantered towards the Borough. "There are a good many like him, who think of nothing now but how to skin other people, now prices are up. I'd like to rub his nose in it. Are you feeling fit for any work to-night?"

"I'm pretty well done up," said Stephen frankly; "an' I should think there's no chance of our seein' Ripley an' gettin' a job till daybreak, anyhow. But I'm game to go ahead if the need rises."

"Let's get on and report ourselves, then," said Sam, quickening his pace. "We shall both be the better for one sound night's rest—if we can get it."

Tough as the boys were, they were certainly unfit for another night's work; and, luckily for them, there was no need of it. They fell in with a picket at the end of Tooley Street, that had just marched down from headquarters, and they learned that Lord Ripley and his staff were away on some mission of importance.

"Then it's no good reportin' ourselves there," said Stephen thankfully. "And I'm hanged if I'm sorry! If we don't get quarters somewhere now, I shall go to sleep on my horse!"

They were both rather sorry for having left the Fusiliers. But neither of them liked turning back; and as the picket informed them that a company of the Essex Regiment was quartered close by, they went there, and fell among friends.

Dead tired, the boys turned in on some bales of straw in the basement of the house, and slept soundly till daybreak.

When dawn came, the great city was humming with life, and eager crowds were afoot in all directions. Three things were called for on all sides—food, news, and weapons, and they were all of them scarce.

The nerves of the swarming millions of London were strung up to breaking-point, and nobody knew what was going to happen next.

The day opened with the sound of heavy firing on the other side of the river.

"Hallo! Mor' fighting?" exclaimed Sam. "Why, I thought all our troops were over this side, and the Germans held the other! What scrap's going on?" he called to a Lancer subaltern who was cantering past.

"The Germans didn't get beyond St. Paul's yesterday!" called the officer in reply. "Two of our regiments and a battery were hurried in from Acton, and held up the enemy. They beat 'em back last night, an' the fightin' stopped till daybreak."

"By gum!" said Stephen, as the brothers rode on rapidly. "We've scored a win there, anyhow! Can they hold out, d'you think?"

"Of course not! How can a couple of regiments an' a battery hold back an army?" said Sam. "They're probably doin' their utmost to hold the Germans in check while we get all our defences in order on this side. Wish we'd known it—we'd have seen some fun over there! But nobody seems to know just where they are now."

"That firin' is somewhere out Holborn Viaduct way, I think," said Stephen.

And not long afterwards they came upon the southern entrance to Blackfriars Bridge, where Engineers and gunners were working at feverish speed in completing defences and mounting artillery. Many civilians were lending their aid to fetch and carry, and were slaving with a will.

The heavy firing in the distance had ceased, and just as the boys arrived, a cyclist scout was seen scorching over the bridge at racing speed, his head bent down upon the handle-bars, and his legs driving like pistons.

He jammed his brakes on, and flung himself off, as he reached the guard at the south end.

"Send help for the battery!" he shouted. "They've held off the enemy an hour at Ludgate Circus! Our Riflemen are wiped out, and they're saving the guns! There's a company of Dragoons in full chase, an' unless you can send help, the battery will be caught!"

"Out with those two Maxims—quick, there!" shouted the officer in charge of the bridge guard. "The Rifle company to go with them! Get across with all speed!"

"They'll be too late, without horses!" panted the scout; for none were available at the time.

And at that moment Sam, having heard the call, spurred forward as the Riflemen started to run the two Maxims across by hand.

"Here are horses, sir!" cried Sam. "If the Maxims are galloping we can yank them across in time, if you'll let us! We can handle machine-guns."

"It's the Villiers pups, by gosh!" exclaimed an Artilleryman, recognising the boys.

And the officer jumped at the chance, for no other horses were to be had.

"Hitch them on quickly!" he cried. "It's our only chance! Double over there—the Rifles!"

