

THE SCHOOLBOY INVENTOR'S WHEEZE!

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VOL. 4.

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by
MARTIN
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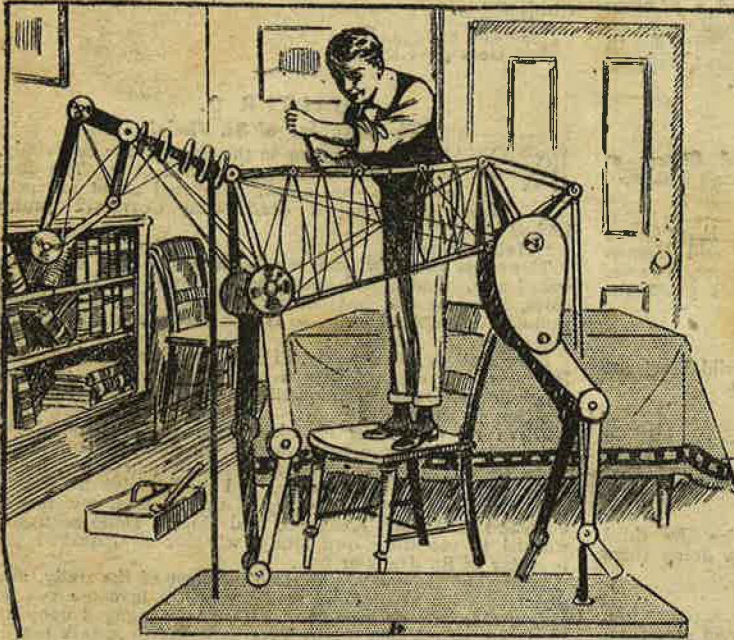
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GLYN'S GREAT WHEEZE.

A Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's,

— BY —

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Troublesome Visitors!

HARRY NOBLE—generally called Kangaroo at St. Jim's—came along the Shell passage, and thumped at the door of Tom Merry's study. The door was not fastened, and the thump sent it flying violently open, and it crashed against a chair—and then there was a wrathful exclamation from within the study.

"Oh, you ass!" Kangaroo looked in.

Tom Merry's study had only one occupant, and it was not Tom Merry. It was Manners of the Shell, Tom's study-mate and chum, and the most enthusiastic amateur photographer at St. Jim's. Manners was busy at the table, cutting films, and the sudden crash of the falling chair had made him jump, with the result that his scissors zigzagged a course through one of the films, with disastrous results.

"Hallo!" said the Cornstalk junior affably.

Manners glared.

"You frabjous ass!"

"Hallo! What's the matter?"

"Matter!" roared Manners. "Look! Look there—look at that film!"

Kangaroo looked at the film. It was a long roll, containing a dozen negatives, and Manners had been separating them for putting in the printing frames. Kangaroo cocked his eye at the curly roll in a thoughtful way.

"Well," he said, "I'm looking!"

"You've spoiled a film!" roared Manners. "You utter ass! This roll of films was sent to me from Nico—Monty Lowther sent it—he took them for me. This was a picture of King Carnival in the procession. You utter ass!"

Kangaroo looked at the cut film. The scissors had separated King Carnival's head from his body, as well as beheading half the procession. The Cornstalk junior chuckled softly.

"My hat!" he said. "King Carnival the Thirty-Seventh is in the same state as King Charles the First. Never mind—"

"But I do mind!" hooted Manners. "Get out!"

"But—"

"Buzz off."

"I came to ask you when Tom Merry would be back—"

"This afternoon. Outside!"

"What train?"

"Oh, don't bother!"

"What train at Rylecombe Station?"

"Half-past two," rapped out Manners. "Get out!"

said the Cornstalk imperturbably. "You see, as Tom Merry has been away some time, and been wandering up and down the Riviera, my idea is that we ought to get up some sort of welcome for him on his return to the school."

"Well, go and get it up, then, and don't worry."

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, buzz off, do!"

"Are you going to the station?"

"Perhaps. Get out!"

Kangaroo laughed, and left the study. There was evidently nothing to be got out of Manners while he was at work with his precious films. Kangaroo strolled along the passage, towards his own study, which he shared with Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane. Manners grunted wrathfully, and went on cutting his films.

"I say, Manners—"

It was Digby of the Fourth who put his head in at the study door with that sudden remark. Again Manners' scissors made a ghastly gash.

"Get out!" shrieked Manners.

Digby stared at him in astonishment. His chums, Blake and D'Arcy, had been abroad with Tom Merry, and were due back at the school that afternoon, and Digby was naturally a little excited about it.

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

No. 115 (New Series.)

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"Eh? What did you say, Manners?"

"Get out, you ass!"

"Why—what—?"

"Can't you see you're mucking up my films?" yelled the unhappy photographer. "Look at that gash! I've nipped the roof off the Casino Municipal."

"Well, you must be a clumsy ass," said Digby. "I wanted to know whether you were coming down to the station to meet the kids—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"What does that mean?"

Manners snorted, and snatched up a thick ebony ruler. There was no doubt what that meant, and Digby did not stop to ask—he dodged out of the study.

For a few minutes Manners was left in peace. He finished separating the films, which contained a series of pictures taken by his chum Lowther in Nice and Monte Carlo, and then opened the window to expose the printing frames in the sun on the window-sill. A bright spring sun was shining, very favourable to the work. Manners opened a printing frame, and was just placing the first film in position, when there was a clatter of footsteps and the growling of a dog in the passage, and Towser the bulldog looked in, half-dragging Herries of the Fourth into the study after him.

Herries dragged desperately on the chain.

"Hold on, Towser! Hallo, Manners!"

Crash!

The printing-frame dropped from Manners' fingers as Towser burst in, and there was a crash of breaking glasses.

Manners glared at Herries and his famous bulldog.

"You—you—"

"Towser would like the run; and besides, the chaps would like to see him after being away so long," said Herries fatuously. "He's in high spirits, isn't he? Quiet, Towser, you brute! You know jolly well you mustn't gnaw the cushion."

"You—you—"

"Are you coming, Manners?"

"Get out!" gasped Manners. "Take that wild beast out of my study! I'll—I'll brain him with the poker!"

"Eh?"

"Take that horrid, rotten beast out!"

"Are you calling my dog Towser a horrid, rotten beast?" demanded Herries indignantly. "I suppose you know a decent dog when you see it. Why—"

"Take him away!"

"Are you coming?"

"No!" roared Manners. "Get out! You're the third fool who's been bothering me while I've been doing these films."

"Eh?"

Manners made a dive for the poker. Herries stared at him blankly for a moment, and then made a hurried exit from the study, dragging Towser after him. Towser did not seem very willing to go; but by way of solace, perhaps, he dragged the cushion away in his teeth, and worried it along the passage.

Manners breathed hard through his nose. He was very glad his chums were coming back to St. Jim's, and he intended to go down to the station and meet them. But he particularly wanted to get some prints from those films. He had only lately received them by post, and he wanted to have some pictures finished to show Lowther when he came. But if these interruptions continued he was not likely to have much to show.

He put a couple of printing-frames on the window-sill, and was beginning on the third, when there was a sound of footsteps approaching the study door again.

Manners' eye glistened.

If it was another visitor for Tom Merry's study, he was determined that the visitor should meet with a warm reception. He laid down the frame, and stepped quietly towards the door, and waited silently inside.

The door opened.

A large head, with a big pair of spectacles and blinking eyes, projected itself into the study. It belonged to Skimpole of the Shell.

"Manners! I say, Manners, I— Oh! O-o-o-o-och!"

Skimpole's voice trailed away in a horrified gasp as Manners seized him. Manners rolled him out of the study, bumped him on the linoleum in the passage, shoved him along, and finally bestowed a powerful kick upon him that sent him rolling.

Then, somewhat relieved in his feelings, Manners returned to his study and slammed the door.

Skimpole sat up dazedly in the passage.

He rubbed his bumpy forehead, adjusted his spectacles, and blinked round him, in a state of the most complete bewilderment.

"Dear me!" he gasped. "Manners must be mad—"

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completely insane! Some hereditary strain of madness in his blood has suddenly developed. Dear me!"

"Hallo!" said Gore, coming out of his study. "Is that a particularly comfortable spot to take a nap in the afternoon, Skimmy?"

Skimpole gasped.

"I—I— Where are you going, Goré?"

"I'm going to speak to Manners."

"I warn you not to do so. He is insane. He has just hurled me forth in the most brutal and violent manner. I had not uttered a word."

"Then he must have been jolly quick," grinned Gore.

"You had better not venture into his study—"

Gore laughed. He tried the door, but it did not open. It was evidently locked on the inside. Gore tapped on the panels.

"Manners! Are you there, Manners?"

"Get out!"

"I want to speak to you?"

"Rats!"

"But—"

"Go and eat coke!"

And Gore gave it up.

CHAPTER 2.

The Inventor of St. Jim's.

KANGAROO came along to the door of the end study, and turned the handle and pushed at it. The door did not open—or rather, it opened about an inch, and then stopped dead. The Cornstalk junior kicked at it.

"Hallo, there!"

There was no reply from within the study. But Kangaroo heard a movement, and knew that someone was there. Besides, the door was fastened by the back of a chair being jammed under the handle, so it was pretty evident that the end study was occupied.

Kangaroo chuckled softly. His chum, Bernard Glyn, the lad from Liverpool, was a most enthusiastic amateur scientific man, and he frequently conducted all sorts of researches in the study.

When he was using chemicals, the smells often drove Kangaroo and Clifton Dane forth from their quarters; and when he was working on some mechanism or other, he as often as not locked the door, and coolly kept his study-mates out. He said that they disturbed him, which was doubtless true; but Kangaroo and Clifton Dane naturally wanted to use their own study, whether it disturbed the inventor of St. Jim's or not.

Kangaroo had made a raid on the keys of the study, and deprived Glyn of his, and so the youthful inventor was no longer able to lock himself in. Glyn was engaged upon an invention now which might have kept the Cornstalk out of his own study for weeks, if he hadn't thought of that plan.

Hence the chair-back under the handle of the door. Glyn was evidently determined not to be disturbed.

The Cornstalk kicked on the door.

"Glyn!"

Silence.

"Glyn! Bernard Glyn!"

Still not a word.

Kangaroo stepped back into the passage, turned his shoulder to the door, and hurled his whole weight upon it.

He rather thought that the concussion would have the effect of hurling the chair away from its place, and opening the door. It did not; but it made the door and the whole study shake and rattle, and there was a sudden crash within.

Then there was a yell.

"Oh, you dangerous ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo. "Are you cutting films, too?"

"No, ass! I'm finishing the machine."

"Oh! Aren't you finished yet?"

"No."

"Well, open the door."

"Rats!"

"Look here, you're jolly well not going to have all this blessed study for your blessed machine," exclaimed Noble indignantly. "Open the door."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I want to speak to you."

"Oh, buzz off!"

"Look here—"

"Shut up!"

When Glyn was occupied with an invention, he was harder to deal with than Manners photographing. Kangaroo thumped on the door. Clifton Dane came along the passage, and stared at the hammering Cornstalk.

"What on earth's the matter?"

"That ass is fastening us out," grunted Kangaroo.

"Do you want to go in?"

Kangaroo reflected.

"Well, no, not particularly," he said. "It's on principle, you see. Let's have the blessed door in."

"Oh, all right," said the Canadian, with a grin.

And they bumped on the door with their shoulders. Both were sturdy lads of a good weight. The shock on the door this time was too much for the chair to stand. It did not slip from its place—it was jammed too tightly—but it broke down the back, and fell into pieces.

The door flew open, crashing against the fragments of the chair, and hurling them into the study.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane rushed in.

"Look out!" roared Glyn.

But it was too late!

The Liverpool lad was engaged in work upon a perfect network of wires and steel rods, built up in a curious form, more resembling the skeleton of a large horse than anything else. Kangaroo and Dane rushed right into them.

There was a clang and a crash as the whole contrivance went to the floor.

"Oh!" gasped Kangaroo.

"Ow!" stuttered Dane.

Glyn gave a roar.

"You asses! Look at what you've done! Oh!"

"Well, why didn't you open the door?" grunted Kangaroo, picking himself up. "You ass! I collared the blessed keys of the study, too!"

"Ass!"

"Never mind, you can fix it together again."

"Never mind——"

Glyn did not say any more. There was a poker between the bars of the grate, heating there for some soldering that he had been doing. Glyn made a clutch at it, and the red-hot tip waved within an inch of the Cornstalk's nose.

Kangaroo jumped suddenly back.

"Look out——"

"Get out of the study!" roared Glyn.

"But——"

"Buzz off!"

"I won't!"

"We won't——"

"Then you'll jolly well get burnt!" said Glyn. "Do you think I can have a pair of dangerous lunatics buzzing about here while I'm at work on the most delicate machinery I've ever made? Get out!"

"But—— Oh! Ow!"

Kangaroo yelled as the tip of the poker just touched him. He made a dive for the door, and dashed into the passage.

Glyn flourished the poker.

"After him, Dane!"

"But——"

"Get out!"

"Look here—— Ow!"

Dane dashed after Kangaroo just in time to escape a dab of the hot poker. Bernard Glyn kicked the door shut after them.

Kangaroo immediately opened it again.

"I say, Glyn——"

"Get out!"

"Yes; but I say——"

The poker was brandished again, and Kangaroo popped out, and the door closed. Bernard Glyn jammed the back of a chair under the lock, so tightly this time, that it was impossible for the door to be opened half an inch. Then he thrust the poker back into the grate again, and with a chuckle, went on with his work.

Kangaroo and Dane tried the door, and then kicked upon it.

"I say, Glyn!" roared the Cornstalk through the keyhole.

The Liverpool lad only chuckled.

"Glyn, Tom Merry's coming back by the two-thirty. Aren't you coming to meet him?"

No reply.

"Glyn, I suppose you're coming down to the station with the rest of us?"

Silence!

"Glyn! Glyn! Glyn!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

But from within the study came no sound but the faint clinking as Bernard Glyn put his precious machinery together again. The Cornstalk looked at Dane with a grin.

"It's no good," he remarked; "might as well talk to a deaf mule as to Glyn when he's making one of his rotten contraptions. We shall have to go without him. Hallo, there's Digby calling!"

The Fourth-Former was bawling along the passage.

"Hallo! You fellows, coming to the station?"

"We're coming!"

"Buck up, then!"

And Kangaroo and Clifton Dane gave up their attacks upon the end study, and went along the passage to join Digby and Herries, and the inventor of St. Jim's was left in peace to work on his new invention—an invention that was to cause a considerable furore in the school when it was completed.

CHAPTER 3.

The Return of Tom Merry & Co.

"WYLCOMBE!"

"Eh?"

"Wylcombe Station, deah boys!"

"Rylcombe at last!" said Tom Merry, as the train ran towards the little station half-hidden in green trees. "There it is!"

The juniors of St. Jim's, returning from their holiday on the Riviera, looked out of the carriage windows with keen interest.

They had not been away from St. Jim's and their usual surroundings so very long, but the change of scene had been complete, and they felt as if they had been away from the old familiar landscape for years.

Tom Merry & Co. had spent a very happy holiday on the Riviera, at Nice, and Monte Carlo, with Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess.

But they were not sorry to be returning to St. Jim's, to the old familiar school, and the old familiar faces.

There were seven of them in the railway carriage, as the train rolled on towards the little country station of Rylcombe.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther—Manners' chums in the Shell—sat at the windows on one side, looking out at the station, which was in sight along the line. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn, the chums of the New House, were crowded at the other windows, occupying that side of the carriage. Jack Blake was busily engaged in eating caramels, the last of a packet brought from Nice, and he was too busy to look out. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, had caught sight of Rylcombe Church spire in the distance, and he was now trying to get a look out of the window. Figgins & Co. were in the way—perhaps more in the way than they need have been—but the New House chums were never tired of ragging the swell of the School House.

"Wylcombe at last," said Arthur Augustus, polishing his eyeglass, and jamming it into his eye. "Do you know, deah boys, I'm wathah glad to be back."

"Same here," said Tom Merry.

"We have spent a most pleasant holiday, and we owe the heartiest thanks to Miss Pwiscilla Fawcett, Tom Mewwy's respected govannah——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Figgins's uncle, the worthy majah, was also vewy kind, and I think we weally owe a vote of thanks to Figgins's uncle."

"Hear, hear!"

Figgins's cousin was wathah a wesponsibility to me," went on D'Arcy thoughtfully; "but upon the whole, I am glad I was able to look aftah him."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

"More rats!"

"If you say wats to me, Figgay, I shall have no wesource but to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Rats!"

D'Arcy pushed back his cuffs.

"Vewy well. I——"

"Hush, naughty," said Blake. "Have a caramel."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Do you want to arrive at St. Jim's with a black eye?" demanded Tom Merry. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy."

"Figgins has been wude——"

"Keep the peace! We're nearly into the station. There will be a crowd on the platform. You don't want to arrive fighting," said Tom Merry severely. "Really, I must repeat that I am surprised at you, Gussy."

"On second thoughts, I will not thwash Figgins."

"Go hon!" said Figgins.

"Pway allow me to appwoach the window, deah boys; I want to look out. Ow! Kerr, you uttah ass, you have twodden on my toe!"

"Dear me!" said Kerr.

"Ow! Keep your gweat foot off my toe, you ass!"

"Keep your great toe from under my foot," said Kerr.

"Weally, Kerr——"

"We're slackening," said Figgins.

"I'm jolly glad," said Fatty Wynn, rubbing his plump hands, "I'm getting awfully hungry. It's a curious thing, but a change of air always improves my appetite, and I always feel very hungry getting home, too."

"Pway let me—— Oh!"

"What's the matter now?"
"You have thrust your elbow into my ribs, Figgins."
"Blessed if I know what your ribs are doing at the end of my elbow," said Figgins. "Why don't you look after your ribs?"

"You uttah ass!"
"Stopping!" said Tom Merry.
The train slowed down into the station.
On the platform was a group of St. Jim's juniors, and they waved their hats and caps and gave a yell at the sight of Tom Merry leaning from the window.

Kangaroo, and Clifton Dane, and Digby, and Herries, and Reilly, and George Gore, and several other fellows, were gathered there to welcome Tom Merry & Co. home.

"Here they are!" roared Digby.
"Bravo!"
"Welcome, little strangers!"
"See the Conquering Hero comes."
"Hurray!"
"Have you broken the bank at Monte Carlo?"
"Hurray!"

Tom Merry threw open the carriage door and jumped out. He was immediately surrounded, and fellows were shaking his hands and thumping him on the back. There was no doubt that Tom Merry was very popular with the fellows at St. Jim's.

His popularity had its awkward side. By the time he escaped from the demonstrations of welcome, he was gasping for breath, and aching in most of his bones.

"Oh, you duffers!" was his grateful response.
"But the juniors only laughed."
"Faith, and it's sunburnt ye're looking," said Reilly.
"And have ye broken the bank at Monte Carlo, alanna?"
Tom Merry laughed.

"Not exactly."
"Skimpole says—"
"Hewwies, I am vewy glad to see you, and I appreciate you comin' to the station in this way, but I must insist upon your keepin' that feahful beast away from my legs. I wegard you as an ass! That howwid dog has no respect whatever for a fellow's twousahs!"
"Oh, Towser's all right! He's naturally a little excited," said Herries.

"Yaas, but pway keep him a respectful distance."
"Aren't you going to shake hands with Towser?" demanded Herries indignantly.

"Weally, Hewwies—"
"I've taught him to put up his hand and shake," said Herries warmly. "Don't be a pig, you know. Shake hands with him."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.
He didn't want to be discourteous—far from it—but to shake hands with Towser, whose teeth were an ever-threatening danger to his immaculate "bags"!

"Hewwies! Weally, Hewwies—"
"Shake hands with him," said Tom Merry. "Gussy, I must say that your manners haven't been improved by going abroad."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
"Oh, he needn't shake hands with Towser!" said Herries huffily. "After all, Towser is rather particular whom he shakes hands with, and he mightn't like it."
"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I'm surprised at Gussy," said Figgins, looking round.
"We've looked after him as well as we could, but I must say his manners have gone down."
"I—I—I—"

"Shake hands with Towser, Gussy. Don't be a worm!"
"I—I weally have no objection to shakin' hands with Towsah," said Arthur Augustus, eyeing the bulldog dubiously through his monocle. "I—I— Here, Towsah!"
"Gr-r-r-r!" said Towser.

