"Binks the Millionaire!"

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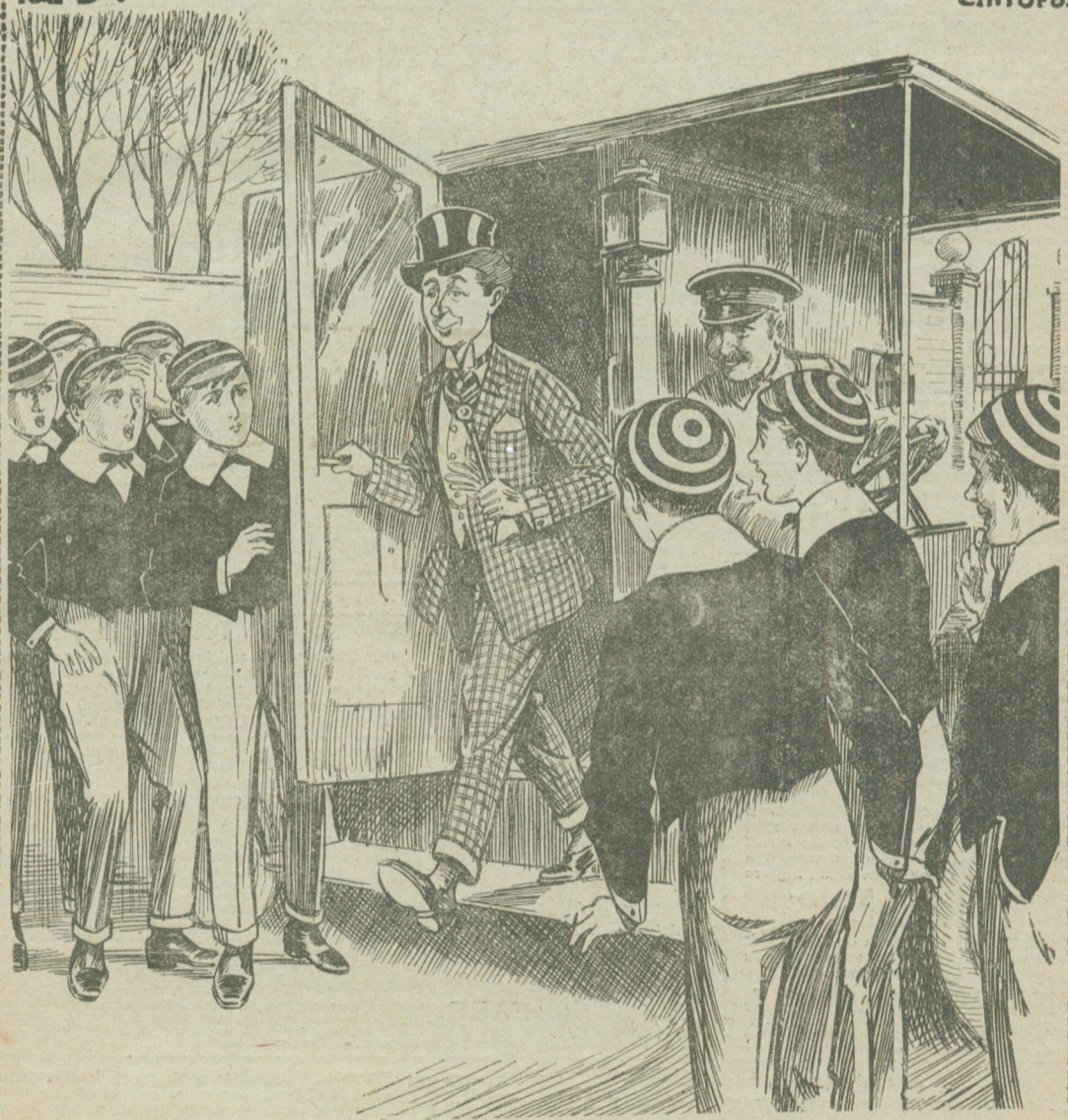

BINKS ARRIVES AT ST. JIM'S IN STYLE.

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BINKS, THE MILLIONAIRE.

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

BY

Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.
Too Surprising.

"MILLIONAIRE!"

"Rats!"

"Yes."

Tom Merry sniffed.

"Well, you'll soon see," he said disdainfully.

Monty Lowther and Manners, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, stared at their chum. Tom Merry looked as if he were speaking seriously, but——

But——

There was a very big but.

"Now, look here,' said Lowther, "did you say millionaire?"

"Yes, I said millionaire."

"Binks?"

"Yes, Binks."

"A giddy millionaire?" exclaimed Manners incredulously.

"I don't know about giddy but a millionaire, certainly," said Tom Merry warmly. "After all, what is there so wonderful in it?"

"Well, it's not a common occurrence for the boot-boy in a place to blossom forth suddenly into a millionaire," said Lowther sarcastically. "Such things don't happen more than two or three times a week."

"Well, this has happened."

"Binks!" said Manners. "Chap who opened the door and took the messages and cleaned the boots, and used to hang about the kitchen looking out for scraps of tuck, and used to bone tarts out of the study cupboards."

"I don't believe he did," said Tom Merry. "Gore said so; but you know Gore."

"Besides, he's a millionaire now," said Lowther. "It's immoral to believe anything against a millionaire."

"Oh, don't be an ass, Monty!"

"But I'm going to see Binks in all his glory before I believe it," said Lowther. "He's been pulling your respected leg, Thomas, my son."

"You saw the letter he had from home, before he got the doctor's leave to go home and see about it," said Tom Merry.

Lowther yawned.

"Yes, something about an uncle in Australia, or Greenland, wasn't it?"

"In Australia," said Tom Merry. "Binks was his favourite nephew—named Henry after him. The uncle was a tough old specimen, and died a millionaire, and left all the tin to Binks. You saw the letter."

"But I thought it was a little fancy of Mrs. Binks," said Lowther. "I thought the millions would turn out to be about twenty pounds in the Post Office Savings Bank."

"Exactly!" said Manners. "My idea, too."

"Well, I suspected something of the sort," Tom Merry admitted, "but I've had this letter from Binks, and it's all serene."

"Stuff!"

"Oh, read out the letter!" said Manners. "After all, if there's anything in it, we want to look after Binks. He will be a valuable acquaintance. I always knew he was a nice boy, now I come to think of it. He had a graceful way of bringing in a letter."

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"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"And there was a certain way he had of carrying a tray, which reminded you of a duke in disguise, or a baronet at least."

"Oh, do chuck it, you duffer! Do you want to hear this letter or not?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Oh, go ahead!" said Manners and Lowther resignedly.

Tom Merry read out the letter. It was written in a terrible hand, on dirty paper, and the spelling was of an original turn. But the meaning of the letter was plain enough.

"Dear Master Merry.—I Inklose the pownd you so kinedly lent me. Please find inklosed a postal Order fore the same. The noos is quite troo. My unkle Enery as dide in Australia, and has lef me orl is muny. It is more than a million pownds, so the loryer sez. I am kumin back to St. Jim's to see the Ed. I ope I shall see you.

"Yores affectionately,

"'ENERY BINKS."

"There!" said Tom Merry triumphantly.

Lowther grinned.

"The lawyer's pulling our friend Binks's leg," he remarked.

"Oh, rats!"

"He's rotting," said Manners. "I suppose there are some pickings, and the lawyer chap is on to them, and he's stuffing the Binkses."

Tom Merry snorted.

"Look here, it's not so very extraordinary for a chap to have an uncle die in Australia and leave him some tin," he said.

"Rats! D'Arcy has an uncle, or something of the sort, in Australia, and he hasn't sprung anything of this sort on us."

"Binks is a millionaire."

"Spoof!"

"You ass!"

"Rats!"

"Well, you'll see soon," said Tom Merry. "I expect Binks will be here to-day."

And he stamped out of the study. He was just a little exasperated by the refusal of his chums to believe the startling news.

Startling the news certainly was.

For Binks, the page and boot-boy of the School House at St. Jim's, to become a millionaire, was amazing enough.

Such a thing was not impossible, of course. But it was unusual.

Lowther and Manners might be forgiven for doubting until the evidence was beyond question. But Tom Merry believed it fully.

He knew that Binks would not lie, and he felt that he would not be foolish enough to believe a cock-and-bull story of some unscrupulous lawyer when he got on the spot at home and could look into it.

Binks was a millionaire!

It was amazing, but true.

What he was coming back to St. Jim's for Tom Merry did not quite know. Certainly as a millionaire Binks would not continue in his old job of boot-boy and page.

Perhaps he simply wanted to be congratulated upon his good fortune, or perhaps to seek advice of the Head.

Dr. Holmes had had some information of the great news, and if it turned out to be correct, there was no doubt that Binks would stand greatly in need of sage advice, and the Head was just the kind-hearted gentleman to stand by him and help him in his new and curious position.

For a chap like Binks, who had a heart of gold, but a deadly antipathy to aspirates, to become a millionaire, might lead to some curious results.

"The silly asses!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he went down the passage. He was thinking of his unbelieving chums; but the words fell upon the ears of a group of fellows standing in the doorway of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage, and one of them put up an eyeglass and stared at Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——" he remarked.

"Hallo, Gussy!"

"I wegard your wemark as uttahly wude, Tom Merry," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom Merry stared at him.

"Eh?" he said.

"I appeal to Blake if it was not uttahly wude," said D'Arcy, turning to his chums of Study No. 6.

Jack Blake grinned.

"Horribly," he said.

"I appeal to you, Dig."

"Ghastly rude," said Digby.

"What is your opinion, Hewwies, old man?"

"It was simply rotten," said Herries solemnly. "I wouldn't talk like that to my dog Towser. I wouldn't really."

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Tom Merry again.

"There!" he said.

"Well," said Tom Merry, "what are you babbling about, Gussy? Have you finally taken a long farewell of your sanity?"

"I wegard that question as bein' quite as wude as your pwevious wemark, Tom Mewwy," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "If you do not immediately pwoceed to withdwaw that wemark, I shall have no wesource but to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"My dear ass——"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as an ass."

"Chump, then."

"I wegard that expwession as equally oppwobwious. I——"

"Look here, Blake, you ought to keep him chained up," said Tom Merry, in a tone of expostulation. "It's not fair to let him loose on the public like this."

"I decline to be chained up. I——"

"Look here——"

"I wegard you as an oppwobwious beast, Tom Mewwy. Pway put up your hands, deah boy. I am goin' to thwash you."

"But——"

But Arthur Augustus was advancing upon the Shell fellow. Tom Merry, laughing, put up his hands, and greeted the swell of St. Jim's with a playful tap on the nose.

"Ow!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Look here——"

"Bai Jove!"

The swell of the Fourth rushed at Tom Merry, and clasped him round the neck. Blake and Herries and Digby roared with laughter. Tom Merry returned grip for grip, and the two juniors went waltzing round the passage in deadly combat.

CHAPTER 2.

Binks!

"BAI Jove!"

"Ass!"

"You feahful wottah!"

"Chump!"

"I wegard you——"

"Duffer!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus uttered that last remark as his heels flew up, and he sat down with a bump on the floor of the Fourth Form passage. His hand dragged Tom Merry's necktie down with him, but the hero of the Shell stood up laughing.

D'Arcy sat on the linoleum, gasping and staring.

"Bai Jove!" he panted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wottah!"

D'Arcy struggled to rise to his feet. Tom Merry gently turned him over on his back like a tortoise, and planted a heavy boot on his chest. The swell of St. Jim's gave a shudder of horror.

"Ow! My waistcoat!"

"Will you make it pax?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Wathah not! Pway take your beastly foot off my waistcoat! You will make it howwibly soiled, and I only had it down fwom Bond Stweet yestahday aftahnoon."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake & Co.

"Weally, you wottahs——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue, you boundahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry kept the swell of St. Jim's pinned down under his boot. D'Arcy could not escape, and he dared not struggle for fear of still further rumpling and soiling the invaluable waistcoat.

"Now, then," said Tom Merry again, "will you make it pax?"

"Certainly not, you wottah!"

"Then explain what's the matter with you."

"You made a most oppwobwious wemark. You alluded to us as silly asses. Of course, the wemark had some justice as applied to Blake and Hewwies and Dig, but I uttahly wefuse, myself, to be chawactewised as an ass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"But I was not speaking to you," roared Tom Merry; "I was speaking of Manners and Lowther. I've just been having an argument with them. I didn't see you till you spoke."

D'Arcy's face was a study.

Blake & Co. shrieked with laughter.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus at last.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"I rather think you owe me an apology," grinned Tom Merry, removing his boot from the waistcoat of the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus blinked at him a little doubtfully.

"Pewwaps I do," he remarked thoughtfully.

He rose to his feet, and dusted his waistcoat. Then he jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded his chums with a glance of annoyance. They were yelling.

"Weally, you fellows, you might have told me that I was in ewwah, and that Tom Mewwy was not alludin' to us," he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha!" roared Blake. "I thought it was ripping, so I let you rip."

"You uttah ass! I weally think a chap's chums might point out when a chap's makin' an ass of himself."

"My hat! We should be pointing all day."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wegard you as a set of asses! I owe you an apology, Tom Mewwy. Pway accept my sincere wegwets for that unpwovoked assault and battewy."

"That's all right, Gussy."

"Undah the circs., I ovahlook your wuffianly action in tweadin' on my waistcoat, though it was a wascally thing to do."

"You have to be trodden on sometimes, Gussy," said Blake, with a shake of the head.

"Weally, Blake——"

"But what have you been rowing with Manners and Lowther about, Tommy?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"We haven't been rowing," he said; "but they won't believe the news about Binks."

"Binks?"

"Bai Jove! Have you heard from Binks?"

"I've had a letter."

"Is his uncle weally dead?"

"It seems so."

"And was he awf'ly wich aftah all?"

"Yes."

"And he's left all his tin to Binks?"

"All, or most of it."

"Bai Jove!"

"Binks is a millionaire," said Tom Merry.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Rats!" said Blake and Herries and Digby, with great unanimity.

Tom Merry glared.

"I'll read you the letter," he exclaimed.

"Oh, go ahead, but we sha'n't believe it!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Dry up, Gussy, and let's hear the letter."

Tom Merry read out the letter. The chums of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's listened to it with great attention. Then they laughed. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the only one who took it seriously.

"Gweat Scott!" he ejaculated.

"Spoof!" said Blake.

"Bosh!" said Digby.

"Rats!" said Herries.

"I believe it's true," said Tom Merry. "Binks wouldn't cram, and he's not such a fool as to be taken in, now he's there to see. I believe it's all right, and that Binks is a giddy millionaire."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rot!" said Blake tersely. "If he's a millionaire, what is he coming back for? I suppose he's not going to roll in wealth on the kitchen stairs?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose he wants to see the Head," said Tom Merry. "Perhaps he wants to see me. Anyway, he's coming; and he's a millionaire."

"Rats!"

"I tell you——"

"Rubbish!"

Tom Merry snorted.

"Well, wait and see!" he exclaimed. And he walked on down the passage, tying his necktie as he went, and leaving the Fourth-Formers laughing loudly. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hurried after the Shell fellow.

"Bai Jove, Tom Mewwy, this is vewy wemarkable if twue!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry. "I believe it."

"So do I, deah boy. I say, you know," went on Arthur Augustus, "this will be a gweat change for Binks."

"Jolly big change, from boot-boy to millionaire," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I mean, a chap ought to stand by him a bit. Lots of the fellows—like Goah, for instance—will start chippin' him, as sure as a gun," said D'Arcy. "You see, some of them will be jealous, and some of them are wank wottahs. I wathah think it would be the wight and decent thing to do, you know, to stand by Binks."

Tom Merry gave the swell of St. Jim's a smack on the back.

"That's just like you, Gussy! We'll stand by him—rather!"

"When is he comin'?"

"To-day, I think. Hark!"

It was a shout from the quadrangle. There had been a rumble of wheels, and the shout followed. It was repeated, rising crescendo, amid strange snorts.

"Bai Jove, what is that?" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Somebody's awwived!"

"Binks, for a ducat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Binks, in a motor-car!"

"Bai Jove!"

They dashed down the stairs and out of the door of the School House.

Outside there was a crowd of fellows of all Forms. They swarmed round a taxi-cab that had stopped in front of the School House steps.

The chauffeur of that cab was grinning under the peak of his cap. The taximeter registered over three pounds.

From the open door of the taxi a figure was stepping.

It was Binks!

But such a Binks!

CHAPTER 3.

Binks in his Glory.

HENRY BINKS, the School House page, had never been what one would call handsome. His figure was not a model of grace. It had always had a tendency to burst out of his uniform of many buttons at all points.

Binks in his page's uniform was not a thing of beauty. Nobody had ever supposed so. But Binks in the new garb he had adopted as a millionaire!

An artist would have preferred Binks in his old clothes.

Tom Merry looked, and gasped. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked, and nearly fainted.

Binks was dressed fashionably—or, rather, in an absurd exaggeration of fashion—which showed that a country tailor had been given his head regardless of expense.