In less than twenty seconds willing hands had hitched the collars and traces to the boys' horses. The Maxims were both geared for horse traction, by good luck, and away they both went at full speed, the two young riders straining every nerve to get the utmost pace out of their mounts. Sam's black charger had a slight lead, but Stephen

spurred along not ten yards behind him, and a rousing cheer rose from those left behind.

The Riflemen, who had rushed on ahead, opened out to let the Maxims pass through.

"Stick it on!" shouted Sam over his shoulder, as he heard the distant thunder of hoofs and wheels beyond the bridge. "It's a matter of seconds now!"

Of all the exploits in the campaign, none fired the blood of the boys more than that wild rush across the bridge, with the horses' hoofs striking sparks as they drummed on the stones, and the turbid Thames flowing beneath.

Already they caught sight of the flying batteries galloping down New Bridge Street. They knew that on them alone the saving of the guns depended, knew, too, that unless they themselves got clear of the bridge before the battery reached it, the guns would probably crash right into them.

They saw the khaki-clad Artillerymen driving furiously, the horses galloping almost with their bellies to the ground, and close behind the guns a full troop of Prussian Dragoons were spurting at a breakneck pace, and gaining fast. It was touch and go whether the battery would reach the bridge before they were cut down.

"Take the left side!" yelled Sam; and, pulling his horse as he swung clear from the bridge, he came right round with a sweep, halting with the stone buttress on the right hand of the bridge facing north just behind him. Throwing himself off, he unhitched his horse in a twinkling, and gripped the lever.

Stephen, close behind, dashed sharply across to his left as soon as he was off the bridge. He nearly overturned the gun. But it did not take him many seconds to unhorse it, and take his place behind the shield.

The two Maxims were now on either side of the entrance to the bridge, leaving the way clear between them.

They were not a moment too soon. Right across the wide open space in front, threading between the passenger-rests, the flying guns came at a fearful pace, racing with their pursuers.

There were but two guns, and their only hope lay in speed, and the Maxims. For field-guns to stand against light cavalry at close quarters was, of course, impossible, for before two shells could be fired, the horsemen would naturally be on top of them.

The race had been a short one. The start the guns had had was now covered, and the foremost Dragoons were already drawing alongside the hindmost gun, and hitching their swords to hand to cut the drivers down.

"Hold your fire till the guns are through!" shouted Sam to his brother. And at the same moment his own Maxim opened with a whirr and a rattle.

Sam knew that Stephen, though a fine rifle-shot, could not be trusted to use the machine-gun when so little space separated friend and foe, for the least mistake would have mowed down the gun-horses or the drivers. He relied on Stephen to help beat off the Dragoons—if it were possible—when the guns were through.

As the black muzzle of Sam's Maxim spurted its stream of lead and fire, the six leading Dragoons alongside the rear gun went down—horse and man—like shot rabbits.

A ringing shout broke from the British gunners, past whose ears the rush of bullets sang shrilly, and yet more of the Prussians collapsed, and rolled over on the asphalt, their mounts galloping on, riderless. Ten seconds later the two guns thundered past between the Maxims and away over the bridge, with a wild cheer from the drivers and those beyond.

The troop of Dragoons, checked for the moment, swerved together, and, with savage shouts, spurred across the open space straight for the boys, and for some moments the fate of the cadets hung in the balance.

They might have mounted and fled across the bridge, for their horses were standing near them, untended; but they would not abandon the Maxims. Cool and steady, their eyes glinting along the steel barrels, they faced the troop.

The moment the battery was past, Stephen turned his own gun on the Dragoons, and both muzzles now poured in their deadly hail—one from either side.

On came the mounted swordsmen like a whirlwind. It seemed as if no earthly power could stop such a rush.

But the wall of horses and men, while still sixty yards from the boys, seemed to suddenly shrivel and collapse, and the front rank went down as though it had been tripped up by a wire laid across the road. The two Maxims, playing steadily from side to side like a pair of hoses squirting lead, mowed the Dragoons down in swathes, and none could pass that invisible barrier. They fell in heaps, nearly all at the same spot; for even at that short range there were

not men enough in the troop to "rush" the guns. The few remaining Dragoons, swerving aside, scattered and fled.