"Towsah, old boy!"
"Gr-r-r-r!"
"Just take his paw and shake it," said Herries. "Don't be afraid."

"I trust you do not imagine I am afraid of a bulldog, Hewwies."
"Well, take his paw, then, and don't be all the afternoon about it!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy approached the bulldog in a gingerly manner.

The crowd of juniors stood round grinning, as well as the porter, and several passengers who had alighted from the train.

"Towsah, old boy!"
D'Arcy stooped and gave his gloved hand to Towser, who, instead of putting up his paw, growled ferociously, and so startled the swell of St. Jim's that he jumped back in great alarm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
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"Weally, deah boys—"
"Don't be afraid, Gussy."
"I'm not afraid, you ass!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy advanced again, and this time Towser, at a word from his master, put up a muddy paw, which Arthur Augustus took in his hand. The elegant junior of St. Jim's shook hands solemnly with the bulldog.

"Seize him!" called out Kangaroo suddenly.
"Gr-r-r-r!"
Towser's jaws opened, and D'Arcy sprang back, and dodged behind Herries.

"Keep that howwid beast off, Hewwies—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I insist—"

"He's all right," said Herries. "Come on, Towser, old boy. Towser's a jolly good-tempered dog. He doesn't care whom he shakes hands with."

"Hewwies, you ass—"
"Let's get down to the tuckshop," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "I'm rather hungry after my journey."
"Bai Jove! Look at that!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held out his hand. The lavender kid glove was stained and muddy from contact with Towser's muddy paw. Herries looked at it.

"Well?" he said.
"My glove's ruined!" howled D'Arcy.
"Oh, never mind—"

"But I do mind. I—"
But the juniors were marching off the platform in a laughing crowd, and Arthur Augustus swallowed his indignation and followed them, carefully wiping his soiled glove with his handkerchief, and reducing the fine cambric to a hopelessly muddy condition.

CHAPTER 4.

Great News from Skimpole.

"MANNERS!"
Skimpole of the Shell bawled the name through the keyhole of Tom Merry's study at St. Jim's. It was the third time Skimpole had returned to the attack, but Manners was not to be drawn.

"Manners!"
"Go away!"
"The fellows are gone to meet Tom Merry."
"Pooh!"
"Weren't you going with them?"
"Never mind."

"I want to speak to you, Manners," said Skimpole, with his mouth to the keyhole. "It's a most important matter. You see— Ooooooh!"

A stream of ink, evidently ejected from a squirt, came suddenly through the keyhole of the study door.

It caught Skimpole fairly in his open mouth.
He rolled back and sat down violently, spluttering and spluttering.

"Oh! Oh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners, within the study. "Clear out!"

"Ooch!"
"Ha, ha!"
"I'm choked! I'm pip-pip-poisoned!"
"Serve you right!"

Skimpole staggered up. Ink was running out of the corners of his mouth, and trailing down his waistcoat.

"Dear me!" murmured the genius of the Shell. "I—I had better go and wash my mouth. I cannot help regarding this as extremely rude of Manners."

And the amateur Socialist and scientific genius of St. Jim's hurried off to a bath-room, where he spent the next ten minutes in washing the ink from his mouth and chin. When he emerged from the bath-room, newly washed and scoured, but still with a very strong flavour of ink in his mouth, he met Mellish of the Fourth.

"Stop a minute, Mellish!" exclaimed Skimpole. "I have an idea."

"Bosh!" said Mellish. "Don't start your rotten scientific stuff on me now! I don't care whether the human race originated in a speck of jelly floating in the sea, or whether it didn't. I don't care whether it happened fifteen million years ago, or whether it never happened at all. Scat!"

"But really—"
"Oh, go and eat coke! Tom Merry is coming home this afternoon, hang him!" said the cad of the Fourth. "Don't see why he couldn't stay away another week or two."

"It's that very matter I was going to speak about, Mellish," said Skimpole, walking beside the cad of the Fourth Form. "I'm glad Merry is coming back—"

"Well, I'm not."

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"Ha, ha, ha! This is where we grin!" sang out Frank Monk. "This is one for the Grammar School."
 "Bal Jove! Gwammah cads!" exclaimed the imprisoned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from within the study.

"But——"

"I hate him and all that crew," said Mellish. "Lot of rotters, I call them! Don't talk to me about Tom Merry."

"But as he is coming home with so much money——"

Mellish pricked up his ears.

"Eh? What's that?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"No. What is it? Where has Tom Merry got any money from?" demanded Mellish. "I suppose you mean he's had a tip from his blessed old governess."

"Oh, no; it's a larger sum of money—some thousands of pounds!"

"Eh?"

"Probably ten thousand pounds," said Skimpole. "I am sorry I cannot state the exact amount, but it cannot be less than some thousands of pounds."

"What are you talking about?"

"Tom Merry."

"Do you mean that he's come into a fortune? You ass! If he has come into any money, he won't be allowed to bring it to the school in his blessed trousers pockets," said Mellish, with a sniff. "He wouldn't be able to touch it till he was of age."

"I don't mean that——"

"Then what the dickens do you mean?"

"You see, he has won an enormous sum at Monte Carlo."

Mellish jumped.

"What! Tom Merry has?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Are you sure?" asked the cad of the Fourth, with wide-open eyes.

"Yes. You see, as I invented the system he has won it with, he cannot do less than hand me a goodly share," said Skimpole. "What do you think?"

"Well, he ought," said Mellish slowly. "I don't suppose he's won as much as you say, though."

"Well, if it were only hundreds, that is a lot."

"By George, it is!" said Mellish covetously. "And

money like that would be in his own pockets, too; he could do as he liked with it. Fancy a Shell fellow having a hundred pounds or more."

"I am sure it is a thousand or more."

"But how do you know?" said Mellish, still incredulous.

"Did Tom Merry say so?"

"Of course, I have not seen him yet. But I had a letter from him in Nice. I had sent him my system by registered post—an infallible system, whereby anybody could easily break the bank of Monte Carlo, provided with a capital of one hundred francs," said Skimpole. "He replied that he had received it, and—— By the way, here is Gibbons. Gibbons, I have some news. Tom Merry is coming home rich."

"Rats!" said Gibbons.

"It is true. He has broken the bank at Monte Carlo."

"Gammon!"

"I had a letter from him in Nice——"

"H'm! Got the letter."

"Certainly!"

Skimpole groped in his pocket, and brought forth an envelope with a foreign stamp and the Nice postmark on it.

"That is the envelope," he said. "I do not seem to have the letter. I have probably lost it. I generally lose my letters, somehow. A mighty brain cannot bring itself down to attend to trifles."

Mellish looked at the envelope. It had certainly come from Nice, and was addressed to Skimpole, at St. Jim's, in Tom Merry's handwriting.

Mellish's doubts vanished. Skimpole was a peculiar youth, but he was not a liar, though he frequently made ludicrous mistakes. And he had certainly had a letter from Tom Merry; the envelope witnessed that. And Tom Merry would never lie.

"By George!" said Mellish eagerly. "If this is true—and I suppose it is——"

"Quite true, Mellish, I assure you on the word of a sincere Socialist."

"We ought to give Tom Merry a bit of a welcome home," said Mellish thoughtfully. "After all, he's a jolly decent chap. I always said so."

Skimpole blinked through his spectacles at the cad of the Fourth, in considerable surprise.

"Dear me; You were saying—"

"Never mind what I was saying," said Mellish hurriedly. "I always liked Tom Merry, and you must admit that I've always spoken well of him."

"Why, you said—"

"He's a jolly decent chap, that's what I said," interrupted Mellish. "Gibbons will bear me out that I've always admired Tom Merry. He's jolly decent. The best footballer in the Lower School, and the finest cricketer."

"My hat!" said Gibbons.

"He's the most popular fellow in the school, and so he ought to be, too," went on Mellish. "My idea is that something ought to be done to mark his return—something to show all St. Jim's that the fellows regard it as a red-letter day."

"That is what I was thinking," said Skimpole. "I was considering a large party to meet him at the station, but the other fellows did not tell me exactly when they were going, and they went without my seeing them. It was unfortunate. Then I tried to speak to Manners, to arrange some reception here, but Manners was almost rude about it."

"We can get up a reception without Manners," said Mellish. "We can manage it on our own. Let's call the fellows together and explain to them. Some of the Fifth and Sixth might like to have a hand in it."

"Good egg!" said Gibbons. "Of course, Tom Merry will stand something pretty decent to all of us if he's really come home rich."

"Oh, I don't think we ought to look on it in that light," said Mellish loftily. "I want to welcome Tom Merry home because I like him, and he's such an awfully decent chap. That's my idea."

"Ahem!"

"If you want a thick ear, Gibbons—"

"I—I was only coughing," said Gibbons. "Let's tell the fellows, and get up a big party to meet him at the gates. He'll be here soon."

"Right-ho! Buzz off!"

And the juniors hurried off to carry out the plan. Skimpole made his way to the Shell passage, and passed the news on to several fellows there. He arrived at the end study and knocked at the door.

"Glyn!"

"Buzz off!" came the Liverpool lad's voice from within. Clink! Clink! Bernard Glyn was evidently engaged upon machinery of some sort. Skimpole could hear him at work. He knocked at the door again.

"Bernard Glyn!"

"Go away!"

"We're arranging a reception for Tom Merry—"

"Well, go and recep.," howled Glyn. "Don't come here bothering me. Get away!"

"We're getting up a party to meet him at the gates—"

"Run away and play."

"Won't you come?"

"I'm busy."

"But under the circumstances—"

"If I come out to you I'll boot you all along the passage," roared Glyn.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "He is as rude as Manners. Both of them are certainly very unpleasant this afternoon. However, I suppose that, from a sense of duty, I must persist. Glyn certainly ought to be in the party."

He rapped at the door again with his bony knuckles.

"Glyn! I say, Glyn!"

The door was flung open, and Glyn rushed into the passage with a snort of rage. He collided with Skimpole, and sent him staggering.

"Oh!" gasped the amateur Socialist.

Glyn did not waste his breath in words. He seized Skimpole by the collar, and jerked him up, and then he applied his boot to Skimpole's person in a way that was, to use the poet's words, frequent and painful and free.

"Oh!" roared Skimpole. "Ow! Pray cease this brutal conduct. Ow! As a sincere Socialist, I am bound to return good for evil, but as a Determinist I shall certainly punch your head if you do not—Ow! Ow!"

Skimpole collapsed on the linoleum, and Glyn returned to his study, still snorting. The amateur Socialist of St. Jim's sat up and rubbed his aching bones, and blinked after Bernard Glyn with a bewildered expression.

"How very rough!" he murmured. "As a Determinist, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 115.

I cannot blame him for being rough, as it is certainly the outcome of his heredity and environment. Glyn, if I did not regard you as purely the slave of circumstances, and the victim of the combined influence of heredity and environment, I should call you a beast! Ow!"

Glyn went into his study and slammed the door. Skimpole picked himself up and limped slowly away. According to Skimpole's Determinist theories, Glyn wasn't to blame for having lost his temper, but Skimpole was feeling decidedly uncomfortable, all the same. And, strange to say, it did not relieve his aching bones to reflect that Glyn's violence was simply due to the combined influence of heredity and environment.

CHAPTER 5.

Old Friends.

FATTY WYNN halted as the party from the railway-station reached the tuckshop in the village street. Figgins jerked him by the sleeve.

"Come on!" he said.

"Hold on, Figg! We—we haven't seen Mother Murphy for some time—"

"Well, we couldn't expect to see her, while we were on the Riviera and she was in Rylcombe. Come on!"

"Yes; but it would be only friendly to look in and ask how she is—"

"Come on!"

"It would be only thoughtful—"

"We can have a feed at St. Jim's," said Figgins.

"Come on!"

"I wasn't thinking wholly of a feed—"

"Come on!"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Take his other arm, Kerr."

"Right-ho!"

And Fatty Wynn was marched on, with a very injured expression on his plump face.

"It's rottenly neglectful of us," he said, "and there were fresh jam tarts in the window!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm hungry, too. I always get hungry in this weather. I have a sort of keenness of appetite comes over me at this time of the year."

"And at every other blessed time, too," said Kerr. "Do dry up! You make me feel hungry when you start."

"There'll be a decent feed at St. Jim's," said Kangaroo consolingly. "I've told Mrs. Mimble to trot out the best she has."

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn. "You're a decent chap, Kangaroo. I believe in drawing the bonds of Empire closer—hands across the sea, and so on. I do really."

Kangaroo laughed. The juniors marched on cheerily towards the school, and in the lane they suddenly encountered four youths in Grammar School caps. Tom Merry recognised them at once.

They were Frank Monk, Carboy, Lane, and Gordon Gay, the shining lights of Rylcombe Grammar School—at least, of the junior portion of it.

The four Grammarians halted at the sight of the numerous party of Saints.

"Hallo! So you're back!" said Monk.

"Here we are, as large as life, and twice as natural," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I suppose you Grammar chaps are still vegetating in the same old spot?"

"Yes; and we're ready to give you some more lickings now that you've got back," said Monk.

"Wats!"

"Hallo! Is that Gussy—still alive?" said Carboy. "Didn't you pass through Paris as you went to Nice?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then how have you got back?"

"Eh?"

"I should have thought it wasn't safe for you."

"Oh, that's all wight! The floods have been ovah a long time."

"I wasn't thinking of the floods," said Monk. "I've been told that the officials of the Jardin des Plantes are always on the look-out for new specimens for their monkey-house, and I'm really surprised at your being allowed to leave Paris."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Grammarians.

Arthur Augustus coloured with wrath.

"Weally, Monk—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to allow this wude wemark to pass unchastised," said Arthur Augustus, letting his eyeglass drop to the end of his cord, and pushing back his cuffs. "Pway put up your hands, you wotah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am sowwy to delay you a few minutes, deah boys, while I give Fwank Monk a feahful thwashin'."

"No time," said Kangaroo.

"Wenly, Kangawoo—"

"We'll bump them instead," said the Cornstalk cheerily.

"Collar them!"

"Hurrah!"

"Line up!" shouted Gordon Gay.

The Grammarians lined up, but the rush of the Saints fairly whirled them over. They were collared and bumped in a twinkling.

Then the party of Saints marched on, laughing, leaving the four Grammarians sitting in the dust and blinking at each other.

"Oh!" gasped Monk.

"Ow!" said Carboy and Lane.

Gordon Gay chuckled.

"What are you cackling at, you image?" demanded his three comrades, staring at him wrathfully.

"You!" said Gay cheerfully. "Myself, too. We look a set of duffers!"

"Oh, do we?" said Monk, with a growl.

"Yes. We ought to have given them a wide berth, as the odds were against us. Never mind; we'll make them sit up yet, now that Tom Merry's back again. I've got an idea."

Meanwhile, the Saints marched on, quite satisfied with the bumping they had bestowed upon the heroes of the Grammar School.

They came in sight of the gates of St. Jim's.

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"My hat! The whole school seems to have turned out."

"Bai Jove!"

Kangaroo gave a low whistle.

"I thought there would be a lot," he remarked, "but blessed if I understand this."

The gateway of St. Jim's was crowded. Behind the crowd there could be seen glimpses of a larger crowd back in the quad.

All St. Jim's certainly seemed to have turned out.

There was a shout from the crowd in the gateway as the juniors were sighted in the road, and a mouth-organ struck up a tune.

"See the Conquering Hero Comes!" exclaimed Blake. "That's Kerruish tooting. I'd know his toot anywhere. What does he mean by playing that?"

"Bai Jove! They appawntly wergard us as conquerin' heroes," said Arthur Augustus. "Upon the whole, pewwaps they are wight."

The juniors marched on, considerably puzzled. There was a ringing cheer from the crowd in the gate.

"Hurrah!"

"Hurrah for Tom Merry!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

CHAPTER 6.

The Conquering Hero.

TOM MERRY stared at the crowd.

That his friends should be glad of his return to St. Jim's was natural enough. That his acquaintances should be pleased was also natural. But that half the school should turn out to welcome him was a surprise.

Yet here they were, in crowds.

And, strangest of all, there were Fifth-Formers in the throng, and the Fourth-Former who was making the most noise was Mellish, the one fellow at St. Jim's whom Tom Merry never could get on with.

It was amazing.

What could it mean?

"See the Conquering Hero Comes!" bawled Mellish.

"Hooray!"

Toot-toot-toot! went Kerruish's mouth-organ.

"Hip, hip, hooray!"

"Off your rockers?" asked Tom Merry, as he came up to the gate.

"Hooray!"

"What's the row?"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Bai Jove! I wergard this as wathah wemarkable!"

"Blessed if I understand it, either!" said Kangaroo, looking puzzled.

"Howevah, it is a wippin' weception!"

"I'm so glad you're back," said Skimpole, catching Tom Merry by the buttonhole. "Of course, you found my system—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You remember I sent it to Nice——"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, then, you——"

"Shoulder high!" exclaimed Mellish. "Come on!"

"Hooray!"

A rush of juniors surrounded Tom Merry. Mellish and Hancock seized him, and up he went. French and Pratt of the New House lent a hand. New House and School House were united in doing honour to the hero of the Shell.

"Here, let go!" roared Tom Merry.

"Shoulder high!"

"Hooray!"

"Leggo, Mellish, you ass!"

"Oh, come on!"

And Tom Merry, struggling, was borne shoulder high through the gates. His chums followed, laughing, and greatly puzzled. If these honours were being paid to Tom Merry as a great traveller there was no reason why his chums should not share them, yet Tom Merry solely was evidently the centre of attraction.

It was a puzzle to them.

Tom Merry was not enjoying it, either. He disliked and distrusted Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, and he could not help suspecting that there was some trickery in the matter.

"Look here, Mellish, let me down!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Rot!" said Mellish.

"What are you playing the giddy ox like this for?"

"Because you're a conquering hero, and we're glad to have you back," said Mellish. "I hope you're not thinking of any little disagreement in the past on an occasion like this. Why not let bygones be bygones?"

Tom Merry's heart smote him.

Mellish was evidently in earnest, and so were the others, and Tom Merry, who seldom was suspicious, felt that he had been too suspicious this time.

Mellish apparently had been thinking over his conduct during Tom Merry's absence, and had resolved to be a more friendly fellow, and this was his way of showing it—so it appeared to Tom Merry.

"Of course, I'm willing to let bygones be bygones," he said. "That's all right. But do let me get down, there's a good chap."

"Stuff! We're honouring you!"

"Rats! I don't want to be honoured!"

"Hooray!" roared the crowd. "Hooray for Tom Merry!"

"Right round the quad!" shouted Hancock. "Then to the tuckshop!"

"Hooray!"

"That's a jolly good idea!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Here's the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo!"

"Hooray!"

"Eh?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise. "What's that about the bank at Monte Carlo?"

"Oh, we know all about it," said Mellish, laughing.

"Skimpole's told us."

"Skimpole?"

"Yes. He's told us all about your making the bank bust."

"I suppose he was dreaming," said Tom. "Do you think I'm a gambler? Of course, I never played at Monte Carlo—I shouldn't have been allowed to."

Mellish jumped, and relaxed his hold, and Tom Merry jerked himself free and slid to the ground.

The cad of the Fourth stared at him blankly.

"You—you didn't play at Monte Carlo?" he stammered.

"Certainly not!"

"You didn't break the bank?"

"Of course not!"

"You—you haven't won a thousand pounds?"

"Of course I haven't, you ass!"

"Oh!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. He understood the cause of that imposing reception now, and why his old enemy had been so affable.

"Did you think I had broken the bank, you duffers?" he exclaimed. "What on earth put that silly idea into your empty numskulls?"

"Skimpole told us!" roared a dozen voices.

"Where's Skimpole?"

"Make him explain!"

"Skimpole! Skimpole!"

"Really, you know, Merry——"

"Here he is!"

"Really, you know," said Skimpole, "I hope you will contribute at least five hundred pounds towards the propagation of Socialism, Tom Merry. You see——"

"You utter ass!"

"Eh?"

"Did you tell these chaps that I had broken the bank at Monte Carlo?" roared Tom Merry, taking the amateur Socialist by the shoulder and shaking him.