His clothes were of a loud check, of a chessboard aspect. Indeed, as soon as Manners saw him, he murmured "Pawn to king's fourth!" involuntarily.

The jacket was meant to be a lounge jacket. It was tight at the waist—so tight, that Binks had some difficulty in breathing, which rendered his face redder than was its wont, though it was generally red in parts, as if polished.

The trousers were very loose above the knee, and tapered to the ankle; and the boots were three sizes too small for Binks, and must have called for considerable powers of physical endurance on Binks's part.

His collar was higher than D'Arcy's, and seemed on the point of cutting off his ears at every movement. Binks's ears stood out straight from his head, so that over his high collar they were quite striking.

His necktie was green, with red and blue bars and yellow spots, and was gathered up quite imposingly, and fastened with an enormous gold pin, which seemed to cry out that it was made of rolled gold.

He wore a silk hat.

The hat was cocked a little rakishly on one side, to indicate to the general public that Binks was "all there," and that he had been accustomed to wearing silk toppers all his life.

There was one thing that Binks couldn't do, and that was to cram his hands into gloves. But he carried a pair in his hand, along with a gold-headed cane.

Across Binks's waistcoat—a gorgeous waistcoat, which would have made Joseph's famous coat pale its ineffectual fires—was a watch-chain like a cable. It had doubtless been sold to Binks for gold. If that was the case, Binks had certainly been sold, too.

This vision of splendour descended from the taxi-cab like Jupiter from High Olympus upon the astounded juniors of St. Jim's.

They stared.

Then somebody started a cheer, and they cheered.

"Bravo, Binks!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Welcome home!"

"Three cheers for Binks, the millionaire!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Binks raised his hat gracefully, and bowed to the crowd. He was flushed with pleasure, and all the knobs on his face were glowing.

Tom Merry neither laughed nor cheered. He was more inclined to weep. It was quite natural that a lad like Binks, uneducated, and never in possession of more than a few shillings at a time, should play the giddy ox in this way as soon as he had an unlimited command of money.

It was very evident that the youthful millionaire required some good friends to stand by him in his good fortune.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held on to Tom Merry's arm.

"Look—look at the waistcoat!" he murmured.

"Beats you hollow, Gussy."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Bravo, Binks!"

"And the tie!" muttered D'Arcy wildly. "The—the tie! Did you evah see such awful colours, deah boy?"

"Never!"

"Well, hardly ever!" murmured Blake, who had come out to see the phenomenon. "Gussy, after this you must hide your diminished head."

"I shall wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I mean——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Binks!" murmured Tom Merry. "He's been had awfully with those clothes. It would be a mercy to yank them off him and shove him into his old uniform."

"He certainly looked bettah dwessed then."

"Well, this is a sight for gods and men and little fishes," said Jack Blake. "What do you think, Dig?"

"I don't think!" said Digby.

"Bai Jove! Look at the twousahs!"

"Terrific!"

"The toppah is not so bad. The bwim is much too curlay," said D'Arcy critically. "They have sold Binks a toppah that has been in stock for thwee years at least. But how was Binks to know?"

"Fools and their money," remarked Levison of the Fourth, with his unpleasant sneer.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Bravo, Binks!"

And Kerruish of the Fourth, who was the happy possessor of a mouth-organ, started "See the Conquering Hero Comes!" in discordant strains.

Binks grinned amiably upon the crowd.

He was delighted with his reception.

He had feared that there might be some envy and jealousy among the fellows at the idea of a page and boot-boy blossoming forth into a millionaire.

But there was no sign of it.

Levison was the only one who was sneering, and Levison was out of sight behind the crowd of juniors.

Most of the fellows were laughing, true, but they were cheering as well, and Binks was willing to set it all down to hearty exuberance.

Binks, as he raised his topper and bowed to the ovation, was a sight worthy of reproduction on the cinematograph.

He imitated, as well as he could remember it, the graceful action of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, but he could not be said to succeed exactly.

"It's hawfully good of you fellows to meet me like this," said Binks.

"Hear, hear!"

"Bravo, Binks, the millionaire!"

"Us fellows!" said Mellish, of the Fourth. "My word! He'll start calling us old chaps next, the cheeky bounder."

Tom Merry gave the cad of the Fourth a glance of contempt.

"He won't start calling you old chap," he said. "No decent fellow would be likely to do that."

Mellish bit his lip.

"Decent fellow!" he sneered. "Our old boot-boy—chap we used to give tanners to when he was useful! Oh, awfully decent, I must say!"

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Mellish.

"Mellish, deah boy, I wegard you as a wank wottah," he said. "I admit that it was not vewy delicate of Binks to accept tips, but you must wemembah that a chap in his posish is bwought up to do so, and he knew no bettah. You would certainly have done so in his place, Mellish; and, as a mattah of fact, you have waised money in worse ways, and have been vewy neahly expelled for it."

At which Mellish thought it better to say no more.

Binks came up the steps.

He grinned hugely at the sight of Tom Merry in the doorway.

"'Ere I am again, Master Merry!" he exclaimed. "The noos was quite true."

Tom Merry smiled.

"And you're a millionaire, Binks?"

"Yes, Master Merry."

"What do you say now, Blake?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Oh, I say—— My hat!" said Blake.

"What do you say, Manners?"

Manners grinned.

"Same as Blake," he said.

"I'm jolly glad of your good luck, Binks," Tom Merry exclaimed. "Give us your fist, old man!"

And he held out his hand.

Binks coloured with pleasure.

He had not dared to offer his hand to Tom Merry, millionaire as he was, and the Shell fellow's hearty action went straight to his heart.

He grasped Tom Merry's fingers with a hand that was very hard and knuckly from the work it had done for many years—hard and honest work, leaving marks on the hand as honourable, to a right mind, as the scars of an old soldier.

Levison sneered, and Gore grinned, and Mellish cackled. The other fellows looked on, most of them astonished. Binks was a millionaire, but he had been the School House boot-boy, and very few of the fellows there would have shaken hands with him. As Crooke of the Shell said, it was necessary to keep up some distinctions, you know.

Crooke was the son of a man who had made an immense fortune upon the Stock Exchange, by a speculation which ruined some hundreds of his fellow-countrymen, and drove half a dozen of them to suicide. So Crooke was really quite an authority upon what a decent fellow could do. Crooke sometimes lent money at interest among his Form-fellows, and would take bats and rods and such things in payment when the money was not forthcoming, and in this way he had become the possessor of many things that did not belong to him; but Crooke would have shuddered at shaking hands with Binks. Tom Merry had no such scruples. He gave Binks a grip of the hand that had all his heart behind it.

"I'm jolly glad, Binks, old man!" he exclaimed again.

"Thank you, Master Merry. I've come down to see the 'Ead," said Binks. "I should like to see you after, if I may."

"Of course you may. Come to my study."

"Thank you, Master Merry."

Binks went into the House.

"He can show himself to the Head's study," Lowther remarked, rather humorously.

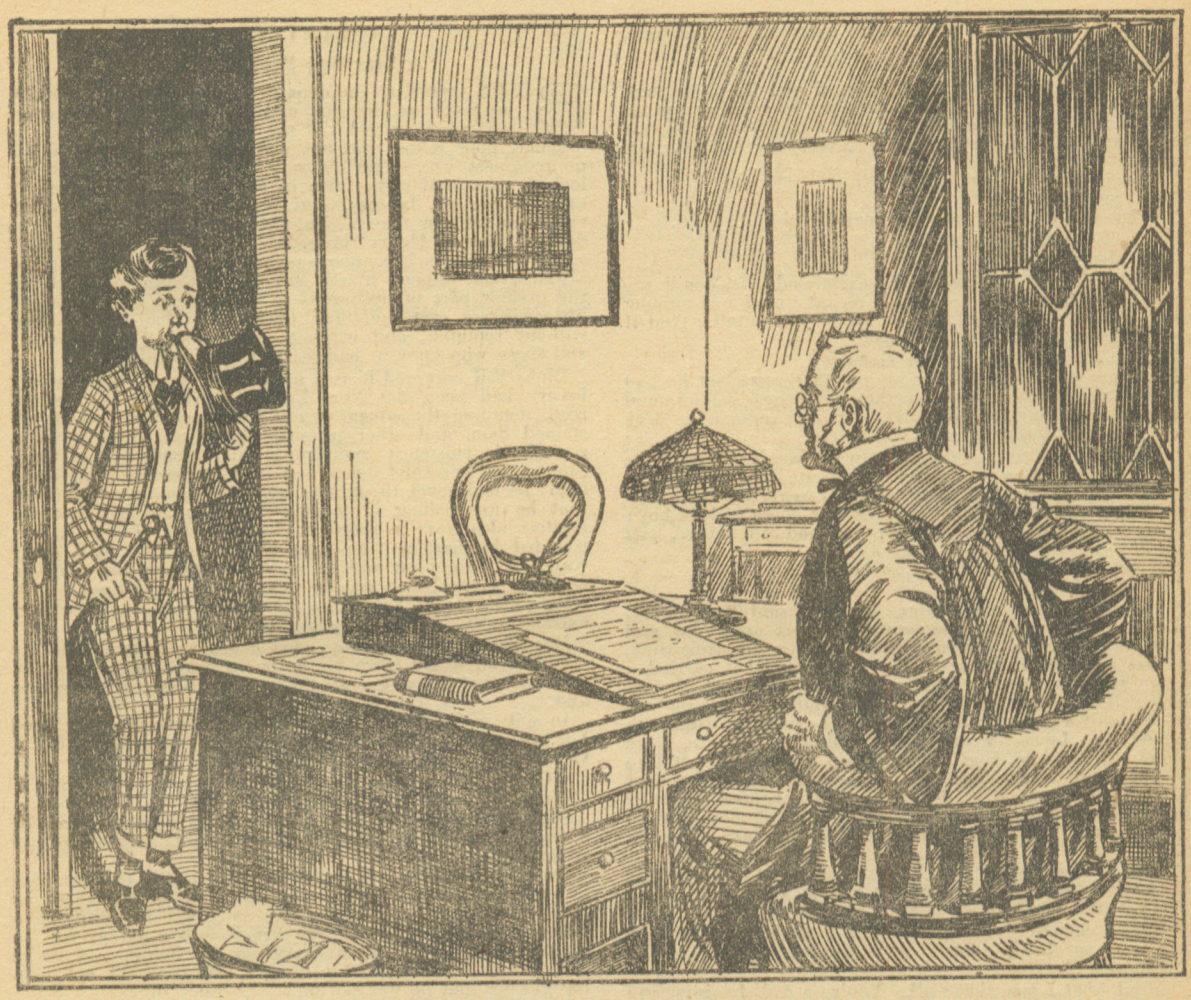
And there was a laugh.

Tom Merry looked at his chum.

"Chuck that, Monty. It's all very well to be funny, but you can leave that sort of thing to Mellish and Gore."

Lowther coloured.

"Oh, keep your wool on, Tommy! I wasn't sneering at



"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Holmes. "Who is it? How did you get in here, my good fellow?" "If—if you please, sir, it's—it's me!" faltered the one-time page of the School House. (*See page 6.*)

Binks. I'll take him to my bosom and weep over him, if you like."

"Oh, rats!"

Lowther slipped his hand through his chum's arm.

"It's all right, Tommy; you're right. I'll be more careful."

"Millionaire!" Gore was saying. "Well, wonders will never cease. Binks a giddy millionaire! My hat!"

"He hasn't paid the cabby," said Mellish.

"Oh, the taxi is to wait," said Gore, with a sneer. "Money's no object to Binks now. The taxi's registering all the time. Awful swanking cad!"

"Of course, it's to show off," said Crooke, of the Shell.

Tom Merry was silent. He could not help feeling that Binks had made an absurd and vulgar display of wealth. But how was the poor lad to know any better? He knew that rich people wore expensive clothes and drove in motor-cars, and as soon as he found his pockets full of money he did the same, without thinking that there were any other considerations in the case. But he would learn.

"Jolly useful friend for some people to have, boot-boy or not," said Levison, with his habitual curl of the lip, which made fellows often want to shake him. "Blessed if I wouldn't have shaken hands with him myself if I had thought of it."

The fellows laughed.

Tom Merry's eyes blazed.

Levison was turning away as he spoke, and he suddenly felt a heavy grasp upon his shoulder, and he was swung quickly back, to find himself looking into the flashing eyes of Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 4.

Levison Explains.

TOM MERRY swung Levison back, and the startled junior stood there, looking at him. The hero of the Shell was red with anger, and the blaze in his eyes made Ernest Levison wish himself anywhere but where he was at that moment.

"Now, then!" said Tom Merry, between his teeth.

Levison recovered his coolness in a moment. Levison's chief characteristic was a cold, steely composure that left more quick-tempered fellows at a great disadvantage in dealing with him.

"Well?" he said coolly.

"I'll trouble you to repeat what you just said," exclaimed Tom Merry.

Levison wrinkled his brows reflectively.

"What did I say?" he remarked. "Oh, I remarked that Binks would be a useful friend to have."

"And something more."

"Oh, yes; I would have shaken hands if I had thought of it," said Levison. "But I didn't."

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"If you are trying to crawl out of what you said, you're welcome to do it," he said.

Levison turned a little pale.

"I can't see that I'm crawling out of anything," he said.

"You hinted that I was sticking up to Binks because of his money."

"My dear fellow——"

"You meant to imply that I was shaking hands with him because he was rich now," said Tom Merry fiercely.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, Levison has a right to his opinion," said Crooke, of the Shell.

Tom Merry looked at him.

"I'll talk it out with you, Crooke, if you like," he said. "Nobody shall hint that I'm making up to a fellow for his money, so long as I've a fist to knock a cad down with. If you meant that, Levison, you'd better say so in plain English."

"I never said I meant it."

"Did you mean it?"

"If the cap fits you, you can wear it," said Levison.

Some of the fellows laughed.

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"That's not good enough," he exclaimed. "You'll say out in plain language whether you meant that I was making up to Binks for his money, or whether you didn't. And if you did mean it, you'll take it back."

Levison gave a quick glance round.

But there was no escape for him, if that was what he had thought of. Manners and Lowther were just behind, and Blake & Co. were standing round. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was looking as indignant as Tom Merry.

"I wegard Levison's wemark as in the worst of taste," he said. "It is wotten bad form to impute bad motives to anybody—simply wotten. I suppose you wegard it as showin' knowledge of the world, Levison. But it doesn't, deah boy; it only shows knowledge of your own caddish nature, you know."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"I'm waiting for your answer, Levison," said Tom Merry.

Levison had to speak; the eyes of all were upon him, and there was no escape. His sneer had cost him dear this time. He was a dealer in innuendoes, in remarks that carried a hidden sting in them but he was usually too keen to risk being called to account in this way. But Tom Merry was too straightforward for a fellow like Levison to deal with successfully. Levison's way was to snipe, as it were, from behind cover, while Tom Merry would come right out into the open and have things out. A most uncomfortable sort of fellow for Levison to deal with. In a contest of sneer and innuendo Levison would have been easily first, but in open warfare Tom Merry could knock him into a cocked hat.

"Well, I don't know that I meant anything of the sort," said Levison at last. "I was only joking, anyway."

Tom Merry laughed scornfully.

"That's enough!" he said. "But I advise you to be a little more careful in your jokes in the future."

"Oh, rats!"

"Mind what I say, that's all. You're a cad, Levison, and if you don't care to stand up to a fellow you slander, you'd better hold your tongue."

Levison bit his lip hard.

There were few fellows who would have taken that "lying down"; but Levison did not want to stand up to the champion athlete of the Shell.

He was no match for Tom Merry, and he knew it. He should have remembered that, as a matter of fact, before he provoked Tom Merry.

Tom Merry turned away from him, and looked at Crooke. The cad of the Shell moved away a pace or two.

"Have you anything to say on the subject, Crooke?" Tom Merry asked.

Crooke shrugged his shoulders.

"No," he said.

"Very good."

The crowd of juniors dispersed. They had rather expected a fight; but, on second thoughts, they realised that they were not likely to get much fighting from either Levison or Crooke.

The Terrible Three were left standing alone. Tom Merry was still looking a little red.

"That chap's a cad!" Lowther remarked. "But don't be too warlike, Tommy, my son. You never used to fly out in this way."

Tom Merry flushed again.

"I can't stand that chap!" he exclaimed. "He's always got something to say with a beastly sting in it—he lets nobody off. He'd make out that the whole human race is rotten to the core, I believe. I'm sick of it."

Herries of the Fourth looked round as he was moving off.

"Quite right, Tom Merry!" he exclaimed. "That's Levison. "You know how my bulldog Towser took a dislike to him at their first meeting. You can always trust Towser. What about Towser now—eh?"

Tom Merry laughed. But he was very much inclined to agree with Towser's view of Ernest Levison.

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CHAPTER 5.

A Startling Proposition.

BINKS tapped at the door of the Head's study. Binks, gorgeous as he was, and feeling himself gorgeous, was a little nervous at the same time.