A second troop, with another of Uhlands behind it, now came charging down New Bridge Street, and at sight of them the boys hastily ceased fire for a few seconds to affix new bands of cartridges to their guns, knowing they could hardly hope to stop the fresh force if the Dragoons and Uhlands made up their minds to capture the Maxims.

Just as they opened fire again, however, the company of Riflemen from the bridge guard arrived, and swiftly formed up between the two machine-guns. In double line, front rank kneeling, they poured into the charging troopers a deadly rifle-fire that turned the scale.

Twenty saddles were emptied in a twinkling—the hail from the Maxims did the rest—and the Germans fairly turned tail and fled back along New Bridge Street as fast as their horses could carry them. The guns were saved, and the enemy in full retreat.

"Hitch up, an' let's take these little barkers back!" called Sam to his brother, deftly catching up the traces again and mounting his horse. "They're only borrowed, but, by gum, they've served their turn!"

Away trundled the two Maxims across the bridge at an easy trot, the Riflemen following behind, and the cheers that went up as the boys reached the guard again on the southern end echoed up and down the Thames like a musketry volley, while the crowds pressed round Sam and Stephen as they rode through. The two rescued field-guns were at a standstill, their horses panting, and covered with sweat, and the artillerymen swung off their caps and cheered with the rest.

"Well done, my lads!" said the officer of the guard enthusiastically. "I never thought you'd do it. As plucky a piece of work as was ever done in the Army! What's your corps?"

"We're not really Army—only outsiders!" said Sam, laughing, as he jumped down and cast off the gun-traces and collar. "Cadets from the dead Greyfriars Corps."

"What? You're the young Essex scouts, are you? No wonder you pulled it off, then, if your former record's anything to go by," said the officer, looking at them keenly. "Will you attach yourselves to my guard here? We'll be glad to have you."

"It's good of you, but we have to report to Lord Ripley," said Sam, saluting, and mounting again. "Glad to have been any service, sir. You'll find the Maxims in order."

"We're quite in demand to-day!" chuckled Stephen, as they both trotted off, anxious to escape the cheering crowd. "They seem to want Cadets at the bridge guards. Well, that little encounter was short an' sweet, so it didn't take much out of us or the horses either. D'you know where Ripley hangs out?"

"Yes. If he's back we'll go to him at once. I don't suppose for a moment he'll want to be bothered with us himself, but if we can see one of his staff officers it'll be good enough."

"Think we can get a job, then?"

Sam looked across the river at the war-scarred buildings of northern London, and shook his head gravely.

"Can't say. Seems to me the time for casual jobs is past. The Kaiser holds not only Eastern and Northern England, but the bigger half of London as well. We've been edged out step by step, and there's no saying what'll happen now. Parliament is meeting at Salisbury."

Stephen stared in surprise, and looked horrified.

"What d'you mean, Sam? You don't think they'll surrender?"

"Heaven forbid! But no man dare say how we stand now. There's no news from the Fleet. However, there's no use our discussing it; we're all in the dark. That's Ripley's quarters ahead, with the sentries outside. I rather hope we sha'n't see the old warrior personally. A great British leader beaten back by foreign invaders must be feelin' pretty sick."

"He isn't beaten!" said Stephen indignantly. "None of us are! I'll bet my life we drive the Germans back into the sea, even now!"

"I only hope everybody'll think as you do, Steve. It's Parliament that manages these things, you know. There are several among 'em now who say we're in the wrong, an' think Germany ought to be thanked for whackin' us. There are others who are shoutin' to have the war stopped at any price, an' so are some of the people. If we get some coward at the head of things who says we're beaten, and decides to knuckle under—"

"By gum! The people'd haul him out an' hang him on a lamppost, whoever he was," cried Stephen, "an' go on fightin' on their own!"