Skimpole gasped.

"Certainly!"

"Then why did you, you dummy?"

"Eh? Because it is true!"

"True? You ass!"

"But you told me so!"

"I—I told you so?" gasped Tom Merry, taken quite aback.

"Yes."

"When—how?"

"In your letter from Nice."

"He's trying to keep it dark," muttered Mellish. "He doesn't want to share out."

"Hold your tongue, you cad!" said Tom Merry fiercely. "Now, then, Skimpole, explain. I certainly never told you anything of the sort. You're dreaming."

"Yes, in your letter from Nice, you know. You remember that I invented a system of winning at roulette, and sent it to you at Nice by registered post?"

"Well?"

"You replied that you had received it?"

"Yes, I received it."

"I asked you to put it to use, and in your reply you said that you had put it to the only use it was fit for."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Exactly."

"Very well, if you tried it on the bank at Monte Carlo it naturally followed that you must have broken the bank, as the system was infallible."

"You utter ass!"

"Really, Tom Merry——"

"I told you I had put it to the only use it was fit for," said Tom Merry. "That meant that I used it for pipelights, as matches are so expensive in Nice."

"Oh!"

"We tore it up between us, and made spills of it, and they lasted us quite a long time," said Tom Merry. "I really tried to read it first, but I couldn't understand a word of it."

"Oh!"

"As for breaking the bank at Monte Carlo, I expect the bank would have broken me if I had tried it—which I didn't do."

"Oh!"

"We've been jolly well swindled!" growled Kerruish. "We thought——"

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Mellish.

"Conquering hero, indeed! Poof!"

"Bah!"

"Rats!"

"Yah!"

And the reception melted away.

CHAPTER 7.

D'Arcy's Complexion is Not Improved.

TOM MERRY & CO. looked at one another. All but Tom Merry were laughing heartily. Tom himself looked a little red and angry.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "No wondah Mellish was so awf'ly chummy when he thought you had won a thousand pounds! I regard him as a wank wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "I never saw a conquering hero stripped of his laurels so suddenly before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Tom Merry. "Let's get in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do stop cackling! I'm ready for a feed."

"Now you're talking!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I'm jolly hungry myself. That walk from the station has given me a good appetite."

"Yaas, wathah! I am feelin' a little peckish."

"Let's get in," said Monty Lowther. "I can see the Head standing at the School House door—he's going to welcome us home."

"Good old Head!"

"Come on, then!"

"Hold on a minute, deah boys! I—I can't see the Head now!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in dismay.

"Why not?"

"Look at my gloves! They're uttably wuined by shakin' hands with Hewwies's wotten bulldog. I could not let the Head see me in gloves like this."

"Ha, ha!"

"It is no laughin' mattah, Blake. I suppose you would not like the Head to regard me as a slovenly boundah?"

"Take them off, then! Come on!"

"I am hardly likely to appeah before the Head in an ovalcoat without gloves."

"Take the coat off, then."

"Well, that's wathah a good ideah," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I can take off the coat and gloves as if I were in weadiness to go to my quartahs, and then the gloves will not be noticed. Help me off with my coat, Blake, deah boy, and don't wumple it more than you can help."

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"Here you are!"

"Ow! You uttah ass! You are dwaggin' it off! On second thoughts, I feel wathah dustay aftah a long journey, and I don't think——"

"You never do!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Your chivvy could do with a wash," said Blake, examining it critically. "There's a black on your nose, and another on your cheek. Give it a rub with your handkerchief, and come on."

"But——"

"The Head's got his eye on us."

"Oh, vewy well!"

Arthur Augustus followed his chums, and as he did so, he took out his cambric handkerchief, and gently rubbed his face. In the haste of the moment he forgot that he had previously used the handkerchief to wipe his muddy gloves.

The result of the wipe of the muddy handkerchief across his face can be imagined. One wipe across the cheek, and another across the nose removed the two offending blacks, but left D'Arcy's face looking as if he had rubbed it in the road.

"Is that all wight, Blake?"

But they were at the door now, and Blake had no time to answer.

Dr. Holmes was standing in the doorway, an imposing figure in cap and gown. He smiled at the juniors. He had been about to leave the School House, and he had caught sight of Tom Merry & Co., and stopped to speak to them.

"I am glad to see you back again, Merry!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with the hero of the Shell. "I hope you have had a pleasant holiday on the Riviera."

"Very pleasant indeed, sir, thank you," said Tom Merry.

"I am glad to hear it."

The Head shook hands with the returning juniors in turn, and came to Arthur Augustus last.

He started as he looked at the swell of St. Jim's.

The others noticed D'Arcy's face for the first time now, and there was a suppressed giggle. D'Arcy was blissfully ignorant of the cause of it.

"D'Arcy, I—I——"

"I'm glad to be back again, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "We have had a wippin' time, sir, but it's pleasant to see the old coll. again, and yourself, sir, if I may make the remark."

"Thank you, D'Arcy," said the Head drily. "You might have shown your pleasure, however, by appearing here with a cleaner face."

"Weally, sir——"

"You had better go and wash it immediately."

And the Head passed on.

D'Arcy stood petrified.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "What does that mean? Is my face dirtay, you chaps?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is there anything the matter with my face, deah boys?" "Well, there's the shape," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "It's a bit odd in that respect."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Then there's the extra eye," said Figgins. "Le troisieme, you know."

"Pway don't be an ass, Figgins."

"Then there's the mud!" roared Kerr. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"The—the mud!"

D'Arcy rushed across to the glass.

He surveyed his reflection there with a gasp of dismay. He could scarcely believe that the muddy countenance looking back at him was his own.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause for unseemly mewwiment!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Somebody has been playin' a twick on me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, it must have come off my handkerchief," said D'Arcy. "I forgot! It is all the fault of Hewwies and his wotten bulldog."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, pway stop cacklin'. I shall go and get a wash, and then find Doctah Holmes, and ofah him an apology for appeawin' befoah him in such a state."

And Arthur Augustus rushed upstairs, three stairs at a time, to the Fourth Form dormitory, to make himself look more presentable.

"Well, a wash wouldn't do any of us any harm," remarked Tom Merry. "I'm going to follow Gussy's example."

"Good!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "Look here, we've got the stuff for the feed all ready in our study, and we'll have it ready for you in five minutes, or ten at the outside. Where would you prefer to have it?"



"Look here—Ow!" exclaimed Clifton Dane as he dashed after Kangaroo just in time to escape a dab of the hot poker from the infuriated Bernard Glyn.

"Well, there'll be a good many of us, and it would be a crowd in one of the studies," said Tom Merry. "Suppose we meet in the Hobby Club-room?"

"Good—in ten minutes."

"Right—ho!"

"Come on, Dane, and help me get the stuff. You can lend a hand, Dig., and you too, Gore, if you like."

"Certainly."

And the four juniors went along to the end study in the Shell passage. As they passed the door of Tom Merry's study, it opened, and Manners came out.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Manners. "I'm ready to go down to the station, if you fellows are."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo.

Manners stared at him.

"What's the joke, you ass?"

"Nothing—only we've been to the station, and returned, and Tom Merry's come home, and he's getting a much-needed wash in the Shell dorm. at this moment."

"By Jove!" Manners looked at his watch. "By Jove! How the time passes when you're at work, doesn't it? I didn't know! Never mind. I've done with the pictures. Most of them have come out beautifully, and Lowther will be pleased. In the Shell dorm., did you say?"

"Yes."

Manners went off to the Shell dormitory to see his chums, and the others hurried to the end study. The door was still fast.

Kangaroo hammered on it with his fist.

"Glyn! Bernard Glyn!"

"Hallo!"

"Open the door."

"Can't!"

"But—"

"Sha'n't!"

"Look here—"

"Poof!"

CHAPTER 8

No Entrance.

KANGAROO breathed hard through his nose. He had laid in a supply of really good things that day, with the assistance of Clifton Dane, to stand Tom Merry & Co. a big feed on their return. Those good things were in a box in the end study. But Bernard Glyn was still busy upon his invention, and the box of good things might as well have been in the moon, for any chance Kangaroo and Dane had of getting at it.

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NEXT THURSDAY;

"RAIDING THE RAIDERS."

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

From his previous experience Kangaroo knew how little chance there was of getting Glyn to open the door while he was busy.

And the sound of clinking metal from within the study showed that Glyn certainly was busy.

Kangaroo tried the door again. It did not budge an inch. The keys belonging to that lock were in Kangaroo's pocket, but the door was even faster than if it had been locked. The Cornstalk chum rapped on it again.

"Glyn!"

There was no reply.

"Look here, Glyn, we want to come in."

"You can't."

"There's a box of grub there—we want it."

"Stuff!"

"Open the door!"

"Can't be did! I've screwed it," said Glyn coolly.

"The screws will take some time to get out. You can run away and play."

"We want the tommy!" roared Kangaroo, exasperated.

"Will the box pass through the keyhole?"

"Ass!"

"Then you can't have it. I'll throw it out of the window, if you like."

"Don't you dare!" yelled the Cornstalk. "You'll smash the gingerbeer-bottles, and muck up the whole lot!"

"Well, buzz off; you can't have the box."

"We must have it."

"Stuff!"

Kangaroo kicked at the door. It did not even shake. Bernard Glyn had certainly taken effective steps to prevent any further interruptions. The door was screwed, and it would have taken Glyn himself some time to get it open from inside. From outside it was an impossibility.

The juniors looked at one another in great exasperation. A considerable amount of pocket-money had been expended upon laying in those provisions, and now Tom Merry & Co. had arrived, hungry for the feed. And the good things were so near and yet so far.

"My hat!" said Digby. "We shall have to get the door open somehow."

Kangaroo shook his head hopelessly.

"Can't be done—we've tried that before."

"What about the window?"

"He will have fastened that, of course—we got in at the window before when the duffer had locked us out," said Clifton Dane.

Digby gave a whistle.

"Then we're done."

"Looks like it."

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Gore. "We shall have to get the door open. I say, Glyn, if you don't open the door, we'll smash the blessed thing in."

There was a chuckle from inside the study.

"Do you hear?" bawled Gore, hammering on the door with his fist.

"You can smash it in if you like!" called back Glyn.

"I don't quite see how you'll do it, but you can try."

"Look here—"

"Oh, run away and play!"

"Let's get a form and bash in the lock," said Gore.

"The lock wouldn't bash in."

"We can try."

"Oh, all right!"

The four juniors ran along the passage. There was a form under the window at the end. The form was of solid oak, and very heavy, and it was clamped to the floor, to prevent its being moved by mischievous juniors.

"We can pull it up," said Gore.

"We'll try."

"Now, then, all together."

The juniors laid hold of the form, and pulled. They pulled and pulled till they were red and gasping, and the form gave a little. Juniors who found the time hang heavy upon their hands had amused themselves with picking some of the screws out of the iron clamps, and that made the work easier.

"It's coming!" gasped Kangaroo.

"Pull away!"

"Put your beef into it."

"Hallo! What on earth are you up to?" exclaimed Herries, coming along the passage. Herries had put Towser away, and he was ready for the feed now.

"Lend a hand!" panted Kangaroo.

"But—"

"Oh, don't jaw! Lend a hand!"

"Oh, all right!"

Herries grasped the form and dragged with the rest. The additional strength did it. The clamps creaked and came loose, and the form left its place—so suddenly that the five

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juniors sprawled on the floor, with the oaken form across their legs.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"My hat!"

"Yaroo!"

Kangaroo sat up, gasping.

"Well, it's come up," he said. "It's all right."

"And we've come down," groaned Digby, rubbing his shins, "and it's all wrong."

"Never mind. Buck up!"

The juniors seized the loosened form, and bore it along the passage. They took it at a run, and it was just Skimpole's luck that he should come out of his study while they were passing the door.

Skimpole stopped out cheerfully into the path of the rushing form, with disastrous results for Skimpole. The end of it caught him on the chest, and Skimpole sat down with a suddenness that completely took all his breath away.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Skimpole. "W-w-w-what—"

"Come on! Never mind him!"

The juniors rushed the form on, leaving Skimpole sitting dazed and breathless, and blinking away at a great rate. They reached the door of the end study.

"Now, then!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"Go it!"

"Get the form round, and bang the lock with the end!"

"You duffers!" exclaimed Gore. "It's too long to go round!"

"Phew!"

It was a fact! The form was too long to be turned round in the passage, and it was impossible to bang the end on to the lock, for the simple reason that it could not be got end-wise to the door.

"Lot of trouble for nothing!" growled Digby. "This is what comes of adopting a silly chump's suggestions!"

"Look here, Digby—"

"Rats! What are we going to do?"

"Bang it sideways!" said Kangaroo desperately. "We can give the door a pretty good clump with it."

"Oh, all right! Buck up, then!"

The end of the heavy form was swung round sideways upon the door. It certainly did give the door a good clump—it made the door and the whole study shake.

There was a sound of a crash from within, and a yell from the amateur inventor.

"You asses!"

Kangaroo chuckled.

"Well, we've startled him, and made him bust something, that's one comfort."

"Go it again!"

Bang!

There was a sound of rapid footsteps in the passage. Knox of the Sixth came along, with a gleam in his eye and a cane in his hand. Of all the School House prefects, Knox was the worse-tempered—and his look showed that the terrific din in the Shell passage had not improved his temper.

The juniors were too busy to hear him coming. They swung the heavy oaken form round again.

"Another bang!" said Kangaroo. "We—oh, oh! Oooh!"

"Oh, oh! Yah!"

"Yahoo!"

Knox had reached them, and he was getting to work with the cane quickly, and without even a word of warning. The juniors dropped the form in a hurry, and there was a wild roar from Knox as the end of it clumped upon his toe.

"Ow! Ow!"

He danced on one leg, clasping the other in anguish.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo. "Serve you jolly well right! Ha, ha, ha!"

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Knox gave a growl, and grasped his cane again. He slashed recklessly among the juniors, and there was a wild stampede down the passage.

Knox followed furiously, lashing out with the cane till the last of the fugitives dodged away and escaped. Savage and sore, the juniors gathered again at a safe distance, but the attack on the end study was finished for good. Inside the end study the inventor of St. Jim's went cheerfully on with his work.

CHAPTER 9.

No Feed.

FATTY WYNN was the first down. The fat Fourth-Former came into the Hobby Club-room and looked about him. The room was a rather large one, and the juniors were allowed to use it for the meetings of the Merry Hobby Club, which was too numerous to hold its meetings in a study. It was just the place for a feed, for there was a large table, and room for plenty of chairs—and the said chairs could easily be borrowed up and down the passage.

Fatty Wynn came in with a cheery smile upon his plump face, expecting to see others there and the table laid for the feed.

He started a little as he found that the room was unoccupied, and that there was nothing—not even a cloth—on the table.

"My hat!" said Fatty Wynn.

He looked out of the doorway, but there was no one in the passage. Where was the feed—and where were the feeders?

Fatty Wynn crossed over to the window and stood looking out disconsolately into the quadrangle. The feed was late, and Fatty Wynn was early.

"All alone, deah boy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in. Fatty Wynn looked round. The swell of St. Jim's had washed his face and changed his collar and his boots, and looked very fresh.

"Yes," growled Wynn.

"I thought there was to be a feed heah."

"So did I."

"Haven't the fellows come yet?"

"Doesn't look like it, does it?"

"Weally, Wynn, that is a wathah gwuff way to speak."

"Well, I'm hungry."

"A chap is still called upon to be polite to anothah chap, even if he is hungwy, deah boy."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Don't bother."

"I wegard you as a wude beast!"

"Well, I'm hungry," said Fatty, as if that explained everything.

D'Arcy looked at his watch—the famous gold ticker that had accompanied him into so many strange places, among so many strange people.

"Bai Jove! As the feed's late, I wathah think I'll slip off and look for the Head. I owe him an apology, you wemombah."

Fatty Wynn grunted, and D'Arcy left the club-room. A minute later Kerr entered.

"Not yet!" he exclaimed.

"No," grunted Fatty.

Figgins came in with Blake. They stared at the empty table, and then at Kerr and the fat Fourth-Former.

"Hallo, we're early!" said Figgins.

"You're not."

"Then the feed's late!" Blake exclaimed.

"That's it."

"Hallo! Here's Tom Merry."

Tom Merry came in with Manners and Lowther. The three chums of the Shell were looking very cheerful, and feeling very hungry.

The juniors who had already arrived stared at the Terrible Three—and the Terrible Three stared at them.

"Where's the feed?" asked Tom Merry.

"Is that a conundrum?"

"No. Where is it?"

"Haven't the faintest idea," said Blake.

"It's rotten!" said Fatty Wynn. "I suppose this is the School House way of doing things! Here we are, famished—"

"Oh, I'm not famished!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "I can stand it a little longer without anything serious happenng!"

"Well, I can't," said Fatty Wynn. "I've got a specially keen appetite to-day—a real hunger I wouldn't take five pounds for. I want some grub."

"We're not all here yet," said Figgins. "There's Gussy still to come."

"He's been. He's gone to apologise to the Head—"

"The ass—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Hallo! Here he is!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into the club-room. He was looking somewhat serious—in fact, there was a decided frown upon his aristocratic brow.

"Worked off the apology?" asked Blake.

"No, I found the Head, but he told me not to bother," said D'Arcy. "I wegard that as wathah wude of the Head. He was talking to Mr. Waitton, though, and pewwaps he did not like being intewwupted."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can see no cause for laughtah whatovah. I shall twy again when the Head is not talking to Mr. Waitton."

"Hang it all—"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"The ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass. I—"

"The frabjous duffer—"

"Wynn, I wish it to be distinctly undahstood that I uttahly decline to be alluded to as a fwabjous duftah. I—"

"Eh? Who's talking to you?"

"Weally—"

"Do you think you're the only frabjous duffer at St. Jim's?" demanded Fatty Wynn. "I was speaking of Kangaroo."

"Oh! In that case—"

"The feed's a quarter of an hour late," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm jolly well not going to stay any longer. If this is School House hospitality, I've had enough of it."

"Oh, rats!" said Blake, quick to stand up for the honour of his house. "After all, it's an honour to a New House waster to be asked into the School House at all."

"Oh, rot!" said Figgins.

"Piffle!" said Kerr.

"Look here, you New House chumps—"

"School House dummy!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"I'm not going to wait any longer!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn desperately. "I'm going down to the tuckshop, and you can tell Kangaroo from me to go and eat coke!"

"Bosh!"

"You coming, Figgy?"

"Well, yes. Tell Kangaroo—"

"We've had enough of the rotten School House!" said Fatty Wynn indignantly.

Blake closed the door and put his back against it.

"You're jolly well not going after your rotten remarks about the School House," he said. "You're jolly well going to stay here and wait for the feed."

"What!"

"Deaf?" said Blake pleasantly. "I'll repeat it all if you like. You're jolly well going to stay here and wait for the feed!"

"Then we jolly well won't!" exclaimed Figgins. "Get away from that door!"

"Rats!"

"Yank him away!"

"Back up, School House!" sang out Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Back up, deah boys!"

"What-ho!"

"Yes, rather!"

The School House fellows rushed to back up Blake. They crowded round the door, and the way was barred to the New House trio.

Figgins & Co. were in a hopeless minority. But they were getting wrathful. They did not mean to give in.

"Stand aside!" roared Figgins.

"Rats!"

"Will you let us pass?"

"Never!" said Blake cheerfully. "Never, old son."

"Charge!" shouted Figgins. "Go it, New House!"

And Figgins & Co. charged. Just as they charged the door opened suddenly from without, and Blake gave a roar as it caught him a crack on the back of the head. Kangaroo looked in, and stared in astonishment at the scene of confusion that met his eyes.

CHAPTER 10.

D'Arcy Has It.

"GO it, New House!"

"Back up, School House!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Pile in!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "What on earth's the matter? Do you fellows usually behave like that when you're invited out?"

"Or have you picked up these manners in France?" asked Digby.

The dusty mass of juniors separated. They stood looking at one another wrathfully, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was groping about the floor for his eyeglass. The cord had snapped in the struggle, and the monocle had momentarily disappeared.

"You see—" said Tom Merry.

"It—it was a House row, to fill up time," explained Figgins. "It's all right, if the feed's ready now."