Binks, poor fellow, did not know how utterly absurd his gorgeousness was. He did not know that he would have looked quiet and respectable in a quiet suit of clothes, or even in his old buttons, and that he looked insufferably vulgar in his new finery. Naturally, such a thought as that did not occur to Henry Binks.

He had always been poor—poorer even than most lads in his situation, because it was necessary for him to contribute the greater part of his wages to the support of a crowd of little Binkses at home. That duty Binks had always done without repining, and without ostentation. Few knew it; and those who knew it had learned it by accident.

Binks had regarded it as a matter of course. Binks's only luxury had been the New York "horribles" he used to read, detailing the adventures of Deadwood Bill and Blood-stained Sam, and other persons who appeared to spend a remarkable existence committing daily murders in mining-camps. Binks's chief desire had been to become a highway-man; he had never thought of becoming a millionaire. Now that he was rolling in money, the poor lad had not the faintest idea how to spend it, but he was, of course, surrounded by harpies who were willing to show him many ways. His ambition was to be a gentleman; and his idea of being a gentleman was to wear expensive clothes, a gold watch and chain, ride in a motor-car, and spend money extravagantly. Binks had much to learn.

But Binks had a sterling good heart, and the probability was that he would learn his lesson in time. It was equally probable that he would go through some queer adventures first.

In spite of his finery, which the poor fellow fancied placed him on a level with the fellows of St. Jim's, Binks felt a tremor as he knocked at the Head's door.

"Come in!" said the well-known voice in its deep tones.

Binks shivered.

Often enough he had gone into the study with messages, or a tray of tea-things. But never as a millionaire—never as an equal.

An equal! Binks had a sort of thrill at the thought that he was the Head's equal now. He had twenty times as much money, perhaps fifty times as much—he could have afforded to buy St. Jim's and turn it into a garage for his motors. The Head had to work for his living, and Binks hadn't—now! As a matter of fact, Binks could not help recognising that he was the superior. Poor Binks!

Yet, considering the hard toil and penury of Binks's youth, who shall blame him for fancying that to be a gentleman was not to work? Binks did not know that a man who does not work is very far from being a gentleman—is merely a useless cumberer of the earth, a drone in the busy hive, an unhappiness to himself and to others.

Binks opened the door, and he drew a deep breath as he did so.

Dr. Holmes looked up.

"Dear me!" he ejaculated.

He looked at Binks. Then he put his glasses on and looked at him again. He seemed puzzled.

He did not recognise Binks in his new clothes, but he knew that the clothes must be those of an utter bounder.

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Holmes. "Who is it? How did you get in here, my good fellow?"

Binks felt a tremor.

Dr. Holmes evidently did not recognise him, and yet he called him "my good fellow." Why did he not take him for a gentleman?

Binks wondered.

"What is it?" asked the Head.

"If—if you please, sir——" faltered the one-time page of the School House.

Dr. Holmes almost dropped his glasses in his astonishment.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Binks!"

"Yes, sir."

"BINKS!"

"It's me, sir."

"Dear me!"

Binks came a little further into the study. He wondered whether Dr. Holmes would shake hands with him. The Head made no motion to do so. He simply stared at the egregious Binks.

"Bless my soul!" he repeated.

"I—I told you I was coming to see you, sir," said Binks.

"Yes—ah, yes!"

"So I've come!"

"Yes. But—but what does this absurd attire mean, Binks?" asked the astonished doctor.

Dr. Holmes might have caned Binks without startling him so much.

"This what, sir?" gasped Binks.

"Those absurd clothes."

"Oh, sir!"

"I trust, Binks, that you have not done this as a joke," said Dr. Holmes sternly.

"Oh, sir!" said poor Binks, hanging down his head.

His look showed how far he was from joking.

Dr Holmes gazed at him seriously.

"Is it possible, Binks, that you thought it the proper thing to dress in that manner?" he asked.

Binks was crimson and silent. What was the matter with his clothes? He didn't know himself; but he felt that the Head must know.

"I'm sorry, sir!" he stammered at last. "I thought I orter be decent to come and see you, sir."

Dr. Holmes smiled slightly.

"Oh, very well, Binks! Really, I beg your pardon for mentioning the matter, as it is really no concern of mine. Of course, you do not desire to keep your position here."

"Well, sir, it wouldn't do for a millionaire to be a boot-boy, would it?"

The Head laughed.

"Hardly, Binks."

"But I 'ope, sir, that you don't think there's hany swank about me because I'm rich now," said Binks earnestly. "I 'ope I shall be sensible, sir."

"A very correct sentiment, Binks."

"My Uncle 'Enry, sir, expressed a wish in 'is will, which I want to tell you about, sir," said Binks.

"Please sit down, Binks."

"Thank you, sir!"

Binks deposited his silk hat carefully upon a chair, and sat down upon another—on the extreme edge of it.

"Now, Binks?"

"Uncle 'Enry, sir, has left me all his money, which is more than a million pounds," said Binks. "'E leaves it to me to pervide for the others, which, of course, I am going to do."

"Quite right, Binks. I am sure you will do your duty to your family."

"As for me, sir, Uncle 'Enry thought——"

Binks paused.

"Well?" said the Head.

"'E—'e thought, sir——"

"Yes?"

"That you, sir——"

"I?"

"Yes, sir, you!"

"That I what?" said the Head, with a smile. "You must explain yourself a little further, Binks."

"M-my Uncle 'Enry thought, sir, that you might be kind enough to take me in 'and," said Binks.

"Oh!"

"He thought, sir, that as my employer, sir, you would consider yourself responsible in a way, sir."

The Head stared.

Dr. Holmes was a conscientious man, and realised to the full the duties of an employer, but surely taking the new millionaire in hand was a little beyond the duty of the most conscientious employer.

"Ahem!" said the Head.

"I—I want to do the right thing, sir," said Binks, a little forlornly. "I want to be eddicated, sir. I know I ain't wot I ought to be, sir."

"I am sure, Binks," said the Head, after a pause, "that I shall be very pleased to do anything in my power to help you."

"Thank you, sir! You mean that, sir?"

"Why, of course, Binks."

"Then—then you wouldn't object, sir——"

"Object—to what?"

"To my coming to St. Jim's, sir."

"You have come," said the Head, not quite comprehending Binks's meaning. "You are here, and you are very welcome."

"I—I mean, sir, as a pupil."

"What?"

"Like Tom Merry, sir!"

The Head gasped.

It was out now—and Binks stood before the Head, with his eyes on the carpet, looking a great deal like a criminal before a judge awaiting sentence of death.

CHAPTER 6.

Binks's Ambition.

DR. HOLMES was silent for several whole minutes. He did not know what to say.

Dr. Holmes was a kind and good man, and the last person in the world to have any snobbish prejudices. He knew perfectly well, of course, that a boot-boy was as good as any other boy, so long as he behaved himself decently. As a Christian, too, he could hardly have denied that all are equal in the eyes of their Maker. He knew that Binks himself was a much better fellow than many of the juniors in the school—than Mellish of the Fourth, or Gore of the Shell, for instance. And yet——

Yet facts were facts.

It was said of old that facts are stubborn things. With the best intentions in the world, Binks was not fitted to take his place among the boys of St. Jim's.

The Head realised that.

There were boys of all classes there—some rich, some poor, and the better-off boys were not always the best. That did not follow by any means. But a certain station was considered essential. Not that the Head cared himself whether a fellow's father was a duke or a dustman. He knew that that was of no real consequence, excepting to the snobbish; all really depended upon what the fellow was like himself.

But a fellow who had started life like Binks was likely to have a rough time of it among fellows who had excusable prejudices on the subject. Binks's ambition to become educated and fitted to take a station in the world was good. But he would fare far better among a new set of people who had known nothing of his origin.

That was clear enough to the Head.

But he could understand, too, how Binks naturally wanted to stick to the only place he knew, and the familiar faces. Millionaire as he was, he would feel lost and deserted at going out into the big world alone.

But——

Binks watched the Head's face anxiously.

"You'll let me come, sir?"

The Head coughed.

"Do you think it would be for your happiness, Binks?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, sir! Master Merry and Master D'Arcy would 'elp me, too," said Binks eagerly. "They are real gentlemen, sir, not like Master Mellish or Gore."

The Head smiled a little. Binks certainly had observation, at all events; he could see things. He knew that a gentleman was naturally kind and considerate to those below him in station. And by that touchstone he could tell an impostor; for there is no truer sign of the "bounder" than haughtiness towards others less fortunately placed.

"But, my dear boy," said the Head kindly, "I think that if I granted this wish of yours, it would hardly make you happy."

"I—I don't want to be happy so much, sir, as to get on and improve myself, and—and become like Tom Merry, sir," said Binks.

The Head could not help softening.

"You are a good boy, Binks," he said. "You do not see the difficulties in the way. But if you have well thought this out——"

"I have, sir, and my people, too," said Binks earnestly. "My father thinks it ought to be done, sir. My father is a very superior man, sir, and he never would work, even when we hadn't any money, sir."

"Ahem!" said the Head, apparently not much impressed by that proof of the superiority of Binks senior. "Well, I will think over it, and consult with the other masters, Binks. Meanwhile, if you are prepared to stay at the school for a few days——"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Then you shall stay a few days, and think it over, and consult with the boys whom you think are favourably disposed towards you," said the Head. "If at the end of, say,

three days, you come to me again and ask my decision, I will give it to you. If you are convinced by a short experience that you will be happier away from St. Jim's, then the matter will naturally drop."

"I shall want to stay, sir."

"We shall see. I will ask the School House dame to provide you with a room, and if you care to attempt Form work, I am sure one of the boys will help you to some idea of it. Suppose you go now, and send Tom Merry to me, Binks."

"Thank you, sir."

Binks left the study.

Dr. Holmes leaned his head upon his hand, and his brow wrinkled in thought.

"Poor lad!" he murmured. "A most laudable ambition, certainly; but—but ah, there are many buts! His clothes—oh, dear, those clothes! But details of that kind can be seen to. It is matters that go deeper that will cause the trouble."

Binks, quite unaware of what the Head was thinking of, made his way in a state of high glee to Tom Merry's study. He took what Dr. Holmes had said as a virtual promise, and almost regarded himself as a St. Jim's boy already.

The Terrible Three were in their study, chatting, when Binks knocked.

"Come in!" sang out Tom Merry.

Binks entered.

Lowther turned his head away. The desire to laugh when he saw Binks's clothes, was too strong. Manners set his teeth firmly to keep back a chuckle.

"Hallo, Binks!" said Tom Merry. "You've seen the Head?"

"Yes, Master Merry. I think it will be all right."

"What will be all right?"

"I think the 'Ead will let me come 'ere."

"Come here!"

"What!"

"I want to henter the school as a pupil," Binks explained. "That's really wot I kum down to see the 'Ead about."

The Terrible Three stared at one another blankly.

"My hat!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"I think it will be orl right," said Binks. "The 'Ead wishes to see you, Master Merry. 'E wants to speak to you about it."

"I'll go," said Tom Merry.

He left the study, leaving Binks with Manners, and Lowther. The two Shell fellows looked uncomfortable.

What on earth were they to do with Binks?

Binks was standing rather sheepishly with his silk hat in his hand. In spite of his topper and his expensive clothes, Binks could not help feeling like the old Binks, who had just brought a message to Tom Merry from the Head.

Lowther broke the silence.

"Sit down, Binks," he said, hooking a chair towards Binks with his foot.

Binks blushed.

"Sit down, Master Lowther?"

"Of course."

"You're very kind," said Binks.

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther. "You're not a giddy boots now; you're a giddy millionaire, and miles above us now, ain't he, Manners?"

"Miles," said Manners solemnly.

"Oh, don't say that, young gents," said Binks uncomfortably. "I know I've got 'eaps and 'eaps of money. I could carry about a thousand quid in me waistcoat pocket if I liked. But I know my place. I ain't thinking I'm just as good as you are because I've got rich."

"You're a good sort, Binks," said Lowther, "and a jolly sight better than some chaps we've got in the Shell."

"I 'ope I shall get on, and tone down a bit," said Binks ruefully. "Of course, it will be a long time before I'm fit to speak to Tom Merry."

"Hard work," Manners suggested.

"Oh, I don't mind 'ard work," said Binks. "I've worked 'ard. You young gents thinks that your Latin and things is 'ard sometimes; but wait till you 'ave to work through a 'undred pairs of boots before breakfast."

The Shell fellows shuddered.

"That'll be 'ard, if you like," said Binks.

"It's rotten," said Lowther. "There ought to be some invention made, or something, so that nobody would have to work. What's the good of living in a giddy age of invention if they can't invent something simple like that? Have some tea, Binks—we've only just made it, and you can have Tom Merry's cup. We'll make him some more when he comes back."

"Do you mean it, Master Lowther?"

"Of course, ass."

"I 'ope somebody will be as kind to you some day, Master Lowther, as you are to me," said Binks, as he sat down.

And Lowther, sarcastic fellow as he was, and inclined to cynicism, could not help being touched

"You're all right, Binks," he said. "There are chaps swanking about St. Jim's who're not half so decent. Here you are, try the cake."

Binks's accession to wealth had not spoiled his appetite. He drank tea, and ate cake with great gusto. While he was so engaged, Gore looked into the study.

He gave quite a jump.

"My hat!"

"Well, what do you want?" asked Manners unpleasantly.

"Ha, ha, ha! Nothing! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Gore went laughing along the passage. Binks turned very red.

"P'r'aps I oughtn't to be sittin' at your table, young gents," he said.

"Rats!" said Lowther. "Who cares for a cad like Gore? Take no notice of him! You're worth fifty of Gore, any day."

And Binks, thus comforted, attacked the cake again.

CHAPTER 7.

Gore Catches It.

TOM MERRY reached the Head's study.

Dr. Holmes was sitting with his chin in his hand, looking very thoughtful, when the hero of the Shell came in. He gave Tom Merry a cordial nod.

"Binks said you wanted to see me, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, Merry, and it is about Binks. I believe you have shown the boy kindness at various times."

"I've tried to treat him decently, sir."

"I am sure of it. He seems very grateful and attached to you. Indeed," said the Head, smiling, "his ambition now, to use his own words, is to become like Tom Merry."

Tom Merry smiled.

"He might have a better model, sir."

"I don't think so—and Binks doesn't. Has Binks informed you of his desire to come to St. Jim's as a pupil?"

"Yes, sir."

"Whether it can possibly be done, Merry, I do not know yet, nor can I decide whether it would be for Binks's benefit. But he is to stay at the school a few days, while the matter is settled. Can I depend upon you, Merry, to devote some little time to him, and to give him some assistance?"

"Certainly, sir."

"The poor lad's education has been much neglected, of course," said Dr. Holmes. "In his class, the necessity of earning money for the family needs leads to a lad being taken away from school at too early an age. We must hope that social legislation will amend this state of affairs in the future; meanwhile, Binks has suffered from it. Big boy as he is, I am in great doubt whether he is fitted to take his place even in the Second or Third Form, among boys of nine or ten. Will you, Merry, do what you can with him, and give him some idea of what he would have to do as a pupil here?"

"I shall be very pleased, sir."

"Also," said the Head, "you might give him some hints as to suitable—er—clothing."

Tom Merry could not help smiling.

"I will do so, sir."

"Thank you very much, Merry."

Tom Merry moved to the door. Then he turned back.

"If—if I may say a word, sir——"

"Go on, Merry!"

"Well, sir, if you decided to let Binks come into the school, he'd have some friends in this House, sir," said Tom Merry diffidently; "I'd stand by him like a shot, sir, and I know my friends would."

"That is very like you, Merry, and just what I expected of you," said the Head. "Whether Binks stays or not is uncertain; but if he does, I am sure you will do your best to help him on."

And Tom Merry left the study.

There was a group of juniors on the lower stairs as Tom Merry came up. Gore was talking and laughing.

"I tell you I saw him," said Gore.

"Rats!" replied Mellish.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Kerruish.

"But I saw him," said Gore. "He was sitting at the table in the study, having tea with Manners and Lowther, I tell you."

"Rats!"

"It's a fact. They're chumming up with Binks."

"Stuff!"

"Why should they?" asked Hancock.

Gore sneered.

"Well, I don't see that it takes a lot of guessing why they do it," he said. "Binks is a millionaire, of course."

"Oh, bosh!" said Kerruish. "Tom Merry doesn't care for his money, and he wouldn't touch it, anyway."

"That's all you know."

Tom Merry came up the stairs three at a time.

"Thank you, Kerruish!" he said.

The juniors swung round, and Gore looked alarmed.

"Hallo!" he said feebly.

"So you are imitating Levison!" said Tom Merry, with flashing eyes. "Only you have spoken out a little more plainly, Gore."

"I—I——"

"Will you come up on the landing, Gore?"

Gore shifted uneasily

"What for?" he said.

"Because you may get hurt if I hit you here on the stairs."

"Look here——"

"Will you come?"

"No, I won't."

"Very well!"

Tom Merry grasped Gore by the shoulders, and swung him down to the lower landing. There he flung him against the wall.

"Now, put your fists up!" he said grimly.