"I believe you're right. Look, there goes Captain Howard! He'll get us in."

Sam waved his hand, and the aide-de-camp, who was walking rapidly across the courtyard of the house where General Ripley had taken up temporary quarters, caught sight of the boys. A minute later he brought them in past the sentries, and shook hands hurriedly but warmly with both.

"Glad to see you, young 'uns! We're up to our necks in work here, an' it's an anxious time. Have you any report to make?"

"Yes, if we can see Stevens or Cavendish," said Sam. "I don't suppose Lord Ripley can—"

He stopped short, as the famous general stepped out of one of the doors and strode across the courtyard. His eye fell on the boys, who saluted, and Lord Ripley, returning the salute, motioned to them to follow him. A few moments later they found themselves alone with him in one of the ante-rooms.

"I have to thank you for the saving of the guns at Blackfriars," said Lord Ripley. "I have just received the news by telephone. A fine piece of work, and worthy of you. Anything more to report? You usually have some useful news."

"Nothing important, sir, except the capture of some Prussian riflemen, whom we handed over to Colonel Warren."

"Very good! Don't fear that any of these matters will

Quite a number of shops were open, and as many well-to-do people still remained in the West End, unable to leave, and able to pay highly for what they needed, trade seemed quite brisk.

Hardly a window had glass in it. Smashed houses, wrecked shops, streets blocked with fallen masonry, and pavements dark with dried blood, showed how awful had been the stress of the last few days; and everywhere, almost in every street, the spiked helmets of the Kaiser's soldiery were seen.

They marched like machines, in small squads and companies, behind their officers; and to judge by the uniforms, London might have been Berlin after a big review.

Parties of Uhlans rode through the streets, and here and there some Prussian or Saxon soldiers off duty swaggered along, laughing and talking with native insolence, and brushing the citizens off the pavement as they walked.

The whole city was teeming with armed men, all of an alien race, and all behaving as though the capital of the British Empire belonged to them.

And so, for the time, it did. They took no notice of any of the citizens, beyond treating them with contempt, and hardly a glance was bestowed on the boys.

Suddenly Sam halted in front of a huge printed placard with the German Eagle at the top, posted on a wall. The boys perused it, and it read as follows, in English:

STARTS NEXT THURSDAY.

"BRITAIN AT BAY!"

ANOTHER GRAND WAR STORY.

be forgotten. You have wonderful luck, you two, as well as pluck. But you must go now."

"Can you give us a job, sir?" blurted out Stephen.

The old warrior smiled grimly.

"Never satisfied unless you are risking your heads!" he said. "You'll have to mark time for a day or two. I have no work for scouts at present, and things are hanging in the balance. The German Commander-in-Chief will march in to-day with his staff and troops, and formally take possession of all London north of the Thames,"—a shadow passed over the general's face—"and a truce may be called. If you choose to go over at your own risk, you may."

The boys saluted and withdrew.

"What a fine old chap he is!" said Stephen. "Let's see," he continued, a moment later, "Von Krantz enters London to-day, now his advance corps have cleared the streets. I say, Sam, let's go and see it. We're sure to run against something!"

"Right you are!" said Sam. "But if we're recognised, it'll be a wall and a firing party for us! We're still wanted badly enough. So, as it's impossible to go in uniform, we must go in civilian clothes. Let's see about getting clothes."

There was no great difficulty about that, for everything, except food and weapons, was plentiful enough. Within an hour the boys were attired in everyday tweed clothes, and started off. They did not like the change, but there was nothing to be gained by committing suicide, which was what appearing in their cadet uniforms would have amounted to.

They crossed by Waterloo Bridge, after being challenged by the guard, and once over the water they hurried eastwards, rather doubtful how far they would be able to get.

To their surprise, there were plenty of signs of life about. They had expected to find practically a dead city, save for the presence of the enemy. But it was not so.