"Oh, yes!" said Fatty Wynn, his good humour restored at once. "You're jolly late, Noble, but we don't mind, if the feed's ready."

"But it isn't," said Kangaroo ruefully

"Eh! Not ready!"

"No. I'm sorry—"

"Then I'm jolly well going," said Fatty Wynn. "I don't want to be rude, Kangaroo, but I must say I'm surprised at you. Here we are, just fresh from a long journey, and in a state of famishment—"

"Well, that's a good word, anyhow," said Monty Lowther.

"In a state of famishment," went on Fatty Wynn. "You ask us to a feed, keep us waiting a quarter of an hour, and then say it isn't ready. That sort of thing may do for the School House, but it's not good enough for us. Come on, you chaps!"

"Hold on!"

"But I'm hungry."

"Yes, but—"

"I'm hungry."

"I tell you—"

"Do come, Figg; I'm hungry!"

"We've got a ripping feed ready," exclaimed Kangaroo, "but we can't get at it. We've been trying to, and we came to ask you fellows if you had any suggestions."

"That's it!" said Herries.

"Oh, that alters the case," said Fatty Wynn, turning back from the door. "You say you've got a good feed?"

"Yes. Cold fowl, salmon, ham and eggs—"

"Oh, good!"

"Cakes and tarts, and jellies and buns—"

"Ripping!"

"Pineapple and Tangerine oranges and dates."

"Splendid!"

"That's not all; but we can't get at it."

"Where is it, then?"

"In my study," said Kangaroo; "and Glyn is busy on a rotten invention, and he's screwed up the door on the inside."

"My only hat!"

"The question is, how to get it open? We've been chased off the Shell passage by Knox, the prefect. We've looked at the window, but it's closed, and I know it's fastened. We can't get into the study, and the feed's there."

"Oh, dear!" said Fatty Wynn.

Some of the juniors laughed. But internal sinkings warned them that they were very hungry, and that the postponement of the feed was a serious matter.

"Anybody think of a dodge?" asked Clifton Dane.

There was a general puckering of brows.

"Bai Jove, I've got it!"

And Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. All glances were turned at once upon the swell of St. Jim's.

"You've got it?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, go ahead."

"Eh?"

"What's the scheme?"

"The—the scheme?"

"Yes; the dodge for getting into the end study," said Tom Merry. "If you've got it, what is it?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I fail to compwehend."

"Ass! You said you'd got it."

"I was alludin' to my monocle," said D'Arcy, with dignity, holding up the recovered eyeglass. "It had wolloed undah the table, but I found it."

The juniors glared at him.

"You unspeakable ass!"

"I wefuse to be chawacterised as an unspeakable ass. I—"

"What's to be done?" said Kangaroo. "Of course, we could stand another feed, but—but not to put too fine a point on it, we've blued all our cash on the grub that's stacked up in the box in the end study."

"Bai Jove!"

"And I don't suppose you fellows have come back from a holiday with your pockets full of tin?" Manners remarked. Tom Merry shook his head.

"We're mostly stony," he said, with a laugh, "and what money we have left is French money. We came straight on, and haven't been able to change it back into English yet. Otherwise we'd lend you anything with pleasure."

"Yaas, wathah!"

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"Why, this is awful!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I'd forgotten about the French money. Mrs. Taggles wouldn't take it at the tuckshop. Is it possible that we shall have to wait for school tea before we get anything?"

"Gweat Scott!"

"It's simply awful!"

"Weally, you know, I'm not a gweeday chap, but I am wathah peckish, and I should wegard such a contingency as wathah dweadful."

"Rats!" said Figgins. "We've got to get into the end study and collar the grub. Can't we bust the door in somehow?"

"We've tried it, and Knox, the prefect, has his eye on the passage now. We can't get in at the window."

"Bai Jove, I've got it!"

"Oh, shut up about that rotten eyeglass!" roared Fatty Wynn, exasperated. "We know you've got it, and that's enough."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Dry up!"

"I wefuse to dwy up. I—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!" said Digby. "We—"

"I decline to wing off. I—"

"But we know all about the eyeglass. We know it rolled under the table, we know you found it, and we know you've got it, and—"

"I wasn't speakin' about the eyeglass this time, deah boy. I mean that I've got an ideah," said the swell of St. Jim's.

"Oh!"

"You see, it takes a fellow with a bwain to think out these things," said D'Arcy. "I should pwobably have solved the pwoblem much soonah if I hadn't been searchin' for my eyeglass. We can't get in at the door—"

"We know that!"

"And we can't get in at the window—"

"We know that, too."

"Pway be patient. There is a third way—"

"Through the keyhole, I suppose?" said Blake sarcastically. "As the slimmest of the party, I suggest that Gussy tries it himself."

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, Blake, I wegard you as an ass. I was certainly not thinkin' of the keyhole. I was alludin' to the chimney."

"The chimney!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The chimney!" repeated Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I never thought of that."

"It takes a chap with a bwain—"

"But how are we to get down the chimney?" said Tom Merry. "And what a state we shall be in when we've done it."

"I twust you will not shwink fwom makin' a sawifice for the common cause."

"It would have to be a jolly uncommon cause to make me go down a chimney," said Monty Lowther. "And if there's a fire in the grate—"

"That's all right," said Kangaroo; "there's no fire in the end study. We've stopped fires there a week ago."

"Off-side!" said Clifton Dane.

"What do you mean?"

"Glyn has lighted one to heat his blessed solder or something," said Dane. "Have you forgotten the red-hot poker?"

"By George, yes, there's a fire in the study!"

"That knocks it on the head," said Blake.

"Not at all, deah boys," said D'Arcy serenely. "What's the mattah with pourin' a pail of watah down the chimney first, to extinguish the fiah?"

"Phow!"

"You see, we needn't go wight up to the woor to get at the chimney," went on the swell of St. Jim's, warning to his subject. "That might attwact attention. Besides, Tom Mewwy would have such a long way to come down."

"Eh?"

"I suppose Tom Mewwy will do the twick. You see, we can get into the chimney in the room ovah the end study—you know what a gweat wide chimney it is. That part of the house is vevy old, and the new Shell passage was built on to it, you wemembah. In olden times the chimney-sweepahs used to go up and down the chimney to clean it, so it stands to weason that there's plenty of woom."

"Something in that."

"Of course there is, or I should not be makin' the wemark, deah boy. There will be heaps of woom in the chimney. Tom Mewwy can get into it, and go down—"

"Ahem!"

"First of all we'll swamp it with watah," said D'Arcy. "The room above is only used as an extwa box-woom now, and we can get into it. There's a tap at the end of the

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"I want to speak to you, Manners," said Skimpole, with his mouth to the keyhole. "You see—Oo—oo—och!"

passage, and a wov of fire-buckets. They are not meant for extinguishing that kind of fiah, but they will do."

"Good!"

"Jolly good!"

"Gussy, you're a genius!"

"It requires a fellow of bwains and judgment to think these things out, deah boys!" said D'Arcy modestly. "I am always willin' to help a lame dog ovah a stile, and—"

"But there's one important point Gussy's overlooked," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Pway, what is that, Tom Mewwy?"

"The chap who thinks out an idea like this ought to be the chap to carry it out," said Tom Merry. "Gussy's the man."

"Weally—"

"Good! Gussy's the man!"

"Hear, hear!"

CHAPTER 11.

An Attack from Above.

THE enthusiasm was great. Arthur Augustus was acclaimed by all as the only individual who could possibly carry out the idea with complete success. The swell of St. Jim's was greatly flattered—but he hesitated. "You're awf'ly good, deah boys!" he said slowly. "But, weally—"

"Gussy's the man!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, I admit that I should pwobably cawwy out the weeze bettah than any of you chaps, but I am thinkin' of my clothes!"

"Gussy! Surely you're not thinking of refusing to make a sacrifice for the common cause!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in a shocked tone.

Arthur Augustus coloured. He was rather taken aback at havin' his own words quoted against him in this way.

"Come on," said Kangaroo; "as it's settled that Gussy is the man—"

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"The sooner the quicker," said Clifton Dane. "I must say that it's really sporty of Gussy to play up to the occasion in this way. I call for a cheer for Gussy!"

"Hurray!"

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Oh, vevy well!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, in a resigned tone. "I suppose as the bwainiest chap here, I weally ought to undahtake it!"

"That's right!"

"Of course you ought!"

"Come on!"

And the juniors crowded out of the study. The prospect of getting hold of the feed at last made even Fatty Wynn keen and eager. The juniors crowded into the Shell passage.

"We'll make one last appeal to Glyn," said D'Arcy, going towards the door of the end study.

"No good!" said Kangaroo. "Come on!"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the Cornstalk chum.

"Weally, Kangawoo, as the leadah of this partay—"

"The what?"

"The leadah! If I am not leadah, I shall certainly wufuse to go down the chimney!"

"Oh, you're leader!" said Kangaroo hastily. "Of course! But—"

"Then my ordahs will have to be obeyed!" D'Arcy tapped at the door of the end study: "Glyn, deah boy—Bernard Glyn!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"We have returned to St. Jim's f'vorn abwoad—"

"I can guess that, ass, when I hear you speak!"

"I wufuse to be called an ass. Open this door at once, and I will give you a fearful thwashin', you wude ass!"

"What an inducement!" murmured Monty Lowther.

The door did not open. D'Arcy rapped on it again.

"Careful!" muttered Herries. "Knox is waiting for a chance to go for us again!"

"Nevah mind Knox!" D'Arcy rapped sharply on the panels. "Glyn, I command you to open this door at once, or you will find yourself in twouble!"

"Oh, buzz off!"

Rap, rap, rap!

"Hallo, here comes Knox!"

"Ahem! I—I think we had bettah, pewwaps, wetire, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, rather hurriedly. "Come on!"

And they retired—at a run. Knox came up too late, and he said things after the retreating juniors. The latter did not stop till they were in the room above Glyn's.

D'Arcy looked into the deep, old-fashioned chimney, and scrowed his head round to look up into it.

"It will be quite easy," he remarked. "Of course, I shall have to change into some old clothes first—"

"Oh, rats!" said Fatty Wynn. "Go as you are!"

"I will go and change while you chaps are extinguishin' the fish!" said D'Arcy, unheeding. "Pway do not spare the watah!"

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry. "Come and get the buckets!"

At the end of the passage there were four red buckets hanging in a row, beside the water-tap. They were intended for extinguishing a fire—but not, of course, a study fire. But they could be used just as easily for that purpose.

To fill the buckets, and to carry them full of water to the box-room, occupied but a few minutes. Tom Merry looked into the chimney. At the back of it a steady column of smoke was rising from the grate in the study below. To push the bucket up into the wide chimney and tilt it over was easy.

"You first, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Right you are!"

He pushed his bucket into the chimney, and the water went swooping over into the shaft. There was a sound of falling soot, and fearful sputtering from below, and the curious, penetrating smell of water thrown on hot coals.

The yell that Bernard Glyn gave could be heard above.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "That's moved him! Go ahead, Kangy!"

Kangaroo added his bucket of water, and then two more bucketfuls followed. The hissing and sputtering from below was terrific.

There came a roar of an angry voice up the chimney.

"You—you asses—you villains!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've put my fire out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Everything's smothered with blacks!" roared Bernard Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha! Open the study door, then!"

"I won't!"

And Glyn retired growling from the grate. The smoke

rolled up the chimney more thickly than ever for some minutes, and then it slackened and cleared away. It was evident that the fire in the end study was quite out.

Arthur Augustus came into the box-room. He was dressed in his very oldest clothes—which weren't very old, either. He had a muffler fastened carefully round his neck, another bound over his head to protect his hair.

"I'm weady, deah boys!"

"Good! The fire's out!"

"Vevy well! You are quite sure, Tom Mewwy, that you would not pwefer to go?"

"Quite sure, thanks!"

"I would willingly change clothes with you for the purpose!"

"Don't trouble!"

"No twouble at all! I—"

"My dear Gussy, you're just the chap—the right man at the right moment. Go ahead, and good luck to you!"

"If you would care to go, Blake—"

"I wouldn't, thanks!"

"Or you, Kerr—"

"I really think this is one of the things a School House chap could do better!" said Kerr, with a shake of the head.

"Or you, Kangawoo—"

"Thanks, no!"

"Vevy well—I'm weady!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy approached the chimney in an extremely gingerly way.

CHAPTER 12.

D'Arcy Does It,

PWAY give me a bunk up, Blake!"

"Certainly!"

Arthur Augustus put his head into the box-room chimney. Blake loyally bunked him up, putting a great deal of force into the bunk, and there was a smothered exclamation from within the chimney.

"Ow! You ass!"

"Hallo! What's the matter?"

"You—ow—you—you've buzzed my head into the soot, you ass!"

"Sorry! Get on!"

"Hold on a minute, you dummay!"

"Oh, all right; if you're going to be all the afternoon about it," said Blake resignedly. "Don't forget that we've all had a long journey, and are simply famishing!"

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "I think Gussy ought to bunk up! I'm feeling horribly empty—as if I should be ill if I don't have something to eat pretty soon!"

"Same here!" said Monty Lowther.

And there was a chorus:

"Buck up, Gussy!"

"Groo!"

"What are you barking about?"

"Groo! My mouth's full of soot!"

"My hat! You must be hungry! Hold out a little while longer, till we get the feed; it won't be long now!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—groo!"

"Give him another shove, Blake!"

"What-ho!"

Jack Blake shoved, and D'Arcy's legs disappeared up the chimney. There was a showering of soot, and a sound of gasping and clambering.

"Getting on all right, Gussy?"

"Groo!"

"There's plenty of room, isn't there?"

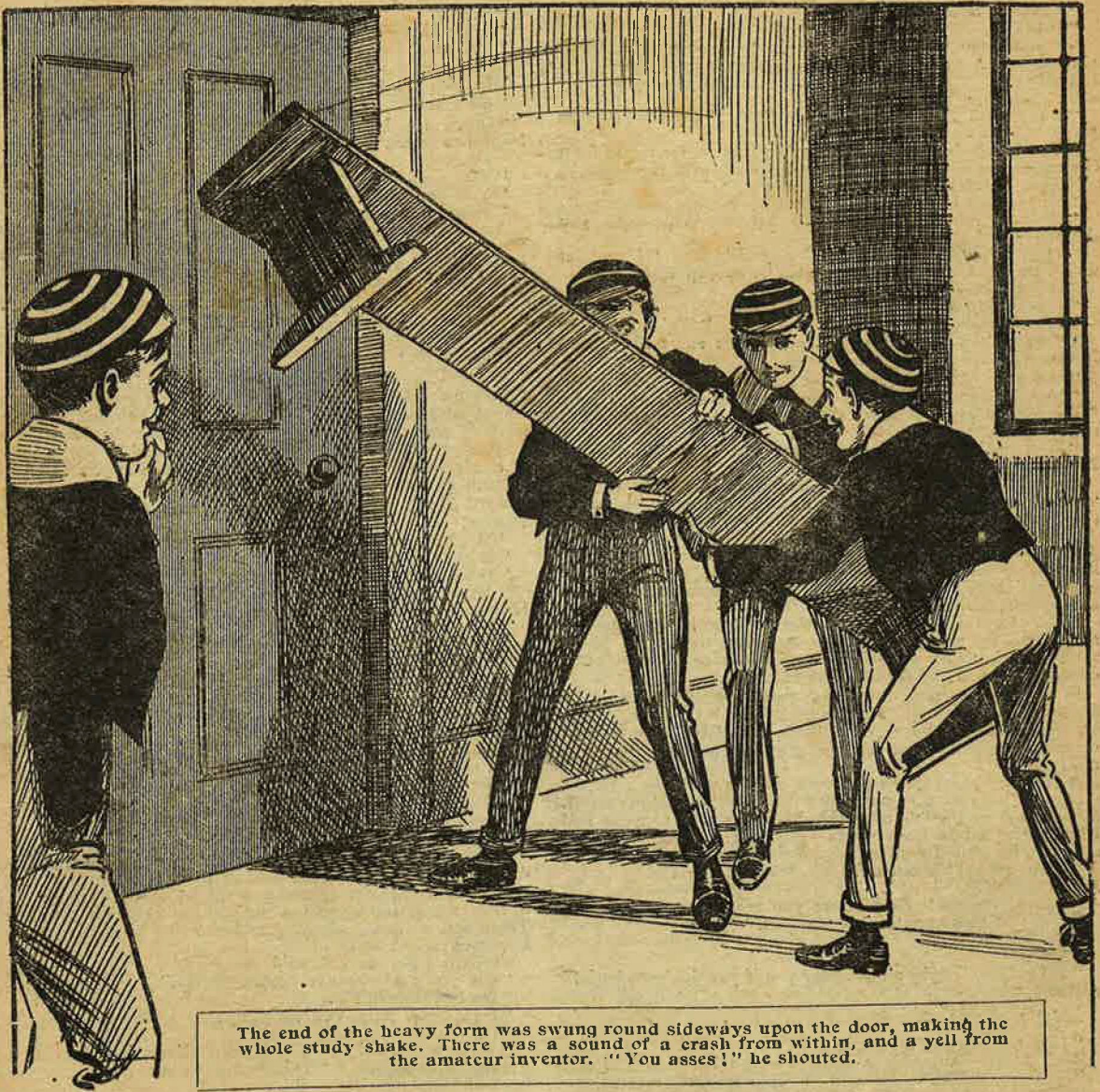
"Groo!"

"Blessed if I understand him—he's talking Esperanto or Finnish. Buck up, Gussy; we're all hungry!"

"Groo-oo!"

The sounds in the chimney ceased. Either D'Arcy was gone, or he was stopping to take breath—such breath as he could get in the confines of the chimney. There seemed to

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The end of the heavy form was swung round sideways upon the door, making the whole study shake. There was a sound of a crash from within, and a yell from the amateur inventor. "You asses!" he shouted.

be more soot than anything else there. It was a long time since that chimney had been swept.

The chums in the box-room waited impatiently. Jack Blake put his head under the chimney and looked anxiously upward.

"I say, Gussy— Oh—ow—ooch!"
A shower of soot descended, and Blake's face and head were smothered. He withdrew them quickly, and turned a countenance like that of a nigger minstrel upon his comrades. There was a yell of laughter in the room.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Ow! Yow!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You dummies!" roared Blake. "What are you gurgling at? I'm smothered!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got blessed soot in my eyes, in my nose, in my mouth, and in my ears, too! My hair's thick with it! Oh!"

"Well, you do look funny!" said Tom Merry, wiping away his tears. "Never mind—"
"Never mind, you ass! Why—"
"I mean, it's all right—"
"It's all right, is it?" roared Blake, rushing at Tom Merry. "If it's all right, then, you can have some of it, you Shell duffer!"
"Ow! Keep off! Yah!"
Blake embraced Tom Merry, and waltzed him round the

box-room, rubbing his face quite affectionately upon that of the hero of the Shell.

Tom Merry roared and struggled in vain. In less than a minute he was as black as Blake, and his collar and tie and waistcoat were in a shocking state.

Blake released him at last.
"There!" he gasped "Is that all right?"
"You dangerous ass! You—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You cackling duffers—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Swish came a fresh shower of soot down the chimney, smothering the grate, and filling the room with a choking odour. Digby, who was near the grate, jumped back, spotted all over with soot.

"My hat! Gussy's making short work of it," said Herries.
"Hallo, I can hear him yelling!"
"I say, deah boys!"
"Hallo!"
"Pwayer come closah to the chimney. I can't scwear!"
"No fear."
"Weally, you know—"
"You can scream," said Kangaroo. "We've had enough of your blessed soot. Why don't you get on with the washing, and leave the cackle till afterwards."
"I wefuso to allow my wemarks to be alluded to as cackle."
"What have you got to say, ass?"
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"I decline to be called an ass."
 "Pool!"
 "I want you fellows to be weady to back me up, that's all," said D'Arcy, his voice sounding strangely muffled from the chimney. "It has occurred to me that Glyn may possibly show fight, you know."
 "Ha, ha! I think it's extremely likely!" chuckled Clifton Dane.

"Vewy well, in that case, it may be imposs. for me to fight Glyn with one hand, and unsew the doah with the othah."
 "Yes. I can't quite see you doing it."
 "So you had better be weady to back me up, you know."
 "If you think we're coming up the chunney, you duffer—"

"Then it's useless my goin'," said D'Arcy. "I may as well return. Glyn is almost certain to cut up wusty."
 "Oh, get on!"
 "I wefuse to get on."