"Look here——" began Gore.

"Unless you choose to eat your words, like Levison," said Tom Merry scornfully.

"Hanged if I will!"

"Then put your fists up."

"Hang you!"

Tap!

Tom Merry's knuckles came upon Gore's nose, and he put his fists up. He had no choice but to defend himself.

"Go it!" said Kerruish, putting his hands in his pockets, and standing back to watch. "Two to one on Tom Merry!"

"Go it, Gore!" said Mellish.

But his was the only voice that backed up Gore. No one had taken Gore's sneers at Tom Merry seriously. The St. Jim's juniors knew perfectly well that Tom Merry would not touch any of Binks's money. Such a suspicion would only have occurred to a mind like Mellish's or Gore's.

Gore had not Tom Merry's pluck; but he had a certain amount of dogged courage, and he fought hard now that he had to fight.

But he did not make much impression upon Tom Merry.

Tom Merry, red with indignation, pushed his adversary hard, hitting him right and left, till Gore fell upon the landing, with a crash.

He showed no desire to get up again.

Tom Merry looked at him with blazing eyes.

"Have you had enough?" he asked.

Gore looked up at him sullenly.

"Yes," he grunted.

"Take care you don't talk like that when I can hear you again, that's all!" said Tom Merry.

And he went on up the stairs.

The juniors grinned, and left Gore to himself. No one felt any sympathy for the bully of the Shell. He had brought it on himself. Only Mellish ventured a word of condolence, and it was ill-received.

He helped Gore to his feet.

"It's rotten!" he said. "Of course, you're not fit, Gore, or you'd have licked him into a cocked hat."

"Oh, rats!" said Gore.

"As for what you said, it's quite true. Tom Merry is after Binks's money, of course."

Gore grunted.

"Why don't you tell him so?" he said.

"Hang it all, Gore——"

"Oh, shut up!"

Mellish's eyes glinted. Gore was not a pleasant fellow to get on with, especially when he had been roughly handled.

"You wouldn't say all that if Tom Merry were still here," snarled Gore.

"Well, you wouldn't dare to say it again, if Tom Merry were here," exclaimed Mellish, stung into making a retort.

Gore swung round his open hand, and caught Mellish a sounding smack that made him reel. The cad of the Fourth staggered against the banisters, and held on to them.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Got any more to say?" asked Gore savagely.

Mellish did not reply; but he gave the Shell bully a deadly look, as he walked away.

CHAPTER 8.

Thrown Out!

BINKS gave Tom Merry a quick, anxious look as he came back into the study. Tom Merry was looking a little flushed from his encounter with Gore, and there was a mark on his cheek where Gore's knuckles had come home once.

"Seen the 'Ead?" said Binks, at once.

"Yes, kid."

"And——"

"It seems that you're staying at the school a few days," said Tom Merry, sitting down, and beginning on the toast, which Manners had kept warm on the fender for him. "The Head thinks it would be a good idea for me to look after you a bit. Of course, I shall be jolly glad to do it."

Binks's eyes moistened.

"Will you really, Master Merry?"

"Of course."

"It's hawful good of you," said Binks.

"Rats!"

"May I get you another cup of tea?" asked Binks eagerly.

Tom Merry laughed.

"No; you're a giddy guest in this study, Binks. We're waiting on you. Manners, old man, give me another cup of tea, and give Binks one."

"Right-ho!" said Manners.

"You sha'n't wait on me," said Binks. "It's only too good of you to let me sit down in your study. If all young gentlemen was like you young gents, it wouldn't be so bad to be a boot-boy. But Master Mellish always thought as I was dirt under his feet."

"That's because Mellish is a hopeless cad!" said Tom Merry. "If he happened to be a boot-boy, I'll bet a footer to a pair of socks that he'd scuff over the boots and never clean 'em properly. Don't mind him. And sit down; you're here to be waited on. Goodness knows, you've waited on us chaps long enough."

"Oh, Master Merry!"

Manners poured out the tea for Binks, and Monty Lowther helped him to more toast, and Tom Merry cut the cake for him.

Binks was almost overcome.

He made a substantial tea, but he seemed to be gulping down emotion along with the cake all the time.

"I—I say, Master Merry," said Binks, after a short silence, during which he had been pondering—"I say, you know I'm a millionaire now?"

"Yes, rather, Binky."

"I can't touch all my money till I'm twenty-one; but I am to have as much as I like—thousands of pounds, if I like."

"Lucky bargee!"

"Look 'ere, Master Merry, I—I would like——"

"Go ahead! What would you like?"

"I'd like you to 'ave some of the money, Master Merry, and Master Manners and Lowther, too," blurted out Binks, turning very red.

Tom Merry's face grew stern for a moment.

"Chuck that, Binks!" he exclaimed.

"But——"

"You surely don't think we would touch any of your money—any of us? Are you off your rocker?"

Binks stammered.

"I—I don't mean to offend you, Master Merry. If—if you think my money isn't good enough for you young gents——"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"It isn't that, Binks, old man. Nothing of the sort. Your money is as good as anybody else's. But don't you see, we couldn't take any money. It's kind of you to think of it, but anything of that sort is impossible. We don't want to sponge on you, Binks, old man."

"I—I beg your pardon, Master Merry, but I—I thought——"

He broke off.

"That's all right, Binks," said Tom Merry. "We're going to be great friends, and I'd just as soon borrow a bob of you as of Levison; but nothing more than that, you know. Friends can't give each other money. Anything else, but not money. But I don't want to be preaching at you. Have some more cake?"

And Binks had some more cake, and the subject dropped.

To Binks, Tom Merry's reasoning was not quite clear. It seemed absurd to him that a fellow should have heaps of money, and not be able to give any of it to another fellow he liked. But there it was, and Tom Merry's opinion was law to him. Binks had taken Tom Merry for his model, and he could not have taken a better one.

The tea was finished in Tom Merry's study, and then Binks went to see the House dame, and to instal himself in his room. The taxi had been dismissed, after registering an unheard-of amount. Binks had left off counting money; he had a lesson to learn in that direction also.

When Binks was gone, the Terrible Three looked at one another.

"Well, here's a go!"

That was Monty Lowther's opinion.

"A jolly go!" agreed Manners.

"I don't know whether it would be any good the chap coming to St. Jim's," said Tom Merry; "but I know this—if he does come, I'm going to stand by him."

"Good old Tommy!"

"Well, a fellow must be decent, you know. There are lots of chaps here who will be caddish enough about it."

"No doubt about that."

"Gore and Mellish and Crooke, and fellows of that sort, will make Binks's life a burden, if they can," said Tom Merry. "He's a decent sort. I don't care a rap about his blessed 'h's.' After all, what chance has he had of learning to speak properly? The thing is, is he a decent chap? He's decent enough. Well, then, everything else is simply on the surface. If his heart's in the right place, it's all serene. That's my view."

This was quite a long speech for Tom Merry, and his chums grinned.

"All serene!" said Manners, with a chuckle. "Don't go for us; we haven't done anything. Lectures for Gore and Mellish."

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know."

Tom Merry rose.

"We'd better let Blake know about it," he said. "Come on! And this evening we'll put Binks through his first lessons."

"Good!" chuckled Lowther.

"Tom Merry, school-master!" grinned Manners. "Private pupils taken, and coached for entrance exams. into public schools. Backward pupils a speciality."

"Testimonials on application," added Lowther.

"Fees no object," pursued Manners.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry. "I'm going to help Binks, and that settles it."

"Hear, hear!"

The chums of the Shell left the study and went down the Fourth Form passage. They were near the door of Study No. 6, when they heard a sound of disturbance from that famous apartment.

It was a gasping, a scuffling, a trampling, and amid the noise could be heard the aristocratic tones of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Wag him, deah boys—wag him!"

The Terrible Three grinned.

Somebody was evidently being ragged in Blake's study.

"Yow! Leggo!"

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "That's Mellish's voice."

"Wag him, deah boys!"

The Terrible Three ran on, much interested. The door of the study was open, and just as they reached it a body came whirling out.

It was Mellish!

He came whirling and spinning into the passage, and crashed into the Terrible Three as they reached the study door.

Crash!

Manners went crashing against the opposite wall, Lowther was knocked along the passage, and Tom Merry was floored, and Mellish bumped down heavily upon him.

There was a shout of wrath from the Terrible Three.

"Oh!" gasped Mellish.

"Groff my chest!" gasped Tom Merry. "Gerroff, you ass!"

"Oh! Ow!"

Tom Merry rolled Mellish off, and staggered up.

"You dangerous asses!" he roared. "What are you up to?"

Four merry faces looked out of Study No. 6, and there was a roar of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You duffers——"

"Bai Jove! I'm awf'ly—ha, ha, ha!—sowwy, deah boys! We didn't see you. Ha, ha, ha! I wegard it as vewy funnay!"

"You fearful chump——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frabjous ass——"

"Oh, we're sorry!" grinned Blake. "We didn't see you. What were you sticking just outside the door for?"

"Ass! We came to see you!"

"Well, come in," said Blake hospitably. "Never mind what has happened; we overlook that entirely."

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three entered the study, uncertain whether to make a friendly visit or to rush the Fourth-Formers and wreck the study.

CHAPTER 9.

Levison is Called In.

MELLISH had picked himself up and slunk away down the passage. Whatever had been his quarrel with his Form-fellows, he was evidently inclined to pursue it no further. The Shell fellows were glaring wrathfully as they came into Study No. 6, and Blake & Co. tried not to smile, but did not succeed.

"We are weally sowwy, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a graceful bow, but with an irresistible smile dimpling his aristocratic face. "It was quite an accident. Of course, we had no ideah that you were neah. Othahwise, we should have given Mellish anothah bump instead of thwowin' him out."

"Certainly!" said Digby.

"What had he done?" asked Tom Merry

Jack Blake gave a snort.

"Oh, he came here with some of his usual caddishness. He's picked up a yarn from somewhere—listening at a door perhaps—that Binks is coming to the school as a pupil, and he was proposing that the whole Fourth Form should rag him, as a protest against having boot-boys in the Form."

"And you——"

"Well, we ragged Mellish instead," chuckled Blake. "You see, he said that a low cad ought to be ragged, and so we ragged him. That wasn't exactly what he meant, you know; but we were only acting on what he said."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, in that case I forgive you for making silly asses of yourselves," he exclaimed. "Only look out into the passage the next time before you throw your blessed Fourth Form cads about. Look here, it's about Binks that we've come to speak to you."

"Pway sit down, deah boys. Can I give you a bwush down?"

"Oh, that's all right. Look here, the Head's thinking of letting Binks come as a pupil, and he's to stay a few days here, anyway. It will be all over the school soon, and I think the decent chaps ought to stand together to see that Binks isn't ragged by the cads."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"That's my idea," said Tom Merry.

"Quite right," said Blake. "I don't know whether it'll be a good thing for Binks or for anybody else if he comes here, but there's not going to be any snobbish rot while I can stop it."

"Wathah not," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with emphasis. "If I do not object to Binks, I wegard it as pwofound cheek for anybody else to object to him. I take it that I am, pewwaps, the most awistocwatic person in the School House. Therefore——"

"My hat!"

"I was not speakin' in a swankin' sense, Tom Mewwy; I was merely statin' a fact," explained D'Arcy. "Therefore, as I was sayin' when you intewwupted me, I think that if I can stand Binks, it is mere wot of the othah fellows to say that they can't stand him. That's the posish."

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Blake. "Listen to the words of Lord Aubrey Adolphus Chesterfield Grandison Brummel! Hear, hear!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"But Gussy's quite right," said Lowther. "If he can stand Binks, and Binks can stand him, why shouldn't there be peace in the family?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Hallo! Here he is! Come in, Binks!"

Binks came grinning into the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave him a welcoming smile, and then slightly turned his head away He really could not stand the cut of those clothes.

"If you please, young gents, I've got my room," he said. "Would you care to see it, Master Merry?"

"Yes, rather! We'll all see it!"

Binks led the way to his new quarters.

Mrs. Mimms had accommodated him with a room near the junior dormitories, looking out over the quadrangle, and Binks showed the juniors into it with rather a flourish. It was very different from the apartment he had occupied as boots of the School House.

"Vewy nice indeed," said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass round the room. "Bai Jove, though—— What is that?"

It was a large and extremely ragged pair of boots standing on the table.

To the boots was attached a card.

"FOR BINKS TO CLEAN!"

Binks turned crimson.

Tom Merry compressed his lips.

"That's some cad's idea of a joke," he remarked. "Whose scrawl is that on the card?"

The juniors looked at it and shook their heads. The words were scrawled on the card in large Roman letters, and there was no clue to the writer.

"I—I say, that is mean, ain't it?" said Binks. "I don't see why they want to do that, you know. I ain't done anything to offend any of the young gents since I come back, that I knows of."

"Bai Jove, it's a wotten, caddish jape!" said D'Arcy, "and I shall give the pewpetwatah of it a fearful thwashin'."

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors turned over the card in their hands. The letters were large and bold, but a little faint as to colour, having evidently been blotted as soon as written. The joker who had placed the card there had doubtless had to act very quickly, knowing that he might be found in the room.

Binks stood by the window, looking very unhappy.

He was beginning to realise now what the Head had meant when he said that he would not be comfortable at St. Jim's.

If that was an example of what was to follow—— But Binks looked at the chums of the School House, and he felt that he had at least some good friends who would stand by him, and his heart warmed again.

"Never mind that, Master Merry," he said. "It's all right. I don't bear no malice; it's only a joke."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We're not going to have jokes of this sort in the School House," he said.

"Wathah not!"

"But how are we going to find out the chap who did it?" asked Blake.

Herries uttered an exclamation.

"I've got an idea."

"Out with it, then!"

"I'll call in Towser. Towser'll pick up the trail, and track the rotter down as soon as you like," said Herries enthusiastically.

Jack Blake snorted.

"Oh, blow Towser!"

"Look here, Blake——"

"Weally Hewwies, I object to Towsah bein' called in. The bwute has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twousahs."

"Ass! I tell you——"

"I'll tell you what!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Let's show it to that chap Levison, and ask him. You know how awfully keen he is—how he bowled out Mellish in that caddish bizney the other day."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let's take it to Levison and ask him."

Tom Merry hesitated a moment. The less he saw of Ernest Levison, the better he was pleased.

But he would not oppose the wish of the majority.

"I wegard it as a good ideah," D'Arcy remarked. "Come on, deah boys!"

"Oh, all right," said Tom Merry.

"I—I say, I wish you'd let it drop, young gents," said Binks. "Look here, I'd rather you took no notice of it at all, I would."

"Binks, deah boy, you must wegard this as an affaih of honah, in which you have placed yourself unweservedly in our hands," said D'Arcy.

"But——"

"No 'buts' can be allowed in the case, deah boy. You wait here, and we'll attend to the mattah for you."

And Binks stood looking glumly out of his window, while the chums of the School House went along to Levison's study.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy knocked at the door, and opened it.

"Levison, deah boy, can we come in?"

Levison looked at them none too pleasantly. Mellish, who was standing by the mantelpiece, turned an equally unwelcoming glance upon them.

"I suppose you can come in," said Levison curtly. "What do you want?"

Tom Merry laid the card upon the table. Levison ran his eyes carelessly over it.

"'For Binks to Clean!'" he said. "What does that mean?"

"We found that card, with a pair of tramp's boots on the table in the room Mrs. Mimms has given Binks."

"Really!"

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy."

"Well, what do you bring it to me for?"

"We want to know who did it."

CHAPTER 10.

The Detective Detected.

ERNEST LEVISON drew a quick breath, and stepped back a pace.

If you think that I——" he began.

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"We haven't thought anything of the kind," he said. "Your name never occurred to me, at least."

"Wathah not."

"Then why——"

"Oh, it's because you're such a giddy detective," Blake explained. "The way you dished Mellish the other day was a regular caution."

Mellish scowled angrily, but did not speak. He did not like allusions to that affair; more especially as he had made it up with Levison since then. The two cads of the Fourth had need of one another.

"Well," said Levison more coolly. "What do you want me to do?"

"Tell us who wrote that card."

Levison laughed.

"How am I to do that?"

"Well, you found out the other day who scoffed D'Arcy's sov.," said Blake. "I suppose you can find out other things. Sherlock Holmes would tell us in a minute."

"Yaas, wathah! Sherlock Holmes would only have to glance at that card, deah boy, and he would tell us whethah it was w'itten by a man or a boy, and whethah he had a moustache, and what was the pattern of his twousahs."

Levison grinned, and took up the card. He turned it over in his hands with an expression of deep reflection. Mellish watched him curiously, evidently as interested as the chums themselves in the solution of the mystery.

"Well, I dare say I could tell you something about it," said Levison.

"Go on," said Blake.

All the juniors were keenly interested. Levison had shown a keenness in matters of investigation that showed he had the gifts of the born detective; and all the juniors expected him to name the writer of the card, from some clue that was unseen by them. His manner certainly indicated that he know something.