Thousands of Londoners, who fled to the westward when the bombardment opened, had now returned.

The shell-fire and the street-fighting had ceased, and those who had fled now preferred to take the risk and return to their property, rather than stay away and starve.

GERMAN LONDON.

IN THE NAME OF THE KAISER, let it be known that all citizens living in the Kaiser's City of London, north of the Thames, shall be free to trade or carry on their business under the protection of HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY WILHELM, subject to the rule of his officers and agents.

I PROCLAIM LIKEWISE:

Military Law throughout the said City of German London. Complete submission to the Kaiser's rule will be enforced, and any offence against the German Arms, or the carrying of any weapon after the appearance of this Proclamation, will be punished by DEATH. Offenders will be summarily shot.

By Order,
VON KRANTZ,
Commander-in-Chief.

The blood of the two boys boiled as they read it. When he came to the last line, Stephen, with a face white with anger, reached up and tore the proclamation right through from top to bottom, rending half of it off the wall, and flinging it on the ground.

Sam laid a hand on his brother's shoulder, and hurried him away round the corner, luckily before any of the German soldiers noticed what had happened.

"I sympathise with your feelin's, Steve," he said, "but it won't be any advantage to us to be arrested an' executed. You precious nearly got us shot then. Are you able to keep yourself in hand, or shall we chuck goin' to see Von Krantz ride in? If you give yourself away there, we're done!"

"No, I won't do it any more, Sam," said Stephen thickly. "That beastly proclamation was too much for me. I'll go steady now."

They turned down Cheapside, and as the Mansion House

and Bank came in view the scene of the great fight of the day before returned to them vividly.

The view was very different now. German sappers had cleared away all the wrecked barricades, and the broken paving-stones and sand-bags were piled aside out of the way. The gutters were still dark with blood, but now a squad of Saxon riflemen were on guard before the gates of the Bank, and a corps of Prussian Grenadiers stood before the Mansion House, drawn up in double line as if for parade.

A crowd of silent, moody-looking citizens of all classes and ages had gathered, and where too many came together in one place they were roughly moved on by the German Guards.

One man, in the dress of a clerk, answered back when sworn at by a Prussian.

His reward was a rifle-butt dashed against his ribs, and he replied by knocking the Prussian down by a straight right-handed drive under the chin.

He was instantly pounced on and dragged away, struggling, by two soldiers.

"I wonder the brutes didn't shoot him on the spot!" muttered Sam. "There must be some reason for it."

The bray of a bugle rang out somewhere beyond, and from the direction of Moorgate Street the clash of a military band was heard to the tramp of countless boots on the asphalt.

"By gum, it's Von Krantz!" said Stephen. "He's marching in with his men!"

Louder and louder grew the music, and the buildings seemed to shake to the tread of the marching troops.

Suddenly the advance-guard came into view, striding down Prince's Street towards the Mansion House. Then came six mounted Guardsmen abreast, on restive black horses, and behind them the band.

The loud, crashing chorus from the trumpets rang through the quiet streets. The air was the national song of Germany—"Deutschland, Deutschland ueber Alles," and the troops marched to it with a steady, machine-like tread.

A ruffle of drums followed the band, and a short space behind, at the head of a full battalion of Prussian Guards, came a great black horse bearing a tall, grim-looking figure. "Von Krantz!" muttered Stephen.

The German commander-in-chief wore his full parade uniform, with enormous black cavalry boots, white gauntlets, one gripping a naked sabre that was held point uppermost. A great winged silver helmet was on his head, and he looked a giant of a man.

A sharp order rang out, and the guard before the Mansion House presented arms smartly as Von Krantz rode into the open space.

He swung round and halted, the six mounted guards drawing up behind him, and there he sat while the troops poured in.

They came till it seemed the place could hold no more, and each battalion swung steadily into its allotted station.