"It's all right, Gussy!" bawled Blake. "We're about as sooty as we can be already, and we'll come and back you up if you yell—Tom Merry and myself."
 "Oh, vewy well! In that case, I will pwoceed, deah boy."
 "For goodness' sake buck up!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn.

"I'm feeling awfully faint. What an ass I was not to have some grub at the station!"
 "Well, you always were an ass, you know!" remarked Digby consolingly.

Swoosh! came the soot again, and then it ceased. D'Arcy was out of the box-room chimney at last, and in the wider shaft that descended to the grate in the study below.

The chimney was broad, but very dark, as well as sooty. As it was an old-fashioned chimney, which once upon a time had been cleaned in the old-fashioned way, by little fellows going up inside, D'Arcy expected to find some support for a climber—and he found it.

There were iron clamps in the brickwork, at intervals apart, and by groping for them he found them. He found soot, too, in huge quantities, and wherever he touched a clamp or a brick, he dislodged it in clouds.

D'Arcy was gasping for breath now, almost suffocated by the fumes of the soot. Now that he was in Glyn's chimney, he was sending showers of it down into Glyn's grate; and occupied as the amateur inventor was, he could hardly fail to notice it.

A shower of soot that smothered half the study drew Glyn's attention towards the grate, and he came over towards it. It occurred to him at once that this was why the fire had been extinguished from above—to make it possible for an attack to be made by means of the chimney.

"Stop, there!" shouted Glyn. "Who's that?"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Gussy, you ass! Stop where you are!"
 "I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."
 "Go back!"
 "Wats!"

"I'll jolly well light a fire under you if you don't go back!" roared Glyn.

"Gweat Scott!"
 "Are you going?"
 "No, bai Jove—I'm comin'!"

And Arthur Augustus manfully let go his hold and slid fairly down the chimney—and alighted in the grate in the midst of a terrific shower of soot. He bumped there, and rolled out on the hearthrug, and sat up, so astounding a figure, that Glyn simply staggered at the sight of him.

CHAPTER 13.
 Something Like Soot!

"**B**AI Jove!"
 Arthur Augustus gasped out that ejaculation as he sat on the rug, blinking at Glyn. His face and head, his clothes and hands, were smothered, and as black as the ace of spades.

He groped for his monocle, and crammed it into his eye; but it was thick with soot, and he could not see through it. He let it drop upon its cord again.

"Bai Jove!"
 "W-w-w-what!" gasped Glyn.

D'Arcy staggered to his feet.
 "Do I look vewy—vewy dirtay, deah boy?"
 "Dirty!" said Glyn, with an almost hysterical chuckle.

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I can see nothin' to laugh at."
 "Ha, ha! Look in the glass, then."

Arthur Augustus looked in the glass, and started back at the terrible reflection.

"Bai Jove! It's howwid!"
 "Nice state to come into a chap's study in!" growled Glyn.
 "You'd better go back the way you've come!"

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"Wats!"
 "Look here—"
 "I'm goin' to have that door open."
 "Nothing of the sort."
 "I ordah you to open that doah, Glyn."
 "Go hon!"

"Othahwise, I shall have no wesome but to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Ha, ha!"
 "You wefuse?"
 "Yes, rather!"

"Vewy well. Pway put up your fists."
 And Arthur Augustus advanced upon the Liverpool lad. Bernard Glyn retreated. He wasn't afraid of D'Arcy's fists, but he didn't want to come into contact with a walking heap of soot. He backed away round the table.

"Keep off, you horrid sweep!" he exclaimed. "You're not fit to come near a human being!"

"Weally, Glyn—"
 "Keep off!"

D'Arcy followed him round the table. He knocked into Glyn's invention, and there was a clink and a clank. D'Arcy stared at that invention in astonishment. It was a framework of iron and steel, with an electric-motor fastened inside, and in general shape it bore a resemblance to the skeleton of a gigantic horse. It filled up half the study, and it was difficult to pass between it and the table.

"Bai Jove! What is that wotten contwivance?" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Mind your own business."
 "Is that your invention?"
 "Don't ask questions."

"Vewy well—open the door, deah boy, and you can keep on makin' these wotten contwaptions as long as you like."
 "Rats!"

"Then I shall give you a feahful thwashin', and I twust it will be a lesson to you."

D'Arcy rushed at the inventor of St. Jim's. Bernard Glyn dodged round the table again.

"Keep off!" he exclaimed. "Keep off, you filthy sweep! Don't come near me!"

"Open the door, then."
 "I can't!" roared Glyn. "It's screwed."
 "Unscrew it, then."
 "It would take too long."
 "I am willin' to wait."
 "Rats!"

D'Arcy rushed after him again. Again the Liverpool lad dodged, but D'Arcy did not slacken the pursuit this time. He dashed on recklessly, and caught his leg in an outlying part of the wonderful invention, and rolled over on the floor.

There was a terrific clinking and clanking as the wonderful invention rolled after him.

Bernard Glyn gave a wild yell.

"Oh, you ass! You've mucked it up!"
 "Ow! I'm hurt!"
 "Serve you jolly well right."
 "Ow!"

"You've mucked it up!" howled Glyn, dragging at the wonderful invention. "This is the second time to-day it's been knocked over by a silly ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass."
 "Oh, you duffer! It's mixed up now. It will take me hours to get it straight again. Now it won't work to-night at all, I suppose. Oh, you ass!"

"Weally, Glyn—"
 "You frabjous burbler!"

D'Arcy staggered to his feet. The wonderful invention was a complicated mass of rods and levers and springs and wires of all sorts now, without form and void. D'Arcy could not help grinning a little through the soot as he looked at it.

"Bai Jove, it does look wathah wocky!" he remarked. "Howevah, the twouble is about the door. Are you goin' to open it?"

"No!" roared Glyn.
 "Vewy well—put up your fists."
 "Keep off—oh!"

Glyn was dragging at his mixed-up invention. D'Arcy seized him and dragged at him. The inventor of the Shell turned upon the sooty Fourth-Former wrathfully.

"Well, come on, if you will have it!" he exclaimed.
 "Yaas, wathah. I am goin' to—ow!"
 "There, you ass!"
 "Ow!"

Reckless of the soot now, Bernard Glyn closed with the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy rolled over on the floor, with the Liverpool lad sprawling over him. The bump on the floor knocked all the breath out of D'Arcy, and it knocked off a great deal of his soot, most of which bestowed itself upon Glyn.

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"Help!" yelled D'Arcy. "Wescue, deah boys!"

"Now, then, you ass!"

"Wescue!"

There was a sound of smothering and sliding and sneezing in the chimney, and a form shot down and rolled out on the hearthrug.

It was Jack Blake, but he was scarcely recognisable. He was almost as black as Arthur Augustus.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Wescue, deah boy."

"What ho!"

Jack Blake had a grasp upon Glyn in two seconds. He dragged at him, and Glyn held on to D'Arcy manfully.

"Come on, Tom Mewwy—wescue!"

"Right you are."

Tom Merry shot down the chimney. He came into the study in the midst of clouds of soot, looking like a Central African as to complexion. He seized upon Bernard Glyn, and then the Liverpool lad, in the grasp of three pairs of hands, had to give in.

The study was in a shocking state by this time. Soot was everywhere—there was not a corner that was not smothered with it, and the carpet was as black as the juniors.

"Now, then," exclaimed Tom Merry; "we've got him."

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Unfasten that door, you ass!"

"Yah!"

"Where's the screw-driver?"

"Find out."

"Pull that contraption to pieces, Blake, and see if there's a screw-driver among it—"

"Hold on!" roared Glyn. "Let my invention alone."

"I'll find the screw-driver."

"Look sharp, then! Good—now open the door."

"I'll see you hanged first!"

"You'll see us jump on the contraption if you don't."

"Look here—"

"All together!" said Tom Merry, in a business-like tone.

"Stop!" gasped Glyn. "I'll—I'll unscrew the door."

"Then buck up."

Bernard Glyn unscrewed the door. It was not a brief task, for he had driven in five or six big screws their full length, and the wood was hard. He sweated over the screw driver. Tom Merry called up the chimney.

"Lowther!"

"Hallo!"

"It's all right now, the door's being opened."

"Good!"

And the juniors in the box-room descended to the Shell passage, and waited outside the door of the end study—quietly enough, in case Knox should be still on the warpath. Bernard Glyn unscrewed screw after screw.

"Here's the box," said Blake, dragging it out. "Better not open it here, there's too much soot about. I'm jolly hungry, though."

"There you are!" snorted Glyn.

The last screw was out. Tom Merry opened the door. The juniors rushed in. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane simply gasped at the sight of the study. It was reeking with soot from one end to the other.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Kangaroo. "The blessed place will never be clean again."

"What a state!" ejaculated Clifton Dane. "Look at the carpet—and the curtains! Phew!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's a bit dustay."

"You've got yourselves to thank for it," snorted Glyn.

"I didn't want you to come down the chimney."

"It's your fault—"

"Rats! It's yours."

"Look here—"

"You duffers!"

"We jolly well haven't had all this blessed trouble for nothing," exclaimed Figgins. "As everything else is so sooty, I think a little more wouldn't hurt that bounder—"

"It would soot him," said Monty Lowther, who never let slip a chance of making a pun, good, bad, or indifferent.

"Oh, don't; your jokes are worse than the soot!" said Manners.

"Collar that bounder."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Glyn. "I—"

"Yaas, wathah; collah the wascal! It would be wottenly unfaah for him to be less sootay than we are, when he has caused all the twouble. Collah him!"

"Look here, I— Oh!"

Bernard Glyn was collared. The juniors were excited, and it certainly wasn't fair that Glyn should be less sooty than D'Arcy or Blake or Tom Merry. Even Fatty Wynn was willing to delay the feed a few more minutes for the sake of giving the inventor of St. Jim's a much-needed lesson.

Glyn was rolled on the sooty carpet, struggling helplessly, till his face and hands and clothes had collected up nearly

all the soot that was there. Then, leaving him gasping in a state of awful blackness, the juniors crowded out of the end study, taking the famous box with them—leaving Glyn alone with his invention—and the soot. Enthusiastic as the amateur inventor was, he was certainly thinking more about the soot than about the invention at that moment.

"I wathah think we had bettah get a wash," D'Arcy remarked, in the passage. "You fellows can begin the feed—I shall be some little time before I join you, I think."

"Same here," said Tom Merry ruefully.

"And here," said Blake.

"Right ho!" said Kangaroo. "Come as quickly as you can—there's heaps, and there will be plenty left, and it would be cruelty to animals to keep Fatty Wynn waiting any longer."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the three sooty juniors went off to bath and change, while Kangaroo & Co. carried the box to the club-room, where it was opened, and the long-delayed feast commenced at last. A beaming smile overspread Fatty Wynn's plump countenance as he sat down at the table. The good things that were handed out of the box and spread upon the table seemed innumerable; Cornstalk & Co. were certainly doing the thing well this time.

"My hat!" said Fatty Wynn. "This was worth waiting for."

But he did not wait any longer. He began at once, and did not speak again—his jaws were busy, but not with conversation. And every moment his fat face became shinier and happier.

CHAPTER 14.

A Raid of the Grammarians.

"HIST!"

"Eh?"

"Quiet!"

"Who's making a row?"

"I didn't say anybody was, Monkey. Only don't, that's all."

"Look here, Gordon Gay—"

"Stuff! I'm looking ahead."

"I'm not going—"

"Certainly not—you're coming!"

"I'm not going to stand—"

"You can't sit down here, Monkey," said Gordon Gay, in a whispered tone of remonstrance. "Don't be an ass!"

Frank Monk breathed hard through his nose—harder as he heard Carboy and Lane indulge in a subdued chuckle.

The four Grammarians were in dangerous quarters, and caution was necessary, or it is extremely probable that Frank Monk would have let out his left there and then, and that Gordon Gay would have sat down in the passage.

It was dusk in the quadrangle at St. Jim's—deep dusk. The buildings were disappearing in the falling veil of night, and windows were beginning to gleam. But the passages were not all lighted up yet, and the four Grammarians were stealing along in the dusk, with their eyes keenly open for foes.

They had entered the precincts of St. Jim's, and gained an entrance into the School House without attracting attention. It was Gordon Gay's idea, and Frank Monk had regarded it as rather risky; but he did not care to hang back. Gordon Gay was determined to avenge the defeat of the afternoon, and if the idea worked out well, it certainly would be one up against St. Jim's.

The idea was to get into the School House at teatime, when all the fellows would be in the dining-room or else having tea in their studies, and fasten Tom Merry up in his room, and placard the Shell passage with notices to the effect that St. Jim's had been "done" by Rylcombe Grammar School. Lane and Carboy had a number of cards, ready written, bearing the legend, "Down with St. Jim's," all ready to pin up, and Gordon Gay had a mallet and several wooden wedges. It was risky—but it was a good jape if it came off—and Gordon Gay, with his usual coolness, was ready to run any risks.

Frank Monk had always been the acknowledged leader of the juniors in Rylcombe Grammar School, but since the coming of Gordon Gay his position had been more than shaky. There was nothing "forward" about Gay; but he was, as a matter of fact, a born leader, and the Grammar School juniors unconsciously realised it. And Gay, without effort on his own part, was gradually gliding into the position of leader of the Grammar Lower School.

Whereat Frank Monk sometimes chafed considerably though he was always loyally ready to back up C

keeping the Grammar School's end up against St. Jij

"Hist!" repeated Gordon Gay.

"Rats!"

"I tell you—"

up in the juniors, and

"Bosh!"
 "Look here, Monkey——"
 "Oh, cheese it!"
 "I can hear——"
 "Rubbish!"
 "There's somebody coming."
 "Rats!"

"Shut up, Monkey!" whispered Carboy. "I can hear somebody coming."

Monk sniffed; but a footstep was audible, and he had to admit it. The four Grammarians dodged into an alcove in the passage, and laid low in the dusk.

The footsteps were coming along from the stairs, and three forms loomed up in the gloom. Frank Monk peeped out, and recognised Tom Merry, Blake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The three juniors had a newly-washed and brushed appearance, and D'Arcy's collar was of almost unnatural whiteness.

"Bai Jove, we've been wathah long!" the swell of St. Jim's remarked, his voice quite audible to the Grammarians crouching in the alcove.

"Well, there was such a blessed lot of soot to get off," said Blake; "I thought it would never come out of my hair."

"Yaas, wathah! I feel dirtay still. I shall have a hot bath before goin' to bed to-night, to make sure that I am weally quite clean."

"My dear Gussy, you look as clean as a new pin," said Tom Merry. "I'm fearfully hungry. Jolly nice way we've spent our first afternoon home."

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

Gordon Gay compressed his lips. The three juniors were coming straight on, and if they passed that open alcove, the chances were ten to one that they would observe the Grammarians, in spite of the dusk in the passage.

Gay made a sign to his comrades.

As soon as the Saints came abreast of the alcove the only thing was to rush on them, seize and bump them, and fly.

But the next moment the Grammar raider drew a breath of relief.

The three St. Jim's fellows had stopped.

They stopped at a door only a couple of yards from the alcove, and Tom Merry pulled it open, and a flood of light fell out into the passage, mingled with a scent of viands, and a buzz of cheery voices and clinking of knives and forks and glasses.

The three juniors were greeted with cheery exclamations.

"Come in, Tom Merry!"

"What a time you've been, Blake!"

"Never mind—there's plenty left."

"Have you been curling Gussy's hair?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

The closing door cut off the rest of D'Arcy's remonstrance. The passage was in darkness again. The four Grammarians looked at one another.

"There's a feed on," murmured Frank Monk.

"Yes, rather, and a big feed, too, as they're not in a study," said Lane.

"That's so."

Gordon Gay chuckled.

"All the better. We shall have a regular bag this time; a dozen or more of them, I fancy. Come on." He stepped out of the alcove. "You keep watch at the end of the passage, Carboy."

"Right you are!"

Carboy went down to the end of the passage, towards the stairs, to keep watch for an enemy. Frank Monk, Lane, and Gordon Gay approached the door of the club-room.

Silently Gay knelt and placed a wedge in position under the door. Once that was driven in, the door, which was made to open outwards on the corridor, would be hermetically fastened.

"Go it!" muttered Monk.

Bang!

The mallet descended upon the wood, and the wedge was driven in. Bang! Bang! Bang! Another and another wedge were quickly added.

There was a loud exclamation within the club-room. Half the feasters were on their feet now.

"What's that?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Open the door!"

Three or four fellows pushed at the door from within. It did not budge. Gordon Gay tapped on the panels with his mallet.

"Caught!"

"What—— Who's that?"

"Ha, ha, ha! This is where we grin!" sang out Frank Monk. "Caught! This is one for the Grammar School! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Gwammah cads!"

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CHAPTER 15.

A Hot Chase.

GORDON GAY chuckled softly. The door was fast, and the chums of St. Jim's were prisoners in their own club-room.

Gordon Gay tapped on the door again.

"Hallo, duffers!"

"You wottah!"

"Who's top school now?"

"St. Jim's!" shouted back Tom Merry. "Wait till we get hold of you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwammah wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Loud and long laughed the Grammarians. There was a loud voice along the corridor, from the direction of the stairs.

"If you youngsters don't make less row, I shall come up there."

"Phew!" muttered Monk. "Kildare!"

The Grammar School juniors knew the voice well. It belonged to Kildare of the Sixth Form, the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare evidently imagined that the hammering in the passage, and the loud laughter, proceeded from exuberant juniors of St. Jim's, and was quite unaware of the fact that the enemy were within the gates.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop that row!"

"Cheese it!" muttered Lane. "We don't want to be caught here."

Hammer, hammer, hammer, came on the door from within the club-room. The excited juniors had left the feed—all except Fatty Wynn. Fatty Wynn had been at the table a good time, and he had performed miracles there; but he was not prepared to quit it yet, and nothing short of an earthquake would have removed him.

"My hat!" said Gordon Gay. "They're making a row."

Carboy came running along the passage.

"Look out! Kildare's coming!"

"Phew!"

The terrific din was growing instead of ceasing. Kildare, breathing wrath, was coming up the stairs two at a time.

"Cornered!" muttered Lane.

Gordon Gay shook his head.

"We can't get downstairs," exclaimed Carboy, "and we'd better get along! Kildare will be here in two ticks."

"Come on, then!"

"Which way?"

"We can dodge into the next passage."

"The Shell passage," said Frank Monk, who had often visited St. Jim's, and knew the lay of the land very well.

"All right; come on!"

The four Grammarians scuttled away. Kildare came up just as they vanished round the nearest corner.

The captain of St. Jim's was looking wrathful. There had been a great deal of noise in the School House that afternoon, and he was getting exasperated. He had come up with a cane in his hand, prepared to wreak summary punishment upon the disturbers of the peace.

He stopped outside the door of the club-room, upon which Tom Merry & Co. were hammering from within.

"Yah! Grammar cads!"

"Down with the Grammar School!"

"We'll pulverise you!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Open this door!"

Kildare grinned.

The wedges under the door, and the inscriptions on the door and the walls, told him at a glance that there had been a Grammarian raid.

He laughed heartily.

"Hallo, you kids——"

"Yah! Cad!"

"Rotter!"

"Boundah!"

"Hold on, that's Kildare's voice."

"Bai Jove!"

"I say Kildare, old chap, open the door, will you? We've been bunged in here by a set of Grammar rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Sixth-Former kicked away the wedges from the door, and it was pushed open. The red and excited juniors crowded out into the passage. They looked very sheepish as they beheld Kildare's laughing face.

"So the Grammarians have been here," said Kildare.

"Yaas, wathah! Look here, deah boys!"

The juniors smiled sickly smiles as they read the notices up on all sides—"Down with St. Jim's!"

"The cheek!" snorted Blake. "Which way did they go, Kildare?"

"They must have gone up the passage," said Kildare. "They certainly didn't pass me."

"Great Scott! Then they're still in the House!" exclaimed Digby eagerly.

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, don't make too much row, that's all," said Kildare, turning away. "There's been enough disturbance this afternoon—enough even to celebrate your home-coming." And the captain of St. Jim's went downstairs.