"Well," said Levison. "This is Bristol board, and isn't picked up in every study in the School House. It's the kind of board that would be used for pen-and-ink sketches. Is there anybody in the School House who goes in for that sort of thing?"

"My hat!" said Blake.

"Well, is there?" asked Levison.

"Yes; Reilly."

"Weilly would not play a wotten joke like this on Binks," said D'Arcy. "I can answah for my fwiend Weilly that he nevah would be a cad."

"I feel pretty certain about it, too," said Blake.

"Yes, rather!"

"The card may have been boned from his study," suggested Digby. "We know there are fellows in the School House who aren't above boning things from other fellows' studies."

He glanced at Mellish as he spoke, and the cad of the Fourth turned crimson.

"Well, we'll say the card was taken from Reilly's study," said Levison. "That argues a chap on familiar terms with Reilly—chap who might have dropped in and seen the card there, or who knew where it was kept."

The juniors were silent. Reilly was a fine frank lad, whom they all liked, and he was on familiar terms with all of them. But he was not on familiar terms with any of the fellows they thought mean enough to play this joke on Binks. Levison appeared to be leading them into a blind alley with his Sherlock-Holmes-like reasoning. But Monty Lowther came to the rescue with a suggestion.

"Lots of the fellows know about Reilly having this card," he said. "Any chap could have nipped into his study and taken a bit of it."

Levison nodded.

"Possible, of course," he said. "Now, you can tell by the scratches on these letters the kind of pen that was used. You see the letters have been blotted, and the ink is faint."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And what do the scratches show?" asked Blake.

"The kind of pen that was used."

"And what kind of pen was it, Levison?"

"A 'J' pen."

Monty Lowther whistled softly.

"Gore uses 'J' pens!" he exclaimed.

"Gore!" exclaimed all the juniors together.

"We're getting nearer," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. felt that they were on the track at last. Gore was as likely as anyone to have placed that insulting card in Binks's room. They had been inclined to suspect Mellish at first. But Gore was quite as likely as Mellish to be guilty.

"Anything else?" asked Manners.

Levison scanned the card.

"Yes. You see, there are half a dozen blots on the card. That shows that it was done by a chap in the habit of dropping them."

"Gore is always being hauled over the coals for blotting his exercises," Lowther remarked.

"Bai Jove, it's weally conclusive pwoof—Pelion piled on Ossah, deah boys. Let's go and bump Goah till he owns up to the twuth."

"Good egg!"

"Yes, come on."

Tom Merry reached out to take the card up, with the intention of taking it to Gore and confronting the Shell bully with it, when he suddenly paused and uttered a sharp exclamation.

"My hat!"

"Hallo! What's the matter?"

Tom Merry pointed to the blotting-paper on Levison's table.

He had laid the card on it on entering, but as he took the card up now, the blotting-paper was visible again; and upon the blotting-paper was a blotted line of Roman letters backwards.

The whole letters were not there, but they were sufficiently clearly reproduced for the juniors to read backwards the line:

"FOR BINKS TO CLEAN."

They stared at the blotting-paper.

Ernest Levison started forward, to catch it up, but Tom Merry thrust him roughly back.

"Hands off!" he exclaimed.

"Look here——"

"Stand back, you cad!"

Levison had to stand back, biting his lip.

Tom Merry held the card against the blotting-paper, so that the letters and the blotted facsimile could be compared.

It was evident that it was this card which had been blotted upon the sheet as soon as it was written.

It was therefore quite clear that Levison had written it, and had placed it or had it placed in Binks's room.

The accusing eyes of the juniors were turned upon him.

Levison affected to laugh.

"Well," he said, with brazen effrontery, "what's the trouble?"

"This card has been blotted there," said Tom Merry sternly.

"Looks like it."

"You wrote it!"

"Perhaps the chap who wrote it popped into my study to use the blotting-paper," Levison suggested.

"Weally, Levison——"

"You cannot expect to impose upon us with a silly lie like that," said Tom Merry. "You wrote this card, Levison, and you blotted it because you were in a hurry—you dared not be caught putting it and the boots in Binks's room."

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"Have it that way if you like," he said carelessly.

"It is true," said Tom Merry.

"Well, supposing that it is?"

"Then these precious deductions you were making from the card—they were all intended to make us believe someone else had done it."

Levison grinned.

"You could believe what you liked," he said. "I only pointed out to you what might have been the case."

"You tried to make out first that it was Reilly, and then that it was one of Reilly's friends, and finally Gore," said Tom Merry. "We all believed it was Gore, and you left it at that. As a matter of fact, I don't see any reason to suppose that a 'J' pen was used more than any other."

"It wasn't, as a matter of fact," said Levison cheerfully. "But I remembered that Gore used 'J' pens, and I knew you'd jump at his name."

"You cad!"

Levison yawned.

"Well, now you've come down to the facts, will you oblige me by getting out of my study?" he suggested.

"Not yet, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wemarked to my fwiend Binks that I should give the authah of that wotten card a feahful thwashin'. Pway put up your fists, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pushed back his cuffs in a most businesslike manner.

CHAPTER 11.

Binks Receives an Apology.

AS Arthur Augustus prepared for war, Levison retreated a pace or two, placing the table between himself and the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus followed him.

D'Arcy meant business, and there was no escape for the new junior. But Levison had no intention of fighting D'Arcy if he could help it. Although he affected to sneer at the swell of the Fourth as a dandy, he had seen D'Arcy box, and seen him punch the ball; and he had no desire to take the place of the punching-ball on this occasion.

"Oh, draw it mild!" he remarked. "Don't be an ass, you know."

"I wefuse to be called an ass. Pway put up your hands."

"Yes, put them up," said Blake. "Let's see if you're as useful with your hands as you are with your blessed lies."

"Look here——"

"Are you weady, deah boy?"

"Dot him on the boko, Gussy, then he'll be ready," Monty Lowther suggested.

"Bai Jove; yaas!"

"Look here," said Levison. "It was only a joke on that outsider Binks, and I don't see that it has anything to do with you, D'Arcy, at all."

"I wefuse to allow any fwiend of mine to be chawactewised as an outsidah."

"Friend of yours—Binks?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"You've got a queer taste in your choice of friends, that's all," he remarked.

"At all events, I have not made a fwiend of you," said Arthur Augustus, "and I should uttahly wefuse to do so undah any circs."

"Take him away!" said Levison.

"Not a bit of it," said Tom Merry. "You've insulted a friend of ours, and you must expect to put up your fists."

"Yaas, wathah! There is no alternative, unless, of course, you pwefer to make Binks a pwofound apology," suggested Arthur Augustus.

Levison grinned.

"Oh, you want me to apologise to Binks—a giddy bootboy?"

"Yaas, wathah! You would not need the suggestion if you were a gentleman," said D'Arcy. "But, of course, a gentleman would nevah have been guilty of such an offensive action in the first place."

"Hear, hear!" said the juniors.

"Oh, I don't mind apologising, if you want me to," said Levison. "Fetch your friend Binks here, and I'll pitch it to him."

"It would be infwa'lig. for my fwiend Binks to come here and apologise to a boundah of your descwiption," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "You will pwoceed to Binks."

"Oh, rats!"

"Vewy well. If you pwefer to put up your hands——"

Levison made an impatient gesture.

"I'll go, if you like."

"I wegard you as wathah a poltwoon, Levison; but you may go and apologise to Binks instead of takin' a feahful thwashin', if you like."

Levison whistled carelessly as he stepped from the study. The juniors followed him closely. They did not mean to give him an opportunity of escaping till he had made the amende honorable to Binks.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane met them in the passage, and looked at the procession in some surprise.

"Anything on?" asked the Cornstalk.

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus. "Levison has insulted Binks, and is goin' to apologise to him."

"Is he? That's unusually decent of Levison."

"He pwefers it to a feahful thwashin', deah boy."

"Ha, ha! I see!"

Binks was standing in the door of his room. He looked at Levison, puzzled by the junior's presence, and by the sneering smile on his face.

"We've found the cad, Binky!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh, Master Merry——"

"And he's goin' to apologise to you, deah boy."

"Oh, Master D'Arcy——"

"My hat!" exclaimed Gore, who was passing down the

passage. "Apologise to Binks! That's very rich! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry turned upon him.

"Will you kindly get on your way, Gore?" he asked.

"Not unless I choose!" said Gore.

Tom Merry advanced towards him.

"Go!" he said curtly.

Gore gave him one look—and went. He was still aching considerably from the encounter on the stairs, and he did not want any more of the same.

Levison had glanced round quickly for a moment, as if expecting Gore to make a diversion in his favour, and give him a chance of getting away, but it was only for a moment.

"Come on," said Tom Merry, and they entered Binks's room. "Now, then, there's the fellow you insulted, and whom you've got to apologise to."

Levison hesitated.

"I don't want 'im to, really, Master Merry," said Binks. "I know he didn't mean any 'arm. It's all right, really, it is."

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wats!"

"But, really, young gents——"

"Dry up, Binks! Now, then, Levison, it's your show."

Levison gritted his teeth.

"I put a pair of boots on your table, Binks," he said; "also a card, telling you to clean them."

"I know you did, Master Levison."

"Well, you needn't clean them," said Levison.

He turned towards the door.

Some of the juniors grinned, but Tom Merry slung the junior back with an iron grasp on his shoulder.

"That may be funny," he remarked, "but it doesn't amount to an apology. Tell Binks you're sorry for having treated him like a cad."

"I'm sorry for having treated you like a cad, Binks, though, really, it's how you ought to be treated," said Levison, putting into Tom Merry's words a meaning he had never intended.

"That isn't right yet," said Tom Merry grimly. "Apologise properly, Levison, or you'll stand up to Gussy before you get out of this room."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Levison flushed a little. Hardened as he was, he could feel the humiliation of his position in the eyes of Binks.

"Well, I apologise," he said sullenly. "Is that enough?"

"That will do, I suppose," said Tom Merry.

"Hold on a moment," said D'Arcy. "You will kindly add that you take back any weflection you may have cast upon our wespected fwiend Binks."

"I take back everything."

"Yaas, that's all wight, then. Get out, you wottah!"

Levison got out.

"I wegard that affaih as satisfactowily settled," remarked the swell of St. Jim's. "If anythin' of this sort occurs again we shall know that it is Levison, and we'll give him a feahful thwashin' without the option of an apology."

"Good!"

"You're awfully kind to me, young gents," said Binks, with moist eyes.

"Wats! Of course, we shall stand by you so long as you are a decent chap," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy; "and I'll tell you what I will do, Binky, deah boy. If you'll come ovah to Wayland with me to-mowwow I'll take you to my tailah, and ordah you some new clothes."

Binks glanced down at his gorgeous attire.

It was evident that he would be very sorry to part with it, and that he could not see where he had erred, but he was willing to place himself wholly in the hands of Tom Merry & Co.

"Thank you very much, Master D'Arcy," he said.

"Of course, my own tailah is in London," D'Arcy added, "but this chap at Wayland is a wathah clevah fellah, and does things for me vewy well when I haven't time to wefer them to town, you see. He will wig you out in vewy passable style, deah boy. Meanwhile, if you'll come up to the dormitory, Binks, I'll lend you some clothes."

"Ye-es, Master D'Arcy. B-but what's the matter with these?" Binks found the courage to blurt out.

Arthur Augustus turned his monocle upon Binks's attire.

"It would weally take too long to tell you, deah boy," he exclaimed; "but, as a mattah of fact, they give me wathah a pain, you know. Come on!"

And D'Arcy led Binks away.

CHAPTER 12.

Binks Desires to Learn.

TOM MERRY had just finished his prep., and was yawning. Manners and Lowther had gone downstairs and Tom Merry was alone in the study. There came a tap at the door, and Tom Merry sang out cheerily:

"Come in!"

Binks came in.

Binks was clad in some clothes of D'Arcy's now, of a really elegant cut. Binks's figure was not very elegant, Nature having overlooked the fact that he might become a millionaire when she planned him, so to speak. But he certainly looked better in D'Arcy's clothes than his own.

He blushed a little as Tom Merry's eye came upon him.

"Do you like this better, Master Merry?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom frankly. "You can always trust Gussy in the matter of clothes. Why, we all rely upon him ourselves, don't we, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" said the swell of St. Jim's, putting in his head from the passage. "In a case of clothes, deah boy, you can always wely upon me to tell you the wight and pwopah thing to do. I am goin' to stand by Binks, and get him dwessed decently."

"Hear, hear!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Binks.

"Not at all, deah boy," said D'Arcy graciously. "It's a pleasuah to me to help a fellah in a weally important mattah, such as clothes or hats."

And D'Arcy went on his way, very satisfied. Binks closed the door of the study after him, and then turned timidly to Tom Merry.

"Are you busy now, Master Merry?" he asked.

"Not a bit of it—in fact, I'm finished, and it's an hour before bed," said Tom Merry cheerily; "so if I can do anything for you——"

"I was thinkin' of the lessons."

"Good! We'll begin now."

"If it ain't troubling you too much, Master Merry——"

"Rats! As Gussy says, it will be a pleasure," said Tom Merry. "Come and sit down by the fire, and I'll fish out some books."

Binks sat down, and Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought. Binks was old enough to go into the Fourth Form if he came to St. Jim's as a pupil, but it was pretty certain that he had not sufficient knowledge to pass the entrance exam., however easy.

Binks's knowledge was not limited, considering his opportunities. He knew how to extract a living from a hard world, how to clean boots to perfection, how to assist a distressed mother with a large family and a lazy husband. These things Binks could do, and there were very few fellows in the Sixth Form at St. Jim's who could have done them. If put to Binks's line of business, it was probable that Kildare himself, the captain of St. Jim's, would have been found wanting.

But knowledge of this sort, however useful to Binks the boots, was useless to Binks the millionaire.

His task was no longer to clean boots, however well he could do that. His mother was no longer in distress, his little brothers and sisters were no longer poor, his father was able to gratify his lifelong ambition of living without work. All these things were easy now. But other things, less important in themselves, were as hard to solve as the old problems had been in their time.

And how was Binks to solve them.

Tom Merry, as he looked at Binks's fat, good-natured, nobbly, but certainly not brilliant face, wondered how he would wrestle with Latin irregular verbs and the German alphabet. What Form would he be suitable to enter?

Not the Fourth, though he was old enough to enter. Not the Third, either, nor perhaps the Second. It came as a shock to Tom Merry to realise that Binks was not in a state to enter the First Form—among the "Babes."

And a fellow of his age and size certainly couldn't have been put in the First. If he came to St. Jim's, then, what was to be done with him?

Tom Merry took down his Latin grammar and turned back to the old familiar early pages, blotted with many a blot, and scrawled with many a line. Across the second page was sprawled a line in Tom Merry's early handwriting—"Put the accusative before the verb." It was a long time since he had looked at that page, and that scrawled line brought back recollections of early lessons in a rush.

"Ready, Binks?" he said, assuming a cheerfulness he was not exactly feeling.

"Quite, sir," said Binks.

"I suppose you really want to tackle the subject in real earnest?" Tom Merry asked.

"Yes, sir."

"You—you feel a real desire to study?" said Tom, with a faint resemblance of something Dr. Holmes had said to him when he first came to St. Jim's.

"Oh, yes, Master Merry!"

"Good. Shall we tackle Latin for a start?"

"Certainly, sir," said Binks.

"Good. Take a pen and write down what I tell you, on a sheet of paper," said Tom. "We'll just break up the ground, at all events."

"Right you are, sir."

The door opened, and Monty Lowther looked in. He stared at Binks, and then at Tom Merry.

"Coming down to play that game of chess, Tom?" he asked.

"Not now," said Tom Merry. "Busy."

"Oh, all serene!" said Lowther, with a grin.

And he went out and shut the door.

CHAPTER 13.

Binks's First Latin Lesson.

TOM MERRY opened his Latin grammar. Binks sat expectant, biting the handle of his pen. Binks was evidently willing to learn. But whether Binks's dormant mental capacity was equal to the strain was a question. That the new pupil was willing, was something; but it was quite possible that he would prove impenetrable.

"Now, then," said Tom cautiously, "there are the same letters in Latin as in English, Binks—excepting they haven't a 'W.'"

"Oh!" said Binks. "They 'aven't a 'W,' sir?"

"No. All the others are the same."

Binks looked puzzled.

"Then 'ow do they spell 'werry,' sir?" he asked.

Binks probably meant "very."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Never mind that now, Binks," he said, "you have to take your tutor's word for things, when you're beginning, you know."

"Oh, yes!" said Binks. "Please go on, sir. I won't interrupt again."

"The genders are the same as in English—masculine, feminine, neuter, and common."

"Yes," said Binks.

"You know what gender is?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"What is it?"

"Something to eat," said Binks.

Tom Merry gasped.

"You ass! I—I mean, no, it isn't. Gender means sex—masculine gender means of the masculine sex, see?"

"Oh, I see! And there are two?"

"No, four."

"But there ain't four sexes, is there?" said Binks. "Men and women and children is three; but where is the fourth, Master Merry?"