The whole space between the Exchange and Mappin & Webb's emporium was packed with German troops, and up Cheapside and Cannon Street they ranged farther than could be seen.

It was well known, too, that all parts of North London were filling with the Second and Third German Army Corps.

Von Krantz held up his gloved hand for silence, and said, in a loud voice:

"Is the Lord Mayor in custody, as was reported to me?"

"He is, sir," replied the colonel of the Prussian Grenadiers before the Mansion House.

"Let him be brought before me!" was the reply.

"The old boy might have cleared out and escaped in time if he'd liked," said Stephen to his brother. "But he preferred to stay through all the bombardment an' fight-

ing, an' let them arrest him, rather than turn tail. Fine stout old chap!"

The doors above the stone steps on the front swung open, and a handsome, white-haired old gentleman, bearing himself as upright as a boy, strode out between two armed Grenadiers. He was brought before the commander-in-chief, whose gaze he met coolly and fearlessly.

"Well, Sir Lord Mayor," said Von Krantz grimly, "I have presented myself and my Emperor with the freedom of your City of London. Here I am, with my troops. As a non-combatant, you have nothing to fear personally, but you will have to remain under arrest."

"As you please," said the Lord Mayor curtly. "I remained at my post that your men might arrest me if they chose. My place is here, whatever befalls London."

"You can have your parole, if you choose," said Von Krantz.

"I do not accept parole at your hands. I prefer to remain in custody. My stay may yet be longer than yours."

"Remove the prisoner!" said Von Krantz carelessly.

**NOW YOU'VE FINISHED
LEAVE ME IN A 'BUS!**

The erect old gentleman was marched back into the house that had been his own, and the commander-in-chief turned in the saddle and spoke in a voice that carried far and wide:

"Soldiers of the Kaiser, you have borne yourselves as men of our nation should. The defenders have been crushed and swept back at every turn, and the hour of victory is with us!"

As he spoke, the German standard fluttered up to the truck of the flagstaff on the Mansion House, and loud cries of "Hoch!" echoed from a thousand throats.

"To the victors the spoils!" continued Von Krantz grimly. "All resistance has been overcome. To-night the Kaiser's emissaries will present to the British Government the terms of peace, and the price the British nation shall pay for it. Hoch!"

Again the cheers roared out. "Let all citizens who remain north of the Thames submit peacefully to my rule, and they will receive no hurt. The penalty for any misbehaviour is death!"

Sam and Stephen moved quietly away, saying little to each other as they passed through the streets. The night had fallen when they again reached Waterloo Bridge, and the bugles were calling away to the northward.

South, across the dark river, the British bugles were blowing the long Last Post. The scattered troops and the swarming millions that remained across the water seemed as silent as the grave. It was as though the British Lion had received his death-wound.


Yet, as many a hunter has known to his cost, when the king of beasts is most silent—when he is wounded and at bay—that is he ten times more terrible than before.

Had the German Eagle screamed too soon?

THE END.

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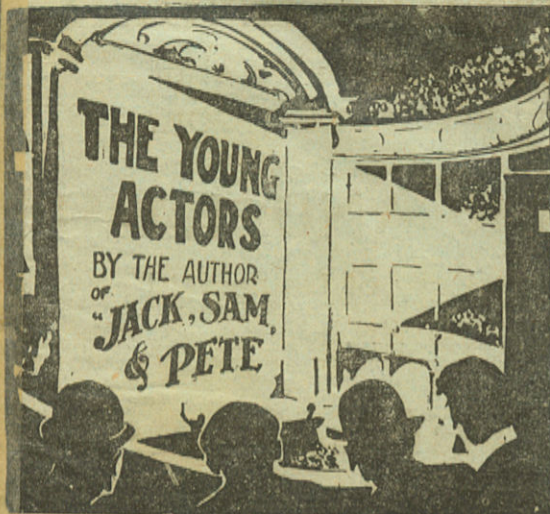
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