"The bounders are still in the house!" exclaimed Tom Merry eagerly. "We'll have them. Look here—"

"Hold on a minute!" gasped Herries. "I'll fetch Towser, and he will track them down like a shot—"

"Blow Towser!"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"I agwee with Lowthah!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "We don't want that howwid beast! He has no respect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

"Some of you get on that staircase, to stop them that way," Tom Merry directed hurriedly. "Figgins & Co. can do that. Blake and Herries and Digby can watch this passage. Gussy and Dane and Kangaroo can cut round to the end of the Shell passage. The rest of us can go this way and chase them. If every earth's stopped, we shall have the blessed foxes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry's directions were immediately followed.

The juniors separated to guard the various ways of escape, it being agreed that they were all to collect again at the sound of Tom Merry's whistle, which he would give when he had run down the fugitives.

The Terrible Three, with Gore and Reilly, rushed in pursuit of the Grammar School juniors.

Meanwhile Gordon Gay & Co. were finding themselves in difficulties.

The alarm had been given now, and even Gay was beginning to wonder whether they would get out of the hands of the Saints. Frank Monk, as the one who knew the place best, took the lead in the flight. The Grammarians doubled round to the staircase by the Fourth-Form passage, and found figures looming up in the dusk there. The staircase was already watched. They dodged into the Shell corridors by a side passage, and found three figures just arriving panting at the end. They turned to go back the way they had come, but footsteps were already close in pursuit.

They stopped, panting, at the corner.

"My hat!" gasped Monk. "Where now?"

"There's only one way," said Gordon Gay. "Up the passage."

"That leads only into a box-room."

"Can't be helped; no good staying here to be caught."

And Gordon Gay ran on. The others followed, though without much hope; it was merely a postponement of the inevitable.

"We may get a chance to hide!" panted Gordon Gay.

"They'll hunt us out."

"Well, anyway, we can dodge into a study and lock ourselves in, and make terms. They may give us a truce rather than have a study wrecked."

"By George, that's an idea!"

"Here's the end."

The juniors halted at the box-room, which closed the end of the passage. It was one of the many old rooms in the School House that were used as box-rooms. The door of it closed up the end of the passage; the Grammarians had come to the end of a blind alley. In the dusky corridor behind sounded loud footsteps.

Gordon Gay tried the box-room door; it was locked, and the key was gone. The junior uttered an exclamation.

"It won't open!"

"They're close behind!" muttered Carboy.

"Get into this study!"

Gay turned to the door of the end study, and opened it. There was no light under the door, which seemed to indicate that the room was unoccupied. Certainly Bernard Glyn could not have been still at work on his invention, in the dark. Of the stirring scenes that had taken place in the study that afternoon the Grammarians had no idea; but a still more startling scene was about to be enacted.

Gay flung open the door, and the chums rushed in.

The next moment they staggered back with a yell of affright.

In the darkness of the study a strange figure loomed up, and a pair of bright green eyes glared at the intruders.

"Ow!" gasped Carboy. "Help!"

CHAPTER 16.

"It!"

"H!"

"Ah!"

"W-h-h-h-hat!"

"Oh!"

The Grammar School juniors started back in terror and consternation as the fearful figure loomed up in the dusk of the end study.

What it was they could not guess.

They only caught a glimpse of a gigantic form, of a pair of glittering green eyes, that seemed to be advancing upon them. Then there was a snort, and a steaming breath was hot upon their faces.

For a moment they staggered, aghast; then, with gasps of terror, they fled from the study. Little cared they for the pursuers now. They would have run any risk to get away from that nameless horror.

They tore out into the passage wildly, and rushed away, and collided fairly with Tom Merry & Co. a dozen yards from the door.

There was a yell of triumph from the St. Jim's juniors.

"Here they are!"

"Grammar cads!"

"We've got them!"

To Tom Merry's surprise the Grammarians offered absolutely no resistance. They were collared and whirled over without striking a blow. They were so overcome by the strange and terrible sight in the end study that they had not a blow left in them.

Tom Merry's whistle rang out sharply. It was the signal to the waiting juniors. There was immediately a sound of hurrying footsteps.

"Got them!"

"This way!"

"Hold 'em tight!"

"Leggo!" gasped Monk. "Have you seen it?"

"Eh?"

"Have you seen it?"

"Seen what?" asked Manners, who was sitting on Monk's chest and holding his ears by way of additional security.

"What are you babbling about?"

"It! The—the fearful thing—"

"Oh, you're dotty!"

"It—it's in the end study!" gasped Gordon Gay, even his nerve shaken for once. "We—we saw it!"

"You saw what?" demanded Tom Merry. "Are you off your rockers?"

"The horrid thing—"

"I suppose it's Glyn he's talking about," said Lowther. "Perhaps Glyn hasn't got the soot off yet, and in that case he's enough to startle anybody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's—it's not Glyn. It's—it's a spectre of some sort—"

"Oh, draw it nild!"

"With flaming eyes—"

"My hat! This chap must have been reading cheap American fiction, and it's got on his brain," said Tom Merry. "I suppose Binks has been lending him some of his New York gore-books."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing of the sort! I—"

"Bai Jove! You've got them!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The cheeky wastahs!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the captured Grammarians. "We'll give them down with St. Jim's, the wottahs!"

"I—I say—"

"You needn't say anything," chuckled Figgins. "You're like a giddy verb, you know—to be, to do, and to suffer. You've been, and done—and now you're going to suffer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wogard that as weally wathah funnay, Figgins."

"Go hon!"

There was a sound in the end study. It was the sound of heavy tramping feet. The juniors all looked along the dusky passage.

"What on earth's that?" asked Tom Merry. "Glyn's tootsies wouldn't make a row like that."

The Grammarians struggled violently.

"Let's get out!" yelled Lane. "It's coming!"

"What's coming?"

"It!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"There it is!" shrieked Carboy.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"Oh!"

Forth from the doorway of the end study came heavy, tramping feet. A strange and weird form loomed up in the dusky corridor. Two flaming eyes looked at the juniors, and from red nostrils came steaming breath.

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By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

ANSWERS

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"RAIDING THE RAIDERS."

Tom Merry & Co. were petrified for a moment.

Then with one accord they bolted.

The Grammarians were, of course, released, and they bolted with the St. Jim's juniors, and the whole crowd poured in wild confusion down the stairs.

"What's the row?"

"What's the matter?"

Voices called questions from all sides, but the startled and terrified juniors did not reply. They rushed right on, and did not stop till they were well out in the open air of the quadrangle.

There they halted, breathless.

The Grammarians did not lose their presence of mind, startled as they were. They were free now, and they seized their chance.

"Come on!" muttered Gordon Gay.

The four Grammar School juniors dashed off across the quadrangle. Taggles, the school porter, was just closing the gates. The four fugitives dashed past him, causing the porter to drop his bunch of keys with a loud clang in his amazement.

"Hang 'em!" murmured Taggles.

And he closed the gates.

In the road the four Grammarians ran on without a pause, and they did not stop till they were a considerable distance from St. Jim's, and all danger of pursuit was over.

Then Gordon Gay slackened down, and the others followed his example.

"Done them that time, at all events!" gasped Gay.

"Yes, rather! But—"

"What could it have been—that awful thing in Glyn's study?"

"Glyn!" exclaimed Frank Monk, a light breaking upon him. "Of course—I had forgotten it was Glyn's study! It's another of his dodges."

"It's what?" said Gordon Gay.

"Glyn's a giddy inventor—he's always making some rotten contraption or other," said Monk. "He made a mechanical figure in imitation of Skimpole once—I saw it. That was before you came to the Grammar School. Of course, you're about a new boy—"

"Oh, cheese that!" said Gordon Gay unceremoniously.

"Well, this is another of Glyn's contraptions, I'll answer for that," said Monk, breaking into a laugh. "We've been scared for nothing."

"The St. Jim's chaps were jolly well scared, too," said Carboy.

"They were—rather!" said Gay. "Quite as much as we were. I suppose it's as Monk says—and it was jolly lucky for us. We're well out of that."

And Monk, Lane, and Carboy agreed that they were.

CHAPTER 17.

Knox Runs for It.

"GREAT Scott!"

"My only hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Crumbs!"

"Phew!"

"What was it?"

"Ask me another!"

The crowd of startled juniors stood outside the School House, gazing in great uneasiness towards the open lighted door. It was not often that Tom Merry & Co. were terrified, but certainly they were very uneasy now.

What was the dreadful apparition that had appeared in the Shell passage?

"Hallo, you chaps!" called out Kangaroo, coming out with Clifton Dane. "Anything the matter?"

"Haven't you seen it?"

"Seen what?"

"It!" shouted Blake. "The horrid monster—whatever it is—I don't know what!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded half a dozen wrathful voices.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you ass—"

"Oh, I've seen it," said Kangaroo, with a grin. "So has Dane here. Haven't you, Dane?"

The Canadian grinned.

"Yes, rather!" he replied. "I've seen it."

"What is it, then?" demanded Figgins.

"Well, it looks like a horse," grinned Dane.

"A horse! How could a horse get into the end study?" exclaimed Manners. "Don't be an ass!"

"I didn't say it was a horse—I only said it looked like a horse. I—Hallo, here's Knox, and he looks as if he meant trouble!"

Knox, the prefect, was looking very annoyed. As a matter of fact, Knox was working up for an exam., and hard work did not improve his temper, and the noise that had been going on was far from improving either his temper or his work. He was looking furious.

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"You young sweeps!" he bawled. "I told you—"

"I say, Knox, we're sorry, you know," said Tom Merry.

"We—we were scared."

"I'll scare you! I'll—"

"There's something awful in the Shell passage!" exclaimed Blake. "Will you go up and see what it is, Knox? We'll come with you."

"Don't talk nonsense to me—"

"It's honest truth!" said Tom Merry. "Honour bright! It's something with flaming eyes, and—and we simply had to bolt."

Knox looked at him. The prefect did not like Tom Merry, but he knew that the captain of the Shell never told an untruth.

"I don't understand this," he said. "I suppose it's somebody playing a trick."

"I—I suppose it is, when you come to think of it," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps you'd better not go—"

"I will go!"

Knox strode into the house again and towards the stairs. The juniors followed him gingerly.

Up the stairs went Knox, two or three at a time, and the juniors followed more slowly. They halted on the first landing.

"I—I say, Knox, be careful!" called out Tom Merry uneasily.

"Oh, hold your tongue!"

Tom bit his lip.

"Nice manners, you know," said Blake. "That's what I like about Knox. He's so polished."

"Bai Jove, I considah—"

"I'm going after him!" exclaimed Tom Merry resolutely.

"He's a beast, but he sha'n't go alone!"

"Hold on!"

"I'm going—you can come if you like!"

Tom Merry ascended the second flight of stairs. Several of the juniors followed. They were not halfway to the second landing when there was a terrific yell from above.

Knox came flying back, his eyes distended, his face white with terror.

He burst down the stairs and through the juniors like a madman, knocking them to right and left, and sending them spinning.

"Knox!" cried Tom Merry, grasping the banisters to save himself. "Knox! I say—"

The prefect did not look at him. He rushed down the rest of the stairs madly, bolted into his study, and the juniors heard him lock the door and they pile the furniture against it.

They stood rooted to the stairs for some moments. From above came a strange sound—strange enough to hear in the School House of St. Jim's.

Snort!

It was a note like the snorting of a wild beast of tremendous power, and it brought a vision of hippopotami and such animals to the startled minds of the juniors. Tom Merry looked up the staircase.

Two flaming greenish eyes glared down at him.

"Come away!" yelled Blake.

And the juniors ran.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane ran with the rest. But they stopped in the lower hall to chuckle, as if they found something amusing in what terrified the others.

"This way," muttered Kangaroo.

Clifton Dane nodded, and followed his Australian chum. They dodged away to the back staircase, by which it was possible to gain the Shell passage. The others were far too excited and disturbed to notice them go.

Kangaroo and Dane reached the Shell passage, and ran towards the top of the stairs. They almost ran into a shadowy figure. There was a sharp exclamation in Bernard Glyn's voice.

"Hallo! Who— Oh, it's you!"

"Yes, you ass!"

"You villain!" gurgled Clifton Dane. "You frabjous duffer! I had no idea you were going to work it off like that."

Bernard Glyn chuckled.

"It's only a trial trip."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up! You'll give the game away."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm jolly well getting level for the bother they've given me," said Bernard Glyn. "I'll teach 'em to bust my inventions for the sake of a rotten feed."

"Ha, ha! But is it finished?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"
 "Hallo! My hat!"
 There was a snort from the direction of the stairs. Bernard Glyn ran forward, and his chums followed him, chuckling. Snort, snort, snort!
 "Phew!" said the Liverpool lad, in tones of dismay.
 "What's the matter? Won't it work?"
 "Yes, hang it!"
 "Eh? Why—?"
 "It won't stop!"
 "What!"
 "Something's gone wrong! I—I can't stop it!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You ass, it's no laughing matter! It—"
 "Yes, it is!" roared Kangaroo; and he fairly threw himself on the linoleum and kicked up his heels in a paroxysm of merriment. "Ha, ha, ha! Oh, you giddy inventor! You can't stop it! Let her rip! Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 18. The Dreadful Apparition.

TRAMP!
 Tramp!
 Tramp!

The heavy tread sounded on the wide stairs. Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!
 Tom Merry & Co. fled helter-skelter down the stairs and across the hall. A crowd of other fellows ran with them. The alarm was general now.
 Fellows of all Forms came out of their studies, loudly inquiring what the matter was, or staring with startled eyes towards the staircase.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!
 As a huge head appeared round the bend of the staircase, the spectators gave a wild yell of affright, and swarmed out into the quadrangle. The steady tramp came on. The yells of the terrified boys, and the heavy tramp on the stairs, brought Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form, out of his study. The little, short-sighted gentleman blinked through his glasses at the staircase.

"Dear me! Who is making that noise?" he exclaimed. "I insist— Oh!"
 Mr. Lathom's eyes almost started from his head as he beheld a gigantic figure looming on the stairs, and descending with steady feet, one hoof after another planted with perfect steadiness and certainty on step below step.

For one moment Mr. Lathom gazed blankly at the awesome apparition, and then he fled with a wild shriek. He threw open the door of Mr. Railton's study, and dashed in, and slammed the door behind him.

Mr. Railton was sitting at his table, writing. He jumped up as the Fourth Form-master slammed the door and groped for the key. There was none in the lock.

"Where is the key?" cried Mr. Lathom, in a shrill, sharp voice. "The key—the key!"

"What?"
 "The key! The key!"
 "Mr. Lathom!"
 "Where is the key?" cried the Fourth Form-master, setting his foot against the door. "Oh! Quick! Where is the key?"

"What is the matter?"
 "It is outside!"
 "What is outside?" exclaimed the master of the School House, springing towards the excited little gentleman.

"What can you mean?"
 "It—it—it is outside!"
 "What? What?"
 "The horrible beast!"

"My dear Lathom," said Mr. Railton, looking scrutinisingly at the Fourth Form-master, under the very natural impression that the little gentleman had been drinking—"my dear Lathom! You are excited! Calm yourself, I pray."

"Where is the key?"
 "I really do not know. I—"
 "Then help me put the table against the door, and the desk—quick! The awful thing may come bursting in at any moment."

"What thing?"
 "Hark! Cannot you hear it?"
 Mr. Railton began to believe that the Fourth Form-master was not intoxicated, but insane. He started, however, as a strange sound came to his ears from without.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp!
 It was the heavy tramp on the stairs, far too heavy for a human being, and sounding with a strange mechanical regularity.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Railton. "What is it?"
 "It's the—the apparition!"

"I must see—"

Mr. Lathom gave a terrified shriek as the House-master laid his hand upon the door. He caught Mr. Railton by the sleeve and pulled him back.

"You are not going out—"
 "I am!"
 "But—but it is there!"

"I do not know what you mean, but I shall certainly see what is the matter," said the House-master quietly.

"Pray let go the door."
 "There is danger—fearful danger—"
 "If there is danger, my place is there, as my boys are there," said the House-master.

"Yes—yes; but the awful beast—"
 "Come, come, let me pass!"

The athletic House-master lifted the little gentleman out of the way as if he had been a child, and threw the study door open. He strode out into the passage.

Then, in spite of his powerful nerves, the House-master started back with a cry of alarm and dismay.

The apparition had just reached the bottom of the stairs. It tramped on towards the open door leading into the quadrangle, a terrified crowd of juniors fleeing before it.

"Good heavens!" cried Mr. Railton.
 "Come in!" shrieked Mr. Lathom. "Quick, before you are devoured!"

But the House-master did not budge. The thing moved with great rapidity, and it seemed to pass like a flash before the House-master's eyes, and it vanished out into the darkness of the quadrangle.

What was it?
 It was a thing in the shape of a gigantic horse, but surely no horse of flesh and blood ever had so fiercely flaming a pair of eyes, or ejected steam so thickly from such red nostrils!

It strode along swiftly, planting one foot firmly after another, and its long, glossy tail lashed and waved behind it.

"Good heavens!" repeated the House-master.
 He rushed after the apparition. He stared blankly out into the dusky quadrangle. From the darkness came the terrified exclamations of the scattering juniors. Mr. Railton turned as Kildare joined him. The captain of St. Jim's was pale and startled.

"W-w-what is it, sir?" gasped Kildare.
 It was evident that Kildare had seen it, too. Mr. Railton shook his head.

"I do not know, Kildare. I—I cannot imagine."
 "How could a horse get into the School House, and upstairs, too?"

"I do not understand."
 Three juniors came downstairs—Glyn and Dane and Kangaroo. Mr. Railton glanced at them. The three juniors were looking preternaturally grave and solemn. They dodged quickly out into the quadrangle without appearing to see the House-master.

"I cannot understand this," Mr. Railton exclaimed. "I must see into it. The—the animal must—must have escaped from some circus, I should say. An ordinary horse certainly would not be able to descend a staircase in safety, I should think."

Kildare gave a gasp of relief.
 "Ah! Of course, sir! Tomsonio's Circus is over at Wayland still, and this may be one of their animals, which has found its way back here."

"It is possible. We must look for it, and ascertain what it is. It may do great damage in the quadrangle. It might even attack some of the boys. Call up some of the prefects, Kildare, and join me there."

"Certainly, sir!"
 And the hunt for the mysterious horse commenced.

CHAPTER 19.

Towser Gets the Worst of It.

TOM MERRY & CO. were in the quadrangle. It was seldom that they were so thrown off their balance, but this time it could not be denied that they were startled out of their wits.

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What a ripping afternoon for our first day home—I don't think!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "I—I can't understand it," said Blake. "What is it?"

"Blessed if I know."
 "Look!" yelled Figgins.
 "Oh, great Scott!"
 "Look!"
 "There it is!"

The strange figure loomed up in the illuminated doorway of the School House. It came out with a swift and steady

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tramp. Down the great, broad, stone steps, and into the quadrangle, the mysterious thing tramped on, and the juniors scattered away into the darkness. Tom Merry ran as hard as any.

There was something too horribly uncanny about the apparition for even the hero of the Shell to want to see it at closer quarters.

"B-b-bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

"Run for your lives!"

And they ran.

There was hardly a star in the sky as yet, and the quadrangle was intensely dark, under the shadows of the big elms especially. But in the gloom could faintly be seen the huge looming figure, and clearly through the darkness glistened the flaming, greenish eyes, and glowed the white, steaming breath from the nostrils.

"M-my hat!" gasped Figgins. "I—I wish we'd stayed a bit longer at Monte Carlo! It's after us! Run!"

"It's gaining!"

"Dodge among the trees."

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp! Snort!

The juniors dodged, and the Thing tramped on steadily. It did not turn from its path in pursuit of them, and they slackened pace and took courage again. It was marching directly across the quadrangle towards the gates.

"It's a horse," said Monty Iowther, with conviction.

"It's like one—that's a fact."

"But those eyes!"

"And it's breathing like a blessed steam-engine."

"It might be a giddy circus horse belonging to Tomsonio's," said Manners. "I remember they had a lot of trick horses that could waltz up and down stairs, and that sort of thing."

"It's trying to get out," said Kerr. "Look! It's going straight for the gates."

"They're locked."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look—look!"