Tom Merry tried not to show his dismay. He had never dreamed that even poor Binks was in such a state of mental darkness as this.

"There are two sexes, Binks, and two genders—the third gender is neuter—that is, no sex at all—and the fourth, common—anything that might belong to either."

"Oh, I see, sir! That's artful, ain't it?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, smiling. "Now, you know how many parts of speech there are in English?"

"Lots, I should think, sir," cried Binks cheerfully.

"There are nine, in English, Binks, counting the article."

"Yes, sir."

"There are eight in Latin, as in Latin there is no article."

"Ain't there really, sir?"

"No. You understand?"

"But ain't there an article of any sort, sir?" asked Binks, looking very much surprised. "'Ow did the Latins get on without any articles?"

"The noun stands by itself," said Tom Merry. "Thus—Why, you ass, I mean articles in a grammatical sense!" he shouted, as the cause of Binks's perplexity dawned suddenly upon him. "Don't you know what an article is?"

"Yes, sir—the table 'ere is a harticle," said Binks, "the poker is a harticle, and everythink in the room is a harticle."

"Exactly," agreed Tom Merry; "quite right, Binks, only—only they're not the sort of articles I was talking about. I mean the word 'the' and the word 'an' or 'a'—definite and indefinite article, they are called."

"Ho!" said Binks.

"There are two numbers, singular and plural."

"Is that all?" said Binks, as if he expected some more.

Tom Merry laughed.

"There is a dual number in Greek, and you can thank your lucky stars you've not got to learn that," he said. "Two numbers are quite enough. Now, the noun has six cases."

"Ho!" said Binks.

"You'd better write that down," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, sir. What sort of cases are they?"

"Eh?"

"What sort of cases, sir? You don't mean wooden cases, like the 'Ead's piano came in?"

"My word!" groaned Tom Merry. "No, I don't mean wooden cases, Binky. They're—they're cases—you see, they're declined according to their case. The substantives in Latin are declined in every case."

"Who declines them, sir?"

"Why, you do."

Binks shook his head.

"Nothing of the sort, Master Merry. I'm only too grateful for you taking all this trouble for me. I wouldn't dream of declining nouns or anything, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "I mean, it's—it's a grammatical form called declension, Binks. You decline a noun by changing the ending, to express a different meaning—see?"

"Oh, I see!" said Binks. "I beg pardon, I'm sure."

"Now, there are six cases," said Tom Merry. "Write 'em down as I tell you—nominative, vocative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative."

Binks wrote the names down very slowly and patiently.

"Now, let's see them," said Tom Merry.

Binks handed him the paper.

"I don't know if the spellin's orl correct," he said. "There may be a letter or two hout, sir. But I'm a good speller as a rule."

Tom Merry looked at the paper, and did not allow his face to express the impression it made upon him. It was written thusly:

"There are sicks kases in Lattin. Nomytive, vockytiv, jennytiv, dativ, kewsativ, and abberativ."

"Is that all right, sir?" asked Binks eagerly.

Tom Merry hadn't the heart to say that it was not.

"You're getting on," he replied diplomatically. "We'll take the spelling by itself at another lesson. Now, I want you to start fairly in the grammar this time, so we'll get on, and take a noun of the first declension."

"Ho!" said Binks.

"Mensa, a table," said Tom Merry, "as there isn't an article in Latin, 'mensa' may mean a table or the table, you see."

"Ho!"

"Now, take the singular first—'Mensa,' a table, nominative," said Tom Merry. "'Mensa,' vocative; 'mensæ,' genitive; 'mensæ,' dative; 'mensam,' accusative, and 'mensa,' ablative. Now you see that the different case-endings—— Binks!"

Binks started and opened his eyes.

"Ho!" he mumbled.

"You young bounder, you were asleep!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"I—I—I just closed my eyes for a second," murmured Binks. "I'm hawfully sorry, Master Merry, hawfully."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I think you've had enough Latin for once," he remarked. "Do you think you will get on with it, Binks?"

"I think so, sir."

"But it's hard, isn't it?"

"Not so hard as gettin' a rise out of your governor, sir," said Binks sagely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I s'pose it means only work," said Binks, "and goodness knows I've worked 'ard enough in my days, Master Merry."

"I suppose you have," said Tom Merry. "And certainly Latin only means a little brains, and plenty of hard work. We'll jaw it to you about the place, too; till we get the hang of the thing into your head. Now, I'll just run over what I've told you already, and then we'll chuck it for this evening."

"Certainly, sir," said Binks, with ill-concealed relief.

"How many cases have the substantives in Latin?" Tom Merry asked.

Binks reflected.

"Three, sir!" he said.

"What!" gasped Tom Merry.

"I mean four, sir," said Binks. "Nominative, indefinite, masculine and feminine, sir."

Tom Merry looked blankly at Binks.

"Can you—can you tell me anything else?" he said weakly.

"Ho, yes, sir! There are four articles, called geenytive, dative, common and neuter, and there are no declensions at all in the language. The alphabet is the same as ours, except that there is no 'Z.'"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ain't that right, sir?" asked Binks, anxiously.

Monty Lowther had put his head in at the door again. He listened to Binks's description of the Latin alphabet with a grin.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "Binks is treating the Latin alphabet as they treated Charles the First?"

"Hey?" said Binks. "'Ow's that, Master Lowther?"

"Why, you've cut off its 'Z.'"

Tom Merry laughed, and Binks looked puzzled, being quite unable to fathom the depths of Monty Lowther's humour.

Tom Merry, red with indignation, pushed his adversary hard, hitting him right and left, till Gore fell upon the landing with a crash. "Have you had enough?" asked Tom Merry. *(See page 9.)*

"Cheese it, Monty!" said Tom Merry. "The first lesson is over, and Binks is a—a promising pupil. We'll have another lesson to-morrow, Binks."

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Binks.

And Binks left the study murmuring to himself, with the determination to learn it—"Latin has three alphabets, the gennytive, dative, and indefinite, and four articles, called the accusative, the mensam, the singular, and the feminine. Good! I think Latin is easier than cleaning boots!"

CHAPTER 14.

A Social Superior.

THE next day Binks was still at St. Jim's, and he was strolling about in the quad. when the fellows went in to morning classes. Mellish called to him when the bell rang.

"Coming in with the Fourth, Binks?"

Binks shook his head.

"No, Master Mellish, I'm not belonging to St. Jim's yet."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mellish. "Why, if you came in we'd all walk out, you rotten outsider, and leave old Lathom with only you for his class."

"Dear me! What did you say, Mellish?"

It was little Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, who had come along in time to hear Mellish's allusion to himself. Melish turned a sickly colour.

"I—I—— Please, sir——"

"You were speaking very rudely to Binks, Mellish."

"I—I'm sorry, sir——"

"And alluding very disrespectfully to myself, Mellish," said Mr. Lathom, with his most magisterial manner.

"Oh, sir! I—I——"

"You will express your regret to Binks for your rudeness, Mellish."

"I—I—I'm sorry, Binks. I was only joking."

"And now you will be caned for your decidedly disrespectful allusion to your Form-master," said Mr. Lathom. "You must not refer to me as old Lathom, Mellish. Even if I were very much advanced in years, which is not the case, it would be disrespectful."

"I—I'm sorry, sir, and——"

"I have no doubt you are, Mellish, and you will be sorrier still shortly," said the master of the Fourth.

And Mellish entered the Form-room with Mr. Lathom's finger and thumb compressing his ear, and a general grin on the faces of the Fourth.

Mellish was caned before he went to his place, but he received no sympathy from the other fellows. Blake confided to him in a whisper that if Lathom hadn't caned him, he,

Jack Blake, would have walloped him as soon as morning lessons were over.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "And I should have considahed it my dutay, as a decent chap, to give Mellish a feahful thwashin', too."

"D'Arcy!" said Mr. Lathom.

"Yaas, sir."

"You are talking!"

"Yaas, sir."

"You must not talk in class, D'Arcy. Take——"

"But I had to answer you, sir," said D'Arcy. "How could I answer you without talkin', sir?"

"I was not alluding to your answer to me, D'Arcy. You were talking before."

"Yaas, sir. I was only wemarkin' that I should consider it my duty to wallop Mellish for speakin' to Binks, sir, as he did."

"Oh!" said Mr. Lathom. "In that case, D'Arcy, you need take no lines, but please do not talk in class again."

"Certainly not, sir."

"Rotten favouritism!" growled Levison.

"Levison!"

"Oh!"

"Take fifty lines for talking in class."

"Oh!"

And Levison was left with a worse opinion of the Form-master than ever. Fortunately, Levison's bad opinion was not likely to do anybody any harm. Indeed, Blake had remarked sagely that it was a great honour to be thought badly of by Levison and Mellish and the like.

Binks, although he was keenly desirous of entering St. Jim's as a pupil, was not sorry to have the evil hour postponed. He was not studious by nature, and although he was willing to study at the price of becoming a St. Jim's fellow, still he was not eager to start upon his lessons. He spent some time in strolling about the quadrangle, and in visiting his old haunts, blissfully conscious of the difference between the present Binks and the former Binks.

He visited the kitchen, where he was received with awe and respect. Mrs. Mimms could hardly believe that the boy who had been so slack in cleaning the knives, and who had been given many a lecture free gratis by herself, was really a millionaire, and simply rolling in money.

The cook was quite overcome by the reflection that the fat page who had hung about the kitchen stairs in the hopes of annexing fragments of pudding or an odd chop, was now ten times as rich as the Head himself. The housemaids related in awed tones that they had boxed the ears of a person who was now twice as rich as Lord Eastwood, D'Arcy's father.

It was very astounding, and it formed at least a nine days' wonder in the lower regions in both the houses at St. Jim's.

Binks was very kind and condescending to the staff.

He had a pocket full of sovereigns, and he gave a couple of them to Johnny, the new page, who had taken his old place in the School House.

After impressing his grandeur upon the staff, he turned his steps in the direction of the porter's lodge.

Between Taggles, the school porter, and Binks, there had always been warfare. There had been painful misunderstandings as to certain tasks, whether they fell within the limits of Binks's duties or not. Binks accused Taggles of piling work on him, and Taggles, on the other hand, maintained that Binks was a lazy young rascal. Probably both of them were right.

Binks looked in at the lodge, and Taggles looked at him. Taggles did not know how to treat the new millionaire.

If Binks was disposed to be friendly, Taggles wasn't the man to save up old offences against a chap—at all events, against a millionaire. If he was disposed to be haughty, Taggles was quite ready to show a due respect to wealth—if some of that wealth reached him in the shape of tips. But if Binks was lofty in tone, and did not shell out, Taggles was prepared to assert his rights as a free-born and independent Englishman, who was as good as anybody else.

"Good-mornin', my man!" said Binks.

"Good-morning!" said Taggles.

"Good-morning what?" said Binks.

"Hey?"

"Fellows generally say 'sir' in addressing me?" said Binks loftily.

"Do they?" said Taggles.

"They do, my man."

"Ho!" said Taggles.

"There's such a thing," said Binks, "as respect for a feller's position in the world, my good man."

Taggles measured him with his eye. He could see no sign of a tip, and so his free-born British independence of character was naturally rising in arms within him.

"Ho!" he said. "Is there? Ho!"

"Yes, there is," said Binks. "But, of course, a feller like you wouldn't understand it."

"Who are you calling a feller?" demanded Taggles.

"I'm calling you a feller," said Binks categorically. "I call anybody a feller who piles work on a kid young enough to be his father—I mean to be his son—and tells whoppers to the 'Ead about him. I call anybody a feller who doesn't address his soshal superiors as 'sir.'"

"Ho!" said Taggles. "Ho! Nice goings hon, indeed! Soshal superiors, hindeed! Ho! Ain't we grand since we come into a little money!"

"Two millions," said Binks—"two million pound!"

"Which I'll believe it when I see it," said the school porter, who was not disposed to believe in a fortune he was not likely to touch.

"Ho, that's werry like you," said Binks scornfully—"werry like! But wot is one to expect of a feller who's never even learned the parts of speech in Latin?"

"Wot!"

"I dare say you are aweer," said Binks, with crushing dignity, "that in Latin there are four numbers, the singular, the feminine, the indefinite, and the article."

"I wasn't aware of that," said Taggles, rather staggered by Binks's knowledge. "I dessay you've cribbed that out of one of the young gent's school books."

"I dare say," said Binks, still more crushingly, "that you have missed, at the Board-school you went to, the fact that there are nine declensions in English, and only eight in Latin, owing to the letter Z being left out of their alphabet."

"Ho!" said Taggles.

"It may be noos to you," went on Binks, glorying in his advantage—"it may be noos to you, my good man, that if you say mensa, in Latin, meaning a declension, you have to say mensam if you want to put it in the singular case, and mensy if you want to put it in the plural indefinite article."

Taggles was silent. He was simply crushed under the extent and weight of Binks's learning.

"So don't cheek your betters," said Binks loftily. "I don't want to be 'ard on you, a poor man with no eddication. But I say——"

"Get houter my lodge!" roared Taggles.

"I'm 'ardly likely to obey the orders of a menial!" said Binks.

"Get hout!"

"Silence, my good man!" said Binks, with a wave of the hand. "I horder you to be silent in the presence of your soshal superiors."

Taggles was silent for a moment with sheer rage. Then he seized a broom from the corner, where Mrs. Taggles had left it, and made a rush at Binks. Binks, forgetful of his new dignity, hopped out of the lodge in record time, but not quite quickly enough to escape Taggles's charge.

"Ow!" he roared, as the head of the broom caught him behind, and propelled him into the open air.

The juniors were just out from morning lessons, and some of them were close at hand as Binks left the porter's lodge in that singular manner.

At the sight of the millionaire sailing out of Taggles's door, on the head of a broom, as it were, they stared.

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Binks alighted on the ground, and squirmed away from the broom with remarkable celerity. Taggles brandished it after him.

"Lemme get at you with this!" he roared. "You come 'ere again with your soshal superiors and sich, and see wot you'll get."

And Taggles went into his lodge and closed the door.

CHAPTER 15.

In Safe Hands.

TOM MERRY & CO. stared blankly at Binks.

"What on earth's the row with Taggles, Binks?" asked Tom Merry. "What did he go for you with a broom for?"

"Because he's an ill-tempered beast, and hasn't any respect for his soshal superiors!" gasped Binks.

"What!" roared the juniors.

"Bai Jove!"

"He's a low beast," explained Binks. "He was himpertinent to me, and I rebuked him, and he went for me with a broom. It was disgraceful. This is what comes of pampering a menial."

Tom Merry and his chums looked at Binks.

They could hardly believe their ears.

Binks certainly had become a millionaire, but they had never expected him to become so much a millionaire as this.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, at last. "Binks, I am afwaid

you are a boundah, aftah all. I am feahfully disappointed in you, Binks."

"Oh, Master D'Arcy!"

"You have been patwonisin' Taggles, Binks."

Binks blushed.

He had not meant any harm, but it was beginning to dawn upon him, in the presence of the shocked looks of the juniors, that he had acted in a most outrageous and bounderish manner. He hung his head.

"Well, I never expected that of you, Binks," said Tom Merry, after a pause.

"Oh, Master Merry!"

"What did you go to Taggles for at all?"

Binks was silent.

"Was it to swank over him just because you've become rich?"

"I—I——"

"Have you been giving him any rotten snobbishness?"

Binks was crimson.

"Oh, Master Merry! I—I just pointed out to him that—that I was his soshal superior, and that he—he ought to be respeckful——"

"You howwid little cad!" said Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass in great disgust upon Binks. "I'm done with you!"

And D'Arcy walked away in great state.

Binks looked immensely distressed.

"Well, I'm afraid I shall have to chuck it, Binks, if you're going on this way," said Tom Merry. "I hope you'll think better of it."

And Tom Merry walked after D'Arcy.

Binks stood rooted to the ground for a few moments, looking after the two juniors in something very like despair. Then he broke into a run, dashing after them.

"Master Merry! Stop a minute!"

Tom Merry paused

"Well, what is it?" he said.

"I—I—I'm sorry, Master Merry. I'm sorry, Master D'Arcy," said Binks penitently. "I know I acted like a beast. But—but, you see, I ain't got used to 'avin' the money yet. I'll do anything you like."

"I'm afraid, Binks, that you are a hopeless wottah."

"I ain't, really," said Binks, in great distress. "Taggles was always 'ard on me, and I wanted to get my hown back, that was all, sir, really."

"If he was hard on you, Binks, you should have been specially careful now not to be hard on him. You should have heaped coals of fire on his head, deah boy."

Binks stared.

"But—but that would 'ave 'urt 'im more'n wot I did," he exclaimed. "It—it might have burned 'im to death, Master D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Gussy means you should have forgiven him, you young ass, and touched his conscience."

"But 'e said——"

"Never mind what he said. Look here, you've treated Taggles rottenly. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Binks."

"And—and I am, really, Master Merry," said Binks humbly.

"You are weally sowwy, Binks?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"In that case," said D'Arcy thoughtfully, "I do not see why the affaih should not be awwanged. An apology fwom one gentleman to anothah ought to be sufficient. I think you can leave this affaih safely in my hands, Tom Mewwy."