The Thing had reached the iron gates. They were locked, and there was no way through the old arched stone gateway. The Thing marched on straight to the gates, and the great head buffed with a clang upon the iron bars.

The shock drove the beast back a few paces, and then it advanced upon the gates again with more force than before. Another crash, and the Thing swung round, as if turned by the shock, and swung off in a fresh direction. It tramped on towards the lodge inhabited by Taggles the porter.

Straight to the lodge-door it went, and its head bumped on the door.

Bump, bump!

"My only hat! It's trying to get into Taggy's lodge!"

"Gweat Scott!"

Each bump on the lodge door only made the Thing return to the charge, as if it were driven straight onwards by an irresistible force within—as perhaps it was.

There was a wrathful voice from within the lodge.

"Stop that row hout there!"

It was the voice of Taggles. The worthy porter of St. Jim's evidently imagined that his door was being bumped by some mischievous junior. He had no idea of the terrible visitor that was tramping without.

Bump!

"Will you stop it, you young rascal? I'll report yer!"

Bump!

"I'll come out to yer in a minute!"

Bump!

There was a rattle at the lock of the door lodge. The exasperated Taggles was coming out with a stick in his hand. The door opened, and a flood of light fell into the gloom of night.

"Now, then, you young—oh!"

Taggles staggered back at the sight of his fearful visitor.

The huge head with the flaming eyes and open steaming jaws was within a foot of his own, and Taggles leaped back as if he had been suddenly electrified.

"'Elp!" gasped Taggles.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The gigantic Thing tramped on through the open doorway, and Taggles squirmed out of its way with wonderful agility considering his age, and, with howls of terror, rushed into the back room and slammed the door after him and barricaded it.

The Thing marched on straight across the room, bumped on the wall—with disastrous results to a picture hanging there—swung round from the shock, and tramped round, butting on the wall several times before it butted its way round to the doorway again.

Then it tramped out.

The juniors had begun to gather with awestricken faces at the doorway, but a warning yell from Kerr announced that

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the Thing was coming out, and they promptly scattered again.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Out into the quadrangle it came, a terrified crowd scattering before it. Jack Blake caught Herries by the arm.

"Herries! Herries, old man—"

"Eh? Oh! What?"

"Towser!"

"Eh?"

"Get Towser! I'll make Taggles open the gates, and Towser can chase the awful brute out into the road."

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Herries. "Why didn't I think of Towser before?"

"Yaas, wathah! Buck up, Hewwies, deah boy!"

"I'll have Towser here in a jiffy!" And Herries rushed off towards the kennels.

Jack Blake dashed into Taggles's lodge. He thumped at the inner door.

"Go away!" roared the porter from within. "You 'orrible beast! Go away! Oh!"

"Taggles—"

"Oh, the 'orrid sight! Oh!"

"Taggles! Taggles!"

"Ho! Is that you, Master Blake?"

"Yes."

"Where's that 'orrid beast? Where—"

"It's in the quad. We're going to drive it out. Bring out the keys and unlock the gates, Taggy."

"I hain't openin' that door."

"Give me the keys."

"I can't without opening the door."

"Open the door, then!" roared Blake angrily.

"I hain't opening it if I knows it," said Taggles, through the keyhole. "I hain't running risks."

"You ass—"

"Run off and 'ide yourself, Master Blake!"

Grr-r-r-r!

It was Towser's voice in the quadrangle. Blake, with an exclamation of disgust, left the porter's lodge. There was evidently no getting the keys from Taggles.

Grr-r-r-r!

"Here's Towser! Come on."

"Look out! Here comes that awful beast!"

The green eyes flamed through the darkness. The Thing was bearing down upon the juniors. Towser growled and showed his teeth. He did not seem to be in the least afraid of the apparition.

He strained at the chain, and Herries had all his work cut out to hold him in. Towser wanted to get to close quarters.

"Got the keys?" gasped Herries.

"No; Taggles won't open his door."

"I—I can't hold Towser in! Towser! Towsy!"

Grr-r-r-r!

With a wrench the bulldog tore the chain from his master's hand, and it clinked along the ground as Towser shot off towards his prey.

"He's off!"

"Look! Look!"

Straight towards the Thing dashed Towser, with eyes gleaming and jaws opened. Towser meant business!

"Bai Jove! Look!"

Right at the fearsome beast the bulldog leapt.

"Towser's got him!"

"Oh, look!"

The bulldog was at the throat of the Thing—and then he fell heavily to the ground. Somehow the sharp fangs had failed to penetrate the flesh of the Thing, and it strode straight on, as if totally unconscious of the attack of the bulldog.

Towser rolled on the ground, dazed. He was not accustomed to having his terrible teeth made so little of. But he recovered himself quickly, and dashed undaunted to the attack once more.

He hurled himself upon the Thing's hindquarters, his teeth gnashing, but again he failed to get a bite.

He rolled off the body of the Thing as he might have rolled off a wall, and bumped down upon the ground with a heavy bump.

Herries whistled.

"Towser! Towsy!"

Towser picked himself up. He blinked at the tramping figure, and then, with a low whine of terror, scuttled away into the darkness, and did not stop till he was safe in the deepest corner of his kennel, where Herries found him, curled up and palpitating.

The juniors stared at one another.

Towser evidently did not know what to make of the Thing, and had had enough of the contest. What was it? What did it mean?

"Towser's afraid of it," muttered Figgins in awe. "What on earth—"



Taddy struggled with all his might, but could not hope to do much against the odds he had to face.
(An amusing incident in the splendid, long complete tale of Gordon Gay & Co. in this week's issue of "The Empire" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Halfpenny.)

"He couldn't get a bite, deah boy?"

"What on earth is it made of?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Eh?"

"I've got it!"

"Got what, you ass?"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

Blake shook the swell of St. Jim's by the shoulder. D'Arcy's eyeglass dropped from his eye and dangled at the end of its cord. The swell of St. Jim's uttered an exclamation.

"Oh, you wuff ass!"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"It's all wight! I know what it is!"

"Then what is it?" roared a dozen voices furiously.

"It's Glyn's beastly invention."

"What!"

"I wemembah seeing the fwamework of it in his study when I came down the chimney. It isn't a weal horse at all—it's a wotten contwaption!"

"My hat!"

"You wemembah Skimpole II.—the mechanical figah, deah boys? This is anothah of the same kind—only a more howwid monstah!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"I believe Gussy's right!"

"Yaas, wathah! It wequiah a fellow of bwains and judgment to guess these things, you know, and undah the circs.—"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"So this is Glyn's great wheeze! The rascal!"

"The spoofing bouncer!"

"It's a machine!"

"A blessed mechanical horse!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a gleaming of lanterns, and Mr. Railton and half a dozen prefects came rushing by, pokers or sticks in their hands, in search of the apparition.

"Have you seen it, boys?" exclaimed the House-master.

"Yes, sir. It—"

"Where is it?"

"Near the gates, sir. It—"

"Thank you, Blake. You juniors had better get in out of danger."

"Yes, sir, but—"

But Mr. Railton did not stop to listen. He rushed on with Kildare, Darrel, Rusden, and the rest of the prefects, in hot pursuit of the monster. Blake gave a whistle.

"Well, they're on the track!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Let's look for Glyn!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The bouncer can make the thing stop its pranks, I suppose. He ought to have the biggest bumping of his life for this. My hat! What an awful row there will be when the truth comes out!"

"Bai Jove! Wathah!"

And the chums of St. Jim's started looking for the cheerful inventor.

CHAPTER 20.

A Bumping for Three.

"A, ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ho, ho, ho!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Three Shell fellows had thrown themselves upon the shadowed grass under the elms in the quadrangle, and were kicking up their heels and gasping with laughter.

They were, of course, Cornstalk & Co.—Kangaroo, Bernard Glyn, and Clifton Dane. The three young rascals were enjoying the fun hugely.

They could see the flaming eyes of the mechanical horse as it stalked about the quad.; they had heard the growling of Towser; they still heard the startled and terrified exclamations of the boys from all quarters.

And they yelled with laughter till their ribs were aching, and the tears were streaming down their cheeks.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, this is too good!" gasped Kangaroo. "It's too funny!"

"It's too rich!" sobbed Clifton Dane. "Did you notice Latham bolting into Railton's study?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Did you see Figgins running as if for a wager?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Hark! They're still yelling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "My hat! How we'll chip 'em to-morrow!" chuckled Bernard Glyn.

"Somebody else will get chipped to-morrow, I expect, with a cane or a birch," said Kangaroo, sitting up in the grass at last, and gasping for breath. "Do you think you're allowed to play japes of this sort, you howling duffer?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You've startled the whole blessed House out of its wits—Railton and the prefects are chasing your blessed machine over the quad with pokers and things."

Glyn and Dane yelled again.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, it's too funny! Ho, ho, ho!"
 "It's funny now," said Kangaroo, wiping his eyes. "But when Railton finds that it's a giddy machine, and he wants to be introduced to the inventor, it won't seem so funny, I expect."

"I don't care," said Bernard Glyn. "The jape is worth a licking. Besides, I don't see why I should be licked."

"Well, I jolly well do."
 "Mr. Railton takes a great interest in my mechanical contrivances," argued the Liverpool lad. "He praised my Skimpole II. very much. He was greatly interested."

"Yes; but this—"
 "Well, this is the same sort of thing, only better."

"Only more ghastly and more trouble, you mean," said Kangaroo, chuckling. "When Railton and the prefects discover that they have been chasing all over the quad on the track of a giddy machine—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Still, it's good fun, and we'll take the gruel together," said the Cornstalk. "You'll get it hottest, Glyn, and serve you jolly well right. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see I'm to blame in any way. I was simply exercising my genius for mechanics," said Glyn. "I've been encouraged to do it."

"Ha, ha, ha! Not in this way!"
 "Well, you see, the thing's got out of hand. I was determined to have it finished the day Tom Merry came home, so as to show it to him and give him a welcome; and then I was interrupted by a lot of duffers coming into the study again and again—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I had to finish putting it together in a hurry, or not put it together at all," said Glyn. "It's not my fault, I must say. Besides, Gussy's biffing it did it some damage. Some blessed spring's broken, and that's why it won't stop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Here they are!" shouted a voice. "I'd know that Cornstalk yell anywhere. Here the bounders are!"

"Collar them!"

"Pile on them!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

"Look out, you chaps!" gasped Glyn.
 But it was too late. The ringing laughter had caught the ears of Tom Merry & Co., as they searched for the chums of the end study, and guided them to the spot. The juniors piled on Cornstalk & Co. before they had a chance to rise.

The struggling trio were pinned down under the weight of a couple of sturdy juniors each, and others stood by ready to pile on them if needed.

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"We've got them."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Now, then, you bounders—"
 "Lemme gerrup!" gasped Bernard Glyn. "What are you up to?"

"We've found you out, you spoofer!"
 "This is a new edition of Skimpole II., is it?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Glyn breathlessly. "We took you in with it! How you ran! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you ass—"
 "Didn't they run!" roared Kangaroo. "Didn't they just! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Which is top study now?" demanded Clifton Dane, gasping out the words under the weight of Monty Lowther and Figgins. "Which is top study?"

"This is where we grin," gasped Kangaroo. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cheeky asses—"
 "Bai Jove, I wegard them as a twio of impertinent boundahs. I think it would be the pwopah capah to give them a feahful thwashin'."

"Yes, rather."
 "You see, Glyn, we've guessed your rotten wheeze—"

"Pway excuse me, Tom Mewwy. You are labouwin' undah a slight ewwah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy politely.

"Eh? What? What are you chattering about, Gussy?"
 "You remarked that we had guessed the wheeze—"

"Well, so we have."
 "You are mistaken, deah boy. I guessed it," said D'Arcy calmly. "Of course, I'm not the sort of chap to put myself forward in any way, but I weally must dwaw the genewal attention to the fact that I guessed the wheeze."

Tom Merry laughed.
 "So you did, Gussy—quite right. Being such a funny merchant yourself, you naturally had a nose for anything of the sort—"

"I wefuse to be called a funnay merchant. I—"

"Well, funny ass, then," conceded Tom Merry.

"I wegard that as a still more oppwobwious expwession. Weally—"

"Are you going to let us get up?" demanded Kangaroo.
 "You are intewwuptin' me, Kangawoo—"

"Lemme gerrup!"
 "We're jolly well going to bump you," said Tom Merry.

"Lay hold of the bounders, you chaps. They're not going to startle us for nothing."

"Frighten you, you mean," gurgled Kangaroo. "Say it in English."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Startle us," said Tom Merry severely. "Of course, as a matter of fact, we weren't really exactly startled—only a little surprised."

"Ha, ha, ha! Do you always run like that when you're surprised?"

"You ought to get surprised somehow when you're going in for a foot race," said Clifton Dane, with a chuckle.

"You'd win."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 Tom Merry turned pink.

"Nuff said!" he exclaimed. "Bump them!"

"Here, hold on! Ow!"
 Bump!

The three chums of the end study, helpless in the grasp of many hands, were bumped, and bumped again, and yet again. They yelled and struggled furiously.

"Now, then, are you sorry?" demanded Tom Merry.

"No!" roared Kangaroo.
 "Bump them again!"

Bump! Bump!
 "Are you sorry?"

"No. Yes. Ow! Yes!"
 "Are you awfully sorry?"

"No. Yes."
 "Good. Are you awfully fearfully sorry?"

"No!"
 "Bump them!"

Bump, bump, bump!
 "Are you awfully fearfully sorry, Kangaroo?" asked Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Yes," gasped the Cornstalk.
 "Are you awfully fearfully sorry, Dane?"

"Ye-e-es. Ow! Yes!"
 "Are you awfully fearfully sorry, Glyn?"

"No!" gasped Glyn.
 "Bump him!"

Bump, bump, bump!
 "Ow, ow! Yow!"

"Are you awfully fearfully sorry, Glyn?"
 "Yow! Yah! Yes!"

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"Good! Let 'em go!"

And Cornstalk & Co. were released; but they were too breathless and bumped to rise. They lay on the grass gasping.

CHAPTER 21. The Secret Out.

"THERE it is!"

"Look out, sir!"

"I can see it. Kildare," said Mr. Railton quietly. "It is evidently a horse, though of a gigantic size. There is no doubt that it must have escaped from the circus, I should think. We had better surround it—"

"What is the matter here? What is the matter?"

It was the thin, sour face of Mr. Ratcliff, the House-master of the New House at St. Jim's. Mr. Railton turned towards him. The lanterns gleamed upon the thin face of the new House-master.

He looked at Mr. Railton in sour surprise.

"There has been a most disturbing noise in the quadrangle," he snapped. "I came out to see what it was. I did not expect to find that prefects were the cause of it!"

Kildare flushed angrily, and Mr. Railton bit his lip. Mr. Ratcliff was addressing them as if they were a crowd of naughty fags, instead of the top fellows in the top Form of the school. But that was Mr. Ratcliff's way. He had a gift for saying things to make people feel small.

"Really, Mr. Ratcliff—" began the School House master warmly.

"Dear me! Is that you, Mr. Railton?" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, affecting to see the School House-master for the first time. "Dear me! Might I inquire what is the cause of this extraordinary scene?"

"I really do not see any need for you to inquire!" said Mr. Railton tartly. "It seems to me extraordinary that you have not seen or heard the strange animal that has made such a disturbance in the quadrangle."

"A—a strange animal!"

"Certainly!"

Mr. Ratcliff sniffed. He had a most provoking sniff.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Railton! Is it possible that you and the School House prefects are searching the quadrangle for some strange cat or dog—"

"A gigantic horse—"

"A what?"

"A horse, which has doubtless escaped from some circus—that is the only way to account for its extraordinary actions—has entered the school—"

"Come, Mr. Railton—"

"Look out, sir!" shouted Rushden suddenly. "It's coming!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Snort!

Mr. Ratcliff swung round with a gasp of affright.

Flaming eyes and steaming nostrils came swooping through the gloom towards him, and the New House-master's knees knocked together.

For one moment he stood staring in petrified dismay at the awesome beast.

Then, with a yell that was heard all over St. Jim's, he fled. With his gown fluttering in the breeze, he tore off madly, and never paused till he was inside the New House. There he had to pause, for he ran into Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, who was just coming out to see what the uproar in the quadrangle was about.

Monteith staggered across the hall, and Mr. Ratcliff reeled against the open door, gasping for breath. His white, scared face startled the prefect.

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" exclaimed Monteith. "I didn't see you coming! What has happened? Are you ill?"

Mr. Ratcliff did not reply.

He gave Monteith one wild look, and bolted past him, tore into his study, and slammed the door shut, and locked it. Then he sank, almost fainting into his chair. The New House-master was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

Monteith stood astonished for a full minute, staring after the vanished House-master. Then he ran out into the quadrangle to see what was the matter.

The shouts of the hunters guided him, and he joined Mr. Railton and the School House prefects.

"What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed.

"Look out!" said Kildare hurriedly.

"But I— Oh, great Scott!"

Monteith sprang back out of the way of the thing. The apparition was tramping round in a wide circle now, instead of marching straight forward as before. Something had evidently gone wrong with the works, and there was a curious buzzing from the animal as it tramped round and round, with snorting nostrils.

"My hat!" gasped Monteith. "What is it?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Drive it towards the gate!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "It does not seem ferocious at all; it has not offered to attack anyone."

The seniors threw up their hands to scare the horse towards the gate. In the hollow of the stone archway it might have been cornered and secured.

"Shoo!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Shoo!"

But the mechanical horse refused to be "shooed." It tramped on round and round.

"Shoo! Shoo!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp! Snort!

Mr. Railton raised the stick he carried, and stepped closer to the horse, and struck it on the shoulders to drive it away. There was a clang.

The House-master jumped almost clear of the ground in his amazement.

The blow on the horse's shoulder had clanged back, as if he were striking metal instead of flesh and blood.

"Good heavens!" cried Mr. Railton. "It is not alive!"

"What, sir?"

"It—it is some contrivance! It is not alive!"

"Great Scott!"

The blow on the shoulder had changed the Thing's direction once more. It tramped off towards the elm-trees. The seniors followed, utterly amazed, and keenly interested, too, now.

"It is a machine of some sort!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "A mechanical contrivance—a most wonderful one! I cannot understand it!"

Kildare uttered an exclamation.

"Glyn!"

"What do you mean, Kildare?"

"It's another dodge of that young rascal!" exclaimed the captain of St. Jim's, with conviction in his tones. "Don't you remember Skimpole II., sir?"

The House-master started.

"Bless my soul—yes!"

"This is a new dodge of his, and— Hallo!"

A crowd of dark figures appeared among the trees. Tom Merry & Co. crowded in the way of the mechanical horse. Now that they knew that it was a cunningly-contrived machine, they were not afraid of it.

"Collar it!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Hold it!"

"Collah the monstah, deah boys!"

The juniors swarmed upon the mechanical horse. Cornstalk & Co. jumped up breathlessly and lent their aid.

The horse tramped on steadily.

The knocks it had received seemed to have righted the mechanism once more, for it tramped on straight towards the open door of the School House. The light, streaming out into the quadrangle, showed the reverend figure of the Head standing in the doorway. The disturbance in the quadrangle had drawn out Dr. Holmes from his quiet study.

"Stop it!" gasped Tom Merry. "There's the Head!"

"My hat! It will walk into him!"

"That's all right!" panted Bernard Glyn. "It can't walk up the steps; it can only walk down!"

"Stop it!"

"Hang on to it!"

And the juniors hung on to it. But the motive power inside the mechanical horse was working at full force, and it tramped steadily on. The prefects rushed to throw their weight upon it, and the mechanism tramped on, with seven or eight fellows hanging on to its neck, its back, its ears, and its tail.

"It—it won't stop!" gasped Figgins.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not!"

"Hang on!"

Right on tramped the mechanical horse, straight into the radius of light from the open door of the School House. The Head looked out, and his face was transfixed with amazement and wonder, as well it might be.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

The lowest of the School House steps stopped the mechanical horse; it stood tramping aimlessly, and could go no further. Its path was barred.

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Head. "What is that— that extraordinary thing?"

There was something like a smile on Mr. Railton's face as he advanced into the light. The horse tramped and snorted.

"It's a mechanical contrivance, sir," he said. "It has caused a great deal of fright and confusion."

"Dear me!"

"I fancy that Glyn, of the Shell, could tell you more about it, sir."

"Extraordinary! Glyn, come forward!"

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"RAIDING THE RAIDERS."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The inventor of the Shell came forward, not very willingly. The doctor's face was very severe.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Head, noticing Glyn's dishevelled state. "How do you come to be in that untidy condition, Glyn?"

"I—I—I've been bumped, sir!" stammered Glyn.

"Oh! Glyn, are you responsible for that—that extraordinary creature?" demanded the Head, pointing to the mechanical horse, still pawing and snorting and steaming at the bottom of the School House steps.

"I—I made it, sir!"

"Extraordinary! It was very clever of you, Glyn, but—but you surely know that you have no right to cause such a disturbance in the school!"

"It got out of hand, sir," said Bernard Glyn. "I—I couldn't stop it! I finished putting it together in a hurry, because I—I wanted to celebrate Tom Merry's home-coming, sir, and so, you see—"

The Head's face relaxed.

"Well, Glyn, if you really did not mean to cause such a disturbance—"

"I'm sorry, sir! I—I meant it for a lark, too!" said Glyn honestly. "I—I'm sorry there's been trouble, though, sir!"

The Head coughed.

"I—I commend your frankness, Glyn! I shall pardon you! I think, Mr. Railton, that Glyn can be forgiven?"

The House-master smiled.

"I think so, sir. It is a most extraordinary contrivance, and much credit is due to Glyn for his patience and his inventiveness in making it. But he must not have it indoors again, of course."

"Certainly not!"

"I'll take it to the bike-shed, sir," said Bernard Glyn.

And the Head went in, with Mr. Railton; and the two masters were smiling as they turned their backs upon the boys. Glyn ran down the steps.

"Lend a hand here!" he exclaimed. "We'll get the blessed thing into the bike-shed, and then I can get at the machinery and stop it."

"Right you are!"

Tom Merry & Co. laid hold of the mechanical horse, and swung it round. It snorted and tramped off in the direction they guided it in. Figgins ran on ahead and opened the door of the bike-shed, and lighted a lantern.

"Here we are!"

The mechanical horse tramped into the shed. Tom Merry gave a shout:

"Look out! Stop it!"

But they could not stop it. Right on it went among the bicycle stands and cycles, and tramped against the solid wall beyond, which effectually stopped him. The cycles lay scattered on all sides.

"It's all right now!" said Bernard Glyn cheerfully.

"Is it?" said Figgins wrathfully. "Look at my bike—tied in a knot round Gussy's!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Never mind! I can stop the horse now—"

"You'd better stop it," said Tom Merry, laughing, "and if you ever start it again, we'll start on you!"

"Bai Jove, wathah!"

And the juniors crowded out of the bicycle-shed, leaving Cornstalk & Co. to deal with the mechanical horse. Tom Merry chuckled as they took their way back to the School House.

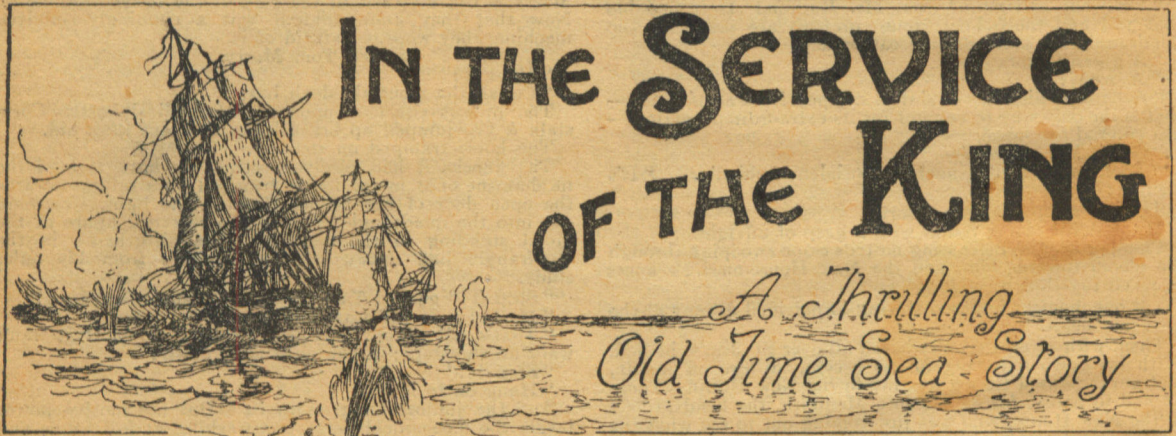
"Well, I must say we've had an exciting day for our return to St. Jim's!" he exclaimed. "This beats Monto Carlo!"

And the juniors agreed that it did.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled: "Raiding the Raiders," by Martin Clifford, next Thursday. Please order your copy of "The Gem" Library in advance. Price 1d.)

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By Lieutenant Lefevre.

READ THIS FIRST!

The Scene in the Cockpit.

Oswald Yorke, a youth of eighteen, whom peculiar circumstances have forced to become a highwayman, one night holds up the carriage of Admiral Sir Sampson Eastlake. He is overpowered, however; but the good old admiral offers him a chance of serving the King in the Navy instead of handing him over to justice. Oswald, therefore, joins the frigate Catapult as a midshipman, under the name of John Smith. Oswald soon "smells powder," as the Catapult engages the French man-o'-war Amadee, which is consorting a captured Indiaman. Under the direction of Mr. Fryer, the first lieutenant, the Catapult has victory within grasp, when the captain, who is under the influence of drink, takes command, and steers the ship out of the fight. Infuriated by his cowardice, the crew threaten mutiny, and Mr. Fryer is hastily summoned by the now frightened captain. Under his authority the rising storm is quelled. Some hours later a strange frigate is seen, and the captain of the Catapult again gives the order to keep away from any fighting. Oswald is disgusted, and he makes his way down to the cockpit where the injured men are being attended to.

(Now go on with the story.)

The scene presented by the cockpit was like a hideous nightmare. On the floor, on roughly contrived beds, lay a dozen or more men, with pale, bloodless faces, and hollow-looking eyes. Some had their heads bandaged; some lay groaning with the pain of a shattered limb; some lay stiff and stark, silent now and for ever.

On the big table, under the dim light cast by a hanging lamp, lay a poor fellow undergoing amputation of the left arm.

There were no anesthetics in those days. The man lay perfectly conscious of all that was going on around him, following every movement made by the doctor with anxious eyes.

In the fight this man had been as brave as any. Now lying helpless awaiting the surgeon's knife, the cold sweat of terror broke out on his forehead, and rolled down his ghastly face.

Dr. Telford heard Oswald enter behind him, but did not turn round. He was intently examining the injured limb.

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"Come and take the man's left hand!" he said sharply. "Hold firmly. Keep the arm steady and extended."

Oswald came forward steadily, and grasped the poor fellow's hand. He felt the flesh quiver under his touch.

"Will—it will hurt, doctor?" gasped the patient. "Hurt! just a bit—a sting, and that's all; it'll be over in a moment. Now, then, turn your eyes away. I'm like the deck-hands. I work better when I am not being watched!" And the doctor laughed pleasantly. "By the way," he went on, talking quietly, as though nothing of importance was about to occur, "which boat were you in, my lad? Mr. Fryer's?"

"No, I was in—" The man ceased speaking suddenly, and set his teeth sharply, and a look of agony distorted his face.

With a practised hand, Dr. Telford made an incision with the knife, quickly severing the bruised and mangled flesh. Oswald was conscious of a feeling of deadly sickness; but he knew that upon his steadiness and coolness the man's life practically depended. It was horrible, but worse was to come. Flinging away the knife, the doctor grasped the saw.

At the sound of the sharp rasp of the implement on the bone, a wild scream broke from the throat of the patient. For a moment, but for a moment only, Oswald's senses swam; then, with a violent effort of will, he fought off the feeling of nausea that was overcoming him. Steady as a rock he stood till the very end. The severed limb was flung aside, and he held the mutilated shoulder, while the doctor quickly caught up and tied the arteries.

It was over. The patient had mercifully fainted, and Oswald staggered back with half-closed eyes, and an insatiable longing for a breath of fresh, cold air.

"What, is it you, Smith?" said the doctor, looking up for the first time. "You are hardly up to this yet, my lad," he said kindly.

"It's all right, sir. I—I am glad if I can be of any use." "No, no; you are shaky enough without having to witness any horrors. Come, Rumbold," he added, turning to the master's mate, who had been administering water to some of the patients, "we'll have that fellow with the shattered knee next!"

Rumbold went over to where a man lay quietly in the shadow.

"He's saved you a job this time, doctor," he said, rising.

Dr. Telford elevated his eyebrows.

"Gone?" he asked.

"Dead as Queen Anne!" said Rumbold, without a trace of emotion.

The doctor stretched out his arms.

"Well, that finishes it!" he said. "Just trundle round to Mr. Fryer's cabin, Rumbold, and see how he is getting on. These confounded little one-horse engagements give me more work to do than a battle royal. In a big fight, Mr. Smith, the men get killed outright, and that saves me work and them trouble; but in expeditions of this sort it means broken limbs and broken heads, and a hard day's work for me!"

"There is nothing I can do, sir?" asked Oswald.

"Nothing. Go and take a turn in the fresh air. You look as if you needed it."

Oswald turned away and made his way among the pale occupants of this chamber of horrors. He marvelled at the doctor's skill and endurance; but, more than all, he marvelled at his coolness and absolute insensibility to nerves.

By this time complete darkness had fallen. Mr. Pringle had shortened sail, and, as the breeze had dropped to almost a whisper, the Catapult made no perceptible headway through the sullenly-rolling waters.

There was a sense of oppression in the air—the feeling that one experiences before the outbreak of a storm. Through the misty blackness Oswald could see two figures on the quarter-deck—Mr. Pringle and a midshipman's—Babington's probably.

His head was aching furiously now, and the feeling of sickness was by no means gone, so he walked to the bulwarks, and leaned against them.

It was absolutely silent and still; the last wavering whisper of a breeze died away, and the sails of the Catapult flapped heavily for a moment, and then lay limp and still. Mr. Pringle's voice broke the silence with an order.

A couple of men, barefooted, hurried across the deck to obey, and then silence again, that lasted for minute after minute.

Oswald was thinking of the past—of that wild, reckless joke that he had played, and of its terrible ending. He was wondering if his father had relented, if the admiral had been true to his word, and had seen him. He was wondering if he should ever see his father again—if he should ever be able to go back to his native place, and hold his head up again among those who had known him from childhood.

Then suddenly out of the blackness a couple of figures

crept stealthily to the bulwarks, and took up their stand not a dozen yards from the spot where Oswald stood.

He could not see who the men were in the darkness, nor could he recognise their voices, for they spoke in whispers, which came to him indistinctly through the still atmosphere.

"It's now or never!" muttered one. "The first luff is laid by the heels. There's only the doctor and the master and a handful of mids. As for them other two, they are dead to the world. They'll never know whose knife it was went into their throats."

"And when it's done and over?" inquired the other in a trembling whisper.

"Fill the boats with rum and vittals, fire the ship, and leave her to burn, and—"

"It must be altogether. There mustn't be no skulkers," said the other man.

"Nary one. Them as has no likings for the job has got to go the same way as the skipper and the second luff. Dead men tell no tales, matey!"

"But the luff Fryer—what of him?"

"I don't mean no harm to him. He's a fair and square one—a good sort. He's sick in his cabin. He needn't know nothing till we are prepared to desert the ship. We can hoist him into a boat, and he'll never be none the wiser what's happened. Maybe he'll be useful to speak up for us if the time ever comes when we want a good word."

"And the others—the mids and—"

"Knock 'em on the head, every cursed one of 'em!" said the other man, in a ferocious whisper. "We can't afford to run no risks, matey!"

"Not me; I'm agen murder!" replied the other.

Just at that moment a third figure came up and joined the other two, and though he, like the others, spoke in a whisper, Oswald had no difficulty in recognising him, because of his peculiar cockney accent—the man being an impressed ferryman from Wapping, by name Wilkins.

"Oo said murder?" he whispered.

"I'm agen it," said one of the first speakers.

"And I'm for it," said the other. "We don't want no babby-hearted chaps at this game. It's dead men tell no tales, and if they're alive, it means hanging for some of us."

"Knock their blooming brains hout, hall hof 'em!" said Wilkins. "That's my motter. Dead men can't 'ang live 'uns!"

The other man still seemed to remonstrate, but the others silenced him.

"Hit's sink or swim together, matey," said Wilkins.

"Hand 'im as wants to swim, and gets the bossifers to 'old 'im up at the same time, he's going to get knocked on the 'ead!"

The other man gave in.

"When is it to be?" he asked.

"Height bells. Cutlasses hall round, and no muskets. The lobsters hare in hit to a man, bar the serjeant and lieutenant."

"Eight bells," whispered one of the other men.

And then they parted and melted away into the darkness, leaving Oswald standing there, wondering if it was true, or whether he had dreamed it all.

The men rising! Going to murder the officers, himself among the others—not that he was thinking of himself in particular just then.

He left his position by the bulwarks, which he had maintained for over half an hour, and staggered towards the quarter-deck.

"Hallo! Who goes?" said a voice out of the darkness.

"Maxwell, you! For Heaven's sake come with me!" said Oswald.

"Why, what's up? What's the matter?"

"Murder and mutiny, that's what's the matter," said Oswald.

"Old chap, it was too much for you down in that cockpit. Go and—"

"I tell you I am sane; I know what I am talking about!" said Oswald fiercely.

"Mr. Pringle, can I speak to you?" he was saying a moment later to that officer.

"Fire away, Mr. Smith!" said Pringle pleasantly.

"At eight bells the crew will rise, murder the officers, except Mr. Fryer, and fire the ship," said Oswald quietly.

Pringle started, and looked at him with quick suspicion.

"What are you talking about, Mr. Smith?"

"I was on the main deck, and heard three of the villains discussing the plot to mutiny," said Oswald quietly. "One of the men was Wilkins; the other two I could not recognise."

He spoke so quietly and so confidently that Mr. Pringle, after a moment's hesitation, felt assured that Oswald was speaking the truth.

"It's been coming for days—ever since we set sail!" he groaned. "First leaving the Amadee, when we might have

captured her; then the floggings; now skulking away from a confounded French frigate. It's got the men's tempers up, and some of us will have to pay the piper. Thunder, what a position for me to be in! The captain and the second lieutenant have been drinking in their cabin for hours; the first lieutenant is wounded. Maxwell, step down and tell Dr. Telford I want to speak to him urgently. Then go and find Lieutenant Armstrong and Sergeant Findlay. Tell them all to come up here quietly. Give them a hint there's something wrong. After that, take a peep into the captain's cabin if you can, and tell me what you see. If—if the captain is sober, ask him if I can speak to him urgently. Hurry, my lad!"

Maxwell hastened away on his errand.

The first to reach the quarter-deck was the doctor.

"Hallo, Pringle! What's in the wind? I'm regular jack-of-all-trades on this ship!" he grumbled. "It's Telford here, there, and everywhere, and not a moment of blessed peace do I get from morn to night."

"You'll be getting a long spell of rest and peace shortly, doctor," said Pringle coolly. "The men are going to murder you to-night!"

"Going to what?" asked the doctor.

"It's the truth."

Here Lieutenant Armstrong, with his sergeant, Findlay, came on to the deck.

"It's the truth," repeated Pringle. "At eight bells the men, crew and Marines—every mother's son of them—are going to rise and mutiny, and murder every one of us. That's the programme, gentlemen. A pleasant one for us—eh?"

"This comes of sailing under a blackguard like Burgoyne!" said the doctor. "The men were well enough at starting."

"They are a pack of devils now, and they mean to do for us and the Catapult, too. They must have blood of some sort, and, since we have denied them French blood, they mean to have ours," said Pringle quietly.

By this time all the midshipmen except Maxwell had assembled on the quarter-deck.

"It was Mr. Smith who overheard the plot," said Pringle. "He was standing by—"

He stopped suddenly, and whipped round, and as he did so, a skulking form behind him sprang up, and tried to escape.

But Sergeant Findlay was too quick for the spy. With a bound he was on him, and the two men went down with a crash to the deck together.

Lieutenant Armstrong pulled out a pistol, and pressed it against the captured spy's head.

"Not a word!" he said sternly. "Make a sound, and I blow your brains out! Get up!"

The man rose to his feet, sullen and silent. His name was Stone. He had been at the helm, and, noticing the gathering on the quarter-deck, had crept up to hear what he could.

While Lieutenant Armstrong kept his pistol pressed against Stone's head, Mr. Pringle interrogated him.

At first the man stood sullenly silent, refusing to speak a word; but, under a little gentle persuasion from the lieutenant, he found his tongue at last.

All the crew were in the proposed mutiny to a man with the exception of Fid, the boatswain, Crufts, Benton, and two others. These men had consistently declared that, in their opinion, there was little satisfaction to be got by mutiny; so they had not been asked to join in the movement, and it had been arranged that they were to share the doom of the officers.

"And the Marines?" asked the sergeant.

"They ain't nothing. They are going to stand by and look on. They swear they won't strike for either side, officers nor men."

Just at that moment Maxwell came back.

"I looked into the captain's cabin," he said. "Mr. Brabazon is asleep on the floor, and the captain is lying with

his head upon the table. They both of them appear to be—"

"Yes, I understand," said Pringle hurriedly. "Now, then, gentlemen, we know the worst and the best, and it remains for us to make our preparations. First secure that fellow. Bind him hand and foot, and gag him."

"What are you going to do with me?" said Stone, whose sulks had given place to deadly terror.

"I don't know; that depends on what happens."

Stone had no opportunity for further discourse, for he was flung down to the deck, bound hand and foot, and a huge piece of rag was thrust into his mouth. Then his jaws were bound up, and he was left to ruminate on his probable fate.

"We have two hours before us, gentlemen; and, if we are sharp, we can get through a good deal of work in two hours. Lieutenant, I think it would be better if you were to see that all firearms and ammunition are secured. We can do with a score of muskets up here, and plenty of ammunition. Mr. Maxwell, we will get a couple of carronades mounted, and turned on the deck."

Cool as a cucumber, and giving his orders with precision, Mr. Pringle was the right man in the right place in that moment of danger.

Lieutenant Armstrong and Findlay went off to secure arms and ammunition, while Maxwell, with the help of Babbington and Rumbold, unshipped a couple of boat-guns, six-pounder carronades, which they mounted so that they covered the approach to the quarter-deck.

Meanwhile, Dr. Telford went below to examine the insensible captain and his boon companion.

"The men are both dead drunk," he reported when he came back. "It would serve them right if we let them lie where they are, and where the crew can get at 'em."

"We can't do that, though, as you say, it would serve them right. We shall have to get them up on deck somehow. Maxwell, go quietly, and give Fid instructions to come here quickly and quietly; then send the others—Benton, Crufts, Sims, and Webster—up one at a time. Go about it cautiously. If those fellows get the wind of us, they'll be on us in no time."

Ten minutes later the men named were on the quarter-deck, wondering at their summons, and also wondering considerably at seeing so many gathered together there.

Mr. Pringle explained the state of things in a few words, and also informed the men that they were the destined victims of their shipmates, as well as he himself was.

"We must have the captain and Mr. Brabazon on deck at once," he said to Benton. "You and Sims go down and haul them up."

He picked out these two for their size and strength. Benton was a big and powerful man, while Sims was a giant as regards both height and strength.

Heavy as the captain was, the pair hauled him on to the quarter-deck without much difficulty, and flung him down with scant ceremony on to the deck, where he lay like a log, wrapped in his drunken sleep.

Sims went alone to fetch Mr. Brabazon, and presently appeared with the second lieutenant slung over his shoulder like a sack of coals, his head and arms hanging down helplessly over Sims' broad back.

By seven bells the two carronades were loaded, and a stack of muskets—all ready loaded—with piles of ammunition, were arranged in the most convenient positions, and as yet not a man of the crew had dreamed that their plot was discovered, and that preparations were being made to frustrate it.

(Another instalment of this thrilling serial next week.)

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- P * INTER A well-known occupation.
- WA * ER What many dislike.
- P * * TRY Familiar to every cook.
- A * AM A Scripture name.
- C * * DLE Found in many a happy home.
- PHO * * GRAPEY A useful art.
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