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry, laughing. And he strolled away, leaving Binks in the safe hands of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The swell of the School House wagged a warning forefinger at Binks.

"Now, Binks, I twust you wealise the enormity of your howwid offence against good taste and good mannahs?"

"Oh, yes, Master D'Arcy."

"You are willin' to make the amende honowable?"

"I'll make anything you like, Master D'Arcy."

D'Arcy coughed.

"I mean, you're willin' to apologise to Taggles, and make it all wight that way, Binks?"

"If you think fit, Master D'Arcy."

"Come on, then, and I'll see mattahs wight."

And D'Arcy led Binks away towards the porter's lodge. Binks, with a lively recollection of the broom, was reluctant to approach Taggles's den again, but he did not resist. He would have suffered anything for the purpose of making his peace with the School House juniors.

Arthur Augustus knocked at Taggles's door, and Taggles opened it. He glared at the sight of Binks, and made a movement to get the broom. D'Arcy put up his hand.

"Taggles, deah boy, I am actin' as a mediatah in this mattah."

"Ho!" said Taggles, who had very dim ideas as to what a mediator might be. "Ho!"

"Binks has been vewy wude and caddish to you."

Taggles's face cleared a little.

"He has, Master D'Arcy. Never saw sich treatment of a man old enough to be his father, sir. Talkin' about soshal superiority and that. As if he was anything but a bootblack, with all his money!" snorted Taggles.

"That's all wight, Taggles. I twust you are not allowin' yourself to speak diswespectfully of bootblacks," said Arthur Augustus, in a tone of reproof. "I twust, Taggles, that you are not a snob."

"W-w-what!" gasped Taggles. He had been called many and various names before, but never that.

"I mean what I say, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "There are fellows at St. Jim's who are the sons of noblemen, and merchants, and gwocers, and so on, and some of them affect to look down on my fwiend Binks because he has been a page. I am sowwy, Taggles, to see a twace of the same snobbishness in you."

"My 'at!" murmured Taggles.

"Yaas, Taggles. Snobbishness is the most howwid of personal dwawbacks," said Arthur Augustus. "I could forgive anybody but a snob. And I should wegard it as most disgustin', Taggles, if you took advantage of your posish as a school portah to patwonise a chap who cleaned boots for a livin'. Wemembah, a chap who cleans boots is a most useful membah of society, and we cannot all be school portahs."

Taggles could only gasp.

"And now to come to business," resumed D'Arcy. "Binks is sowwy for his wudeness to you, wishes to apologise, as one gentleman to anothah."

"Ho!" murmured Taggles.

"Go ahead, Binks, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus, with an encouraging wave of the hand.

Binks was as red as a turkey-cock, but he spluttered out the apology. Taggles eyed him grimly the while.

"I'm sorry for wot I said, Mr. Taggles. I take it all back. I don't bear you no malice for barging into me with the broom. Is that all right, Master D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus nodded approval.

"That is all wight, deah boy, and quite satisfactowy. I twust, Taggles, that you will now overlook Binks's offence, and shake hands with him."

Taggles did not feel much inclined to shake hands, but he put out a horny fist.

"There's my 'and!" he said.

Binks shook it in a gingerly way, and peace was restored. Arthur Augustus, with his monocle jammed in his eye, beamed upon them.

"Vewy good, vewy good indeed!" he exclaimed. "I wejoice to see you do the handsome thing in this way, Binks. I twust all discord is now at an end."

Binks had slipped his finger and thumb into his waistcoat pocket for a sovereign. Taggles caught the glisten of gold, and his eye glistened, too. D'Arcy turned his eyeglass severely upon Binks.

"I twust, Binks, that you are not goin' to spoil the good taste and pwopah feelin' of this mattah by intwoducin' any of your disgustin' money into it," he said.

Binks dropped the sovereign back into his pocket as if it had suddenly become red-hot.

"Certainly not, Master D'Arcy, certainly not!" he exclaimed, in a great hurry.

"Vewy good! You must pardon Binks, Taggles; he did not mean to wound your feelin's, and you must not wegard it as an insult."

And D'Arcy walked away with Binks. Taggles stood staring after them, with very mixed feelings. Arthur Augustus, in the innocence of his heart, did not know it, but the good taste and proper feeling he was so careful about did not appeal very closely to Taggles. As a matter of fact, Taggles would have been quite willing to pocket that insult.

CHAPTER 16.

A Little Disagreement.

BINKS, the millionaire, did not commit another faux pas. He had learned his lesson, and there was no danger of his patronising his old acquaintances of the servants' hall again.

The shocked disgust of his friends on that occasion had opened his mind to a sense of what he had done. Binks began to understand that being a gentleman did not consist wholly in wearing expensive clothes and a gold watch. A sense of kindness and consideration towards those below him in station was the first essential, and Binks learned that from Arthur Augustus. And Binks, with all his disadvantages, had one very great advantage; he could learn, and was

willing to learn. He was not likely to commit the same fault of taste over again. Other faults he was certain to commit, over and over again. He had the idea, which is frequently deeply rooted in the minds of those who have been hard-worked, that to be a gentleman is to do no work, and it was slowly dawning upon his mind, amid great astonishment, that to be a gentleman in the true sense of the word is to work harder than others, if need be, and certainly as hard. Arthur Augustus pointed out to him very delicately that the ideal he had was that of a loafer, and that any corner bounder outside a public-house was a gentleman, if all that was required was to do no work. And Binks began to understand.

Then the necessary care of his person was news to him. To keep his body quite clean with sufficient washing, to keep his hair well brushed, and his nails white and wholesome and neatly trimmed—all these things were new to Binks.

He assimilated these dawnings of new knowledge gradually. It was not to be expected that he would take in everything at once.

Then Binks discovered, with great amazement, that what he had been accustomed to describe below stairs as a haw-haw voice was in reality the proper use of the voice, and that it was easier and more healthy to speak correctly than to speak incorrectly. He learned that a correct enunciation and inflection put less strain upon the vocal organs, and enabled one to speak without tiring or growing red or breathless. He learned, too, that aspirates could be put in their right places without any serious consequences. But the "h's" were likely to take some time to get sorted out into their right places in Binks's speech.

Tom Merry & Co. were ready to stand by Binks, if he was decent; and the knowledge of that was sufficient to make Binks strive hard to be decent.

But there were some fellows at St. Jim's who were determined to see no good in Binks, of course. Gore and Crooke and Mellish, and fellows of their kidney, were victims of a most aristocratic alarm at the idea of Binks entering St. Jim's as a pupil, as now seemed very probable.

Dr. Holmes was known to be considering it, and a number of fellows were willing to take Binks up and make a friend of him if he came into the school; and Gore & Co. said that it was rot, and that it was disgraceful. As for Binks's millions, that was a special grievance to Crooke.

Crooke had long had the distinction of being a very rich man's son, and of late his father in the City had brought off a coup on the Stock Exchange which made the distinction greater than ever. Crooke senior had netted a cool half-million for himself, and as to the people to whom the money belonged, of course they did not matter. At least, that was how the Crookes looked at it. The public, of course, were patient sheep, to be sheared whenever convenient. But what was it to Crooke that his pater—Crooke did not possess anything so vulgar as a father—what was it to him if his pater was a millionaire, if a common page or boot-boy was a millionaire too?

It was disgusting, Crooke said.

Crooke seemed to think there was something rotten about the laws of inheritance in Binks getting his Uncle Henry's money at all. At all events, if he had the disgusting money—made in trade too, as Crooke remarked with horror—the least he could have done was to keep away from St. Jim's with it, and not flourish it in the eyes of fellows he wasn't fit to speak to. Crooke held on in this style to a crowd in the junior common-room in the School House, when a rumour had gone round that Binks was to be taken into the school.

Crooke glanced more than once at Tom Merry while he was speaking, but the hero of the Shell was very quiet. Crooke failed to draw him. But Crooke was not the fellow to fail. He pushed it further till Tom Merry was bound to speak.

"It isn't only that the fellow himself is a low cad," said Crooke, "but he's backed up by chaps who ought to know better. And a fellow who will back up a rank outsider in swanking here is no better than the outsider himself."

"Hear, hear!" said Mellish.

"One's as big a cad as the other," went on Crooke.

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry rose to his feet. The look on his face as he came towards the group made Crooke quail a little.

"You're getting at me, of course," said Tom Merry, in his direct way. "If you've got anything to say, Crooke, say it out."

Crooke flushed.

"Well, it's rotten to back up that cad Binks," he said. "I don't care if he is a millionaire. That's nothing to me."

"Nor to me either," said Tom Merry. "I stand by Binks because he's decent, not because he's a millionaire. That's nothing. You know that as well as I do, Crooke. As for your saying that the money's made out of trade, that's all rot. All money is made out of trade, if you come to that."

"My pater's isn't," said Crooke.

"How is it made, then?" said Tom Merry. "I've only heard of three ways of making money—earning it, borrowing it, or stealing it. I suppose you're a better judge than I am of the method your pater uses."

There was a laugh, and Crooke turned fiery red.

"You know you're talking rot," said Tom Merry. "D'Arcy's governor gets his money in trade—he lets out land to farmers, just the same as a Bloomsbury landlady lets out rooms—and takes his rent just the same as she does. Doesn't he, Gussy?"

"Ya-a-as!" said the swell of St. Jim's slowly. "That is certainly quite cowwect, Tom Mewwy; though I have nevah looked at it in exactly that light befoah."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake——"

"You're a snobbish ass, Crooke, and you know it," said Tom Merry. "The only thing is, can Binks behave himself decently if he comes into the school—or is he willing to learn? That's all."

Crooke snorted.

"Yes, he can behave himself," he sneered. "I saw him feeding in the tuckshop this morning—eating cheese with a knife."

"Well, I dare say he could have put the knife to better use," said Tom Merry, laughing. "But he'll soon learn to keep his knife away from his mouth. I wish I could think that you'd stop being a snob, Crooke, as soon as Binks stops eating with his knife."

"Look here, I'm not going to have this jaw from you, Tom Merry. I say that Binks is a rotten outsider, and ought not to be admitted to the school. He's a low cad, and St. Jim's ain't the place for him!"

"Well, if St. Jim's isn't the place for low cads, what the dickens are you doing here?" Tom Merry demanded.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "What the dickens are you doin' here, deah boy?"

Crooke did not answer. He rushed at Tom Merry, hitting out. But he had forgotten his usual caution when he tackled the best boxer in the Shell.

Tom Merry brushed up his savage drive with perfect ease, and in return gave him a tap on the chin, which dropped him upon the floor.

"Ow!" gasped Crooke.

He staggered up dazedly, holding his jaw in his hand. There was a very considerable ache there.

"Ow! Yah! Oh!"

"Do you want any more?" asked Tom Merry. "There's some more ready?"

Crooke made no reply. He stamped out of the room, still holding his jaw. A chuckle from the fellows followed him. Gore and Mellish went out to join him in the passage, and sympathise with him. They would have sympathised with anybody who was up against Tom Merry.

"Ow! I'll make that cad smart for this!" groaned Crooke.

"There he is!" muttered Mellish, pointing down the passage towards a window recess that overlooked a quiet corner of the quadrangle.

Binks was standing there, with his hands in his pockets, looking out. Crooke's eyes gleamed. He did not venture to attack Tom Merry again; but Binks was a safer victim, and besides, the cads of the School House would be three to one. The long, wide passage was deserted save by themselves.

"Come on!" muttered Crooke.

CHAPTER 17.

The Raggers Ragged.

"HOW do you do?" said Binks, as the three fellows came round him in the deep window recess. He was rather puzzled by their coming, but he greeted them in a friendly spirit.

But their intentions were not friendly.

Without speaking a word, they grasped Binks. He started to dodge them, but it was too late. He was bumped down on the floor in a twinkling.

"Got the cad!" muttered Mellish.

"Bump him!"

"Oh, young gents—young gentlemen!" said poor Binks. "I ain't done nothing! I ain't—— Oh—ow! 'Elp!"

Bump!

It was not the bump usually bestowed in cases of bumping. That sometimes hurt. But this was a heavy, savage bump, that hurt a great deal, and made Binks feel as if his bones were cracking under the concussion with the floor.

"Oh!" gasped Binks. "'Elp!"

"You cad!"

"You outsider!"

"You parvenu!"

Bump!

"Ow! Don't do it, young gents! Don't do it!" shrieked Binks. "It 'urts! Ow! Don't! Ow! 'Elp! Yarooh!"

"Give him another!"

"No; we'll give him a hiding!" said Crooke viciously, rubbing his still aching jaw, the ache making him more cruel than usual. "I've got a ruler here."

"Ha, ha! Good!"

"Yank him over!"

"I've got him!"

"Don't! Ow! 'Elp! Wot 'ave I done, young gents?"

Gore twisted the weedy youth over easily enough. Binks was not an athlete. He was twisted over Gore's knee, and held face downwards, and Mellish added his grip to Gore's to keep him there.

Then Crooke drew the ruler from his pocket.

"Hold the cad tight!"

"We've got him!"

"Good! Now we'll give him a taste of what to expect if he comes to St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha! Go it!"

And Crooke began. He laid on with the hard, heavy ruler till Binks shrieked with the pain of it. That the unfortunate lad was defenceless, and that he had done nothing to deserve such treatment, mattered nothing to Crooke. He was paying Binks for what Tom Merry had done; he was revenging himself upon Binks as he dared not attempt to do upon Tom Merry.

Gore thrust a heavy hand over Binks's mouth, and stifled his yells. He was afraid the noise might reach the juniors in the common-room at the end of the passage. Binks bit desperately at the hand, and Gore yelled and dragged it away.

"Ow! He's bitten me!"

"Never mind—I'll give him some more for that!" said Crooke.

"'Elp!" shrieked Binks. "'Elp!"

There was a rush of footsteps in the passage.

"Cave!" muttered Mellish.

He let go Binks and dashed out of the window recess. A heavy driving right-hander met him and hurled him back. He fell like a log in the corner of the window—and lay there—judging it best so to lie. For Tom Merry was standing in the opening of the recess, with clenched fists and flashing eyes, and Mellish preferred the horizontal to the perpendicular just then. It was safer.

Tom Merry was white with anger. The raggers had dropped Binks, and he was staggering against the wall, twisting with pain, his face white, and his eyes full of tears. He was trying to choke back a sob, and it came out like an explosion.

"You cowards!" shouted Tom Merry. "You hounds! What have you been doing to Binks?"

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy, who was just behind. "They've been waggin' him—waggin' the poor chap with a wulah!"

"Let me pass!" muttered Crooke fiercely.

Tom Merry pushed him back.

"Not yet!" he said grimly.

"I tell you——"

"Stand back!"

Binks gasped painfully. Gore and Crooke stood with their fists clenched, but they did not attempt to push past Tom Merry again.

"The cads have hurt you, Binks?"

"It's—it's all right, Master Merry!" stammered Binks. "I—I don't mind. I—I don't mind. I—I suppose it was only in fun. Let them go!"

Tom Merry turned his flashing eyes upon Gore and Crooke.

"You hear that?" he exclaimed. "Binks is worth a hundred of you. You're not fit to touch him, you unspeakable cads!"

Gore sneered.

"That may be your opinion," he said. "If you've done your lecture, Tom Merry, we'll go."

"I'm not done yet. Put up your hands. You've been licking a chap who could not stand up for himself, now try your hands on me!"

"Look here——"

"Excuse me, Tom Mewwy!" said D'Arcy gently, but firmly. "I cannot allow this. I object to a decent fellow soilin' his hands upon those wascals. Keep back, my deah fellow, and we will wag them instead!"

"Good!" chimed in Blake. "They're not worth licking, Tommy. Let them have some of what they've given Binks."

Tom Merry smiled grimly.

"Oh, all right!" he exclaimed. "You hear that, you rotters?"

"Let me pass!" exclaimed Crooke furiously.

"Collah them, deah boys!"

There were plenty of fellows to do it. Gore and Crooke and Mellish were grasped in many hands.

They struggled, but it was of no use. They did not venture to hit out, for the natural result would have been that the juniors would have hit back, and the raggers would have had decidedly the worst of that.

"Let me go!" muttered Mellish, as he was dragged to his feet. "It—it was only a lark, you know, and——"

"Well, here are some more larks for you," said Digby, wielding the ruler he had jerked out of Crooke's hand.

Mellish roared. Digby held out the ruler to Binks.

"Now give Crooke some, Binks, my boy!"

Binks hesitated, and shook his head.

"I—I'd rather let him off, Master Digby."

"Rats! Give him some!"

"Bai Jove! Binks is wight, deah boys. It is vewy wight and pwopah of him to pwefer to heap coals of fire on his enemy," said D'Arcy. "But it is wight and pwopah for us to wag them, and so give me that wulah."

D'Arcy took the ruler. The swell of St. Jim's knew how to hit. He laid it upon the unhappy raggers as if he were batting in a Form cricket match.

The yells the raggers gave sounded from one end of the passage to the other.

"There!" said D'Arcy, at last. "I wegard that as sufficient. If any person here feels aggwieved at my actions, I am willin' to meet him in the gym., and give him satisfaction, eithah with or without gloves. Now, kick them down the passage!"

"Good egg!"

The three raggers were bundled down the passage, and the crowd of juniors kicked them heartily till they ran.

There was no help for them, and as the kicks landed on them like rain, they put their pride in their pockets, so to speak, and pelted off, with the juniors behind, kicking at them till they were out of the passage.

Then Tom Merry & Co. returned to Binks. Binks was still in great pain, but he was putting a brave face upon it.

"Feel pwetty bad, old fellow?" asked D'Arcy sympathetically.

"Ye-es!" stammered Binks. "But—but I shall be all right soon."

"I don't think there will be any more ragging," said Tom Merry. "They've had it worse than you had it, Binks, my boys!"

And he was right. The three raggers had fled for refuge to the dormitory, and there they were bewailing their injuries, and making mental resolves not to appear in public in the characters of raggers again.

"Master Merry wanted in the Head's study!" said the new Buttons of the School House, a little later; and Tom Merry made his way to Dr. Holmes's room, wondering what was "up" this time. But it was not to be called over the coals that Tom Merry had been summoned to the Head's study. Dr. Holmes gave him a kindly look as he came in.

"I want to speak to you about Binks, Merry," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"He has now been at St. Jim's four days," said the Head, tapping upon the table with his hand. "You have been taking some notice of him all that time, Merry?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"As a junior in the House, you will have had opportunities of making observations in this matter, Tom Merry. Is it your opinion that Binks could with advantage to himself and to others be admitted as a pupil at St. Jim's?"

"I don't see why not, sir," said Tom Merry frankly. "There are worse fellows than Binks in the School House."

The Head nodded.

"If I should consent to do as he wishes, Merry, Binks would learn more from the boys than from the masters. I should wish him to associate with boys who would, without picking up any unpleasant ways from him, gradually train him by force of example into better ways himself."

"I understand, sir."

"Would you be prepared, Merry, to take Binks's part, and stand by him, and help him on by every possible means—treat him as a friend, in fact, if I allowed him to enter St. Jim's?"

Tom Merry hesitated one moment. It was no light task that was being imposed upon him. He was free to accept or refuse; and there was no reason why he should burden himself with Binks, excepting—excepting that he was Tom Merry, and that it was just like Tom Merry to do it.

"Yes, sir," he said firmly.

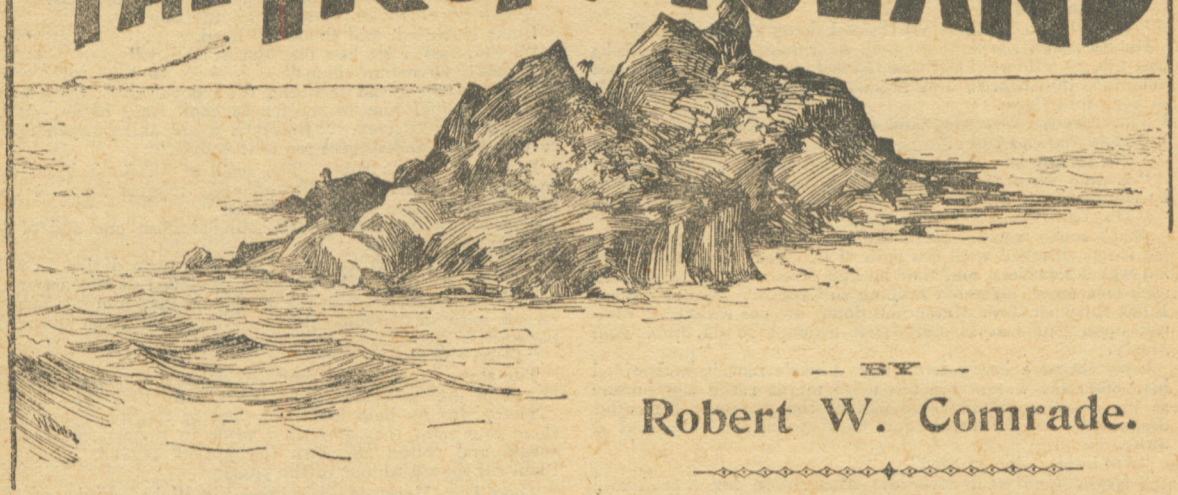
"Very well, Merry," said the Head. "I trust you—I rely upon you. You may tell Binks that he may enter St. Jim's."

And Tom Merry hurried off to carry the joyful news to Binks, the millionaire.

(Another splendid story of Tom Merry & Co., next Thursday, entitled: "The Fatal Telegram," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of the "Gem" in advance. Price One Penny.)

A Wonderful New Story!

THE IRON ISLAND



— BY —

Robert W. Comrade.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RE-WRITTEN.

Philip Graydon is a young Englishman, who has been marooned for the last eight years on an uncharted island in the Pacific Ocean by a criminal society called the Brotherhood of Iron, of which Graydon is an ex-member. He is astounded one day to meet a fashionably-dressed young lady on the island of which he had for so long been the only occupant. The new-comer is Dolores de las Mercedes, an actress, who has caused serious disturbances in France by adopting the title of Queen of France for the sake of advertisement. The French Government had considered it necessary that she should retire from civilisation for a time, and had landed her, with a tent and complete equipment, on the Iron Island, little knowing that it had already an occupant. Dolores and Graydon put their heads together, and evolve a plan of escape. When Don Sebastian, the emissary of the Brotherhood, makes his annual visit to the island in his steam-yacht, he is overpowered, bound, and Graydon, with Dolores' help, makes himself up in exact representation of the Don.

Dolores is left in charge of the baffled Spaniard, while Graydon departs for Rio in his stead, promising to return speedily. He stays just long enough in Rio in the guise of the Don to foil the plans of the Brotherhood, and then with a portmanteau, containing a complete disguise, takes train to Buenos Ayres. During the journey he shaves and changes his clothes, and in place of Don Sebastian a languid, clean-shaven young man appears.

(Now go on with the story.)

Frank Kingston Arrives on the Iron Island

Seated on one of the cushions was a young man, clean-shaven and well-groomed. He was of average height, and looked the same as thousands of other young men. He was, in fact, commonplace. Attired in a light flannel suit, with brown boots and very high collar, he appeared something of a fop. A straw hat was set at a rakish angle on his head, while the expression in his eyes was one of boredom. Any intelligent man looking at him, however closely, would instantly size him up as a wealthy young Englishman, indolent, not excessively strong, and rather weak-willed.

This, of course, was the very appearance the young man wanted to display. He wanted to be thought a brainless fop, and he acted the part to perfection—it was, as a matter of fact, almost second nature to him, for even on the island he had shown tendencies such as these when Dolores had first appeared.

His name was Frank Kingston—he was Frank Kingston—and it was his intention to remain Frank Kingston for all time. What member of the Council would give him a second glance when looking for a deadly enemy? Why, the very suggestion that he could concentrate his mind on matters other than the frivolous was absurd! And yet in every single item of his appearance he was in reality the very opposite.

Graydon—Philip Graydon—was dead. He had died on the Iron Island. The Brotherhood would think he had died in body and soul, whereas he had only died in name. Nevertheless, he was dead, and the name of Graydon would presently be forgotten. He would soon forget it even himself.

Suddenly the train stopped. It had entered a station, and Kingston—it would be idle calling him Graydon now that he was not Graydon—looked out of the window. It was a fairly large station, and was crowded with people. Yet they were not travelling by this train, for they made no attempt to get aboard. Frank Kingston grasped his portmanteau and stepped out on to the platform, mingling instantly with the people.

Soon the train departed, and Kingston seated himself on a form and waited. He knew what was coming. There was a train back to Rio in a few minutes, and it was this he had planned to travel by. He procured his ticket unconcernedly, and took his seat among several other passengers when the train steamed in on the same set of rails.

At Rio he went about his business immediately. As Frank Kingston, a young man who had made a heap of money out in the gold-fields of Africa, he wished to charter a yacht—a steam-yacht. Fortunately he found a firm of shipown who had the very thing he needed at Rio, and almost ready for immediate departure. Kingston paid his money down on the nail out of the £13,000 in notes.

It was a pretty story he told. He was going to a certain isolated rock in the Pacific to take off a lady friend who had essayed to try the Robinson Crusoe idea for a month. The shipowners merely laughed, and wondered what next mad freak these Americans would be up to—for Kingston had described his friend as an American lady.

The story could not possibly excite suspicion; it was so natural, so like an American woman, always seeking something out of the ordinary. At most, it was merely a matter to laugh at. So Kingston started on his return journey—or, rather, on his journey to the Iron Island, for it was not a return journey. Don Sebastian had left the island. But it was not Don Sebastian who went back, it was Frank Kingston, the wealthy young Englishman, the rather brainless fop who lived for nothing but pleasure. And there was a difference between the two—a difference outwardly; inwardly there was none.

. . . . . .

As Dolores had surmised, her Spanish prisoner caused her no trouble whatever. He was completely cowed, and did as he was bidden without question. He realised how helpless he was, what a strong, masterful woman she was. Besides that, he was absolutely terrorised. He knew very well that he was to be left on the Iron Island exactly as Graydon had been left upon it, and the knowledge did not tend to make him happy.

Don Sebastian was another man to what he usually was. All his sneering, blustering manner had vanished, and he had become a quiet, craven-hearted prisoner. His eyes were bloodshot and dull-looking. The spirit had gone out of him; the shock had been too much, and it had made him weak and listless.

To tell the truth, he was ill—so ill, in fact, that it never even entered his head to offer resistance. He knew that had he done so, Dolores would have had no hesitation in shooting him down. She was glad of his illness—it was not serious, being merely accentuated fright and terror—for her only source of danger was eliminated.

Then, after the counterfeit Don Sebastian had been gone a few days, an incident happened which caused Dolores' beautiful face to go hard and stern. One morning, quite suddenly, she had caught sight of a column of smoke on the horizon to the north. At first she was puzzled as to what it could be; then, as the shape of a cruiser came into view, and headed straight for the island, she guessed the truth, or, rather, what she thought to be the truth.

They were coming back to taunt her, to jeer at her, and probably bid her a derisive farewell before returning to France. Never for an instant did it enter her head that the man-o'-war was returning to take her back to the French Republic. And even if she had, it is doubtful whether she would have availed herself of the opportunity.

She was going to get away, anyhow, and had thrown in her lot with the exile she had found in possession of the island upon her arrival. She was drawn towards him, and wanted to keep in touch with his doings. She wanted to take part in his campaign against the Brotherhood of Iron, and help him in his difficulties. Her womanly sympathy was all with him, and she had no wish to return to her accustomed life in Paris.

But this didn't occur to her at all. She felt sure the cruiser had merely come to taunt her. She paled with indignation, and heaped bitter words upon M. Lemerre's head. It was his doing, all his doing, she thought. So much for Lemerre's kindly plan! His intentions were good, but he had not foreseen the amazing incidents on the Iron Island.

"I will hide," she told herself quickly, "so that when they come they will be unable to find me. Don Sebastian must on no account be seen, either. Happy thought! They will think I have thrown myself over the cliff, and am dead. In this way I can go to England without fear, under the name of Kathleen O'Brien. The French Government will think me dead, so will not trouble to look for me."

What a remarkably singular coincidence it was! Three of them—Graydon, Fraser, and Dolores—were to go to England under different identities, while they were all supposed to be dead. It was little short of marvellous how it had come about, had all fitted in. Yet it was perfectly reasonable, perfectly logical. All were dead, and all were alive, to use a contradictory phrase.

"But where am I to hide?" she thought swiftly. "Ah, the very place! The cavern he showed me into! The tide is just on the point of coming in, so if I am quick they will arrive while the water is covering the entrance, which will absolutely ensure safe hiding. What a fortunate chance the tide should be where it is. It seems providential!"

Swiftly she hurried down the path. Don Sebastian, pale and haggard, was seated in the shady arbour, brooding over his fate. He looked up sullenly as Dolores appeared. She was a woman, but she was decidedly master here.

"Come with me!" she said briefly. "And hurry, if you can!"

He hesitated, realised his weakness and the close proximity of the revolver, and thought it best to do as she told him. She treated him with scant ceremony, for she knew what a scoundrel he was. As fast as possible they made their way down the beach. Even as it was, they had to paddle through a foot of water to gain the cave entrance.

Don Sebastian, his curiosity aroused, asked where she was taking him, but Dolores refused to let him know. If he knew the ship was so close to the island, he would give a big amount of trouble. So he remained in ignorance of the war vessel's arrival. Dolores kept her eye close on her companion; but she needn't have been so careful, for he was too ill to harm her.

Presently the tide began to creep up until at last it had reached its highest point. The cavern, however, was perfectly dry. Dolores was unable to hear a sound, but she knew very well that the island was being searched for her.

At last, having been in the cavern for several hours, she ventured to creep down to the entrance, the tide having receded again. Cautiously she looked out, then clapped her hands in delight.

Far away could be seen the black dot which represented the French cruiser. The sailors had searched for her, and had given it up at last, and departed. She had escaped their attentions, anyhow, she thought, and given them the impression that she was dead. And Don Sebastian knew nothing about it. In fact, he cared little about anything.

The days passed slowly after this incident, terribly slowly; and Dolores, in spite of her conviction that everything would turn out all right, could not prevent the feeling making itself present that she was in as bad a position as Graydon had been before he left. Suppose he didn't come back? Suppose something had happened to him?

Then she stamped her foot with vexation. Of course, he would come back. Hadn't he pledged his word to do so? Wasn't he a man in a thousand? He couldn't fail; it was ridiculous to suppose he could. He might come at any hour now. Whenever she walked about her glance continually wandered in the direction of the sparkling blue of the ocean. But every time they saw only the clear, unbroken horizon-line. Not a sail and not a sign of smoke—nothing!

The terrible loneliness struck her now more than it had ever done before. She was not afraid of it, but it was so oppressing. The Spaniard kept always in the vicinity of the storehouse, and whenever she paid him a visit, hardly spoke a word. The oppression began to work on her nerves, and very soon she could not be comfortable unless she was sitting in some place where she could command a view of the sea. For hours at a stretch she would sit there watching and waiting, and then turn towards her shelter with a dull, despairing ache in her heart.

And then, one day, when she had been watching for barely half an hour, a faint, ever so faint blur appeared on the horizon to the south. She rubbed her eyes uncertainly. Was she right? Was it a blur, or had her eyes deceived her? Had they grown misty with watching? No; the blur was getting more distinct. It was forming itself into a trail—a trail of smoke!

Dolores sprang to her feet excitedly. Her heart was beating like lightning, her eyes shining brilliantly. She had begun to give up hope, and now—— She looked again. Standing out black against the clear, transparent blue of sea and sky was a funnel—the funnel of a steamboat. There could no longer be any doubt; it was the ship to take her off! It had come at last—at last!

"Oh, Heaven," she cried, "and I was beginning to think he wouldn't come! Forgive me for that!"

Unable to keep still, almost hysterical, she waited and watched, heedless of the cruel sun blazing down upon her, heedless of the myriad insects that buzzed around her incessantly. Such trivialities as these did not count. Her eyes were glued seawards, towards that black spot.

And swiftly, steadily it came onwards, until presently it enlarged into an imposing yacht. The bridge could just be made out through her binoculars, but the occupants were unrecognisable at that distance. And it was heading straight as a die for the Iron Island, travelling at full speed, deviating not an inch from the course.

"He has come at last!" murmured Dolores fervently. "Thank Heaven, he has come at last!"

Yes, Frank Kingston had come!

Off for British Shores.

"You've done well, Morrison—deuced well!" remarked Frank Kingston, as he leaned over the bridge-rail of the steam yacht Coronet. "You've made the journey in a day less than I anticipated."

"The weather's been very favourable, sir," replied Captain Morrison. "I suppose this is really the island the young lady is staying on?"

"Yes, this is the one, and the sea's just right for a landing. By Jove, I expect she's had about enough of it, don't you?"

Frank Kingston smiled lazily, and gazed through his glasses at the jagged cliffs of the Iron Island, which lay directly ahead. He was a young man, exquisitely dressed, and his face gave one the impression that he was something of a fool. His foppish manners and rather inane smile seemed to tell all too plainly what a weak-minded young fellow he was.

At least, if one were to judge from outward appearances. In this instance, however, appearances counted for nothing. Frank Kingston was apparently a very ordinary young man, while, as a matter of fact, he was the most remarkable individual on earth.

So far as Captain Morrison knew, he was simply a young fellow who had struck lucky at the gold mines. The journey from Rio had been a pleasant one, and it had seemed as though Kingston had not a care in the world.

Yet, behind his clever mask of dandyism he had a brain that was equal to two ordinary men's. Before he had changed his name and identity—while he had been Philip Graydon—his eight years of solitude on the Iron Island had strengthened his every faculty, and made him a most remarkable man.

And now he had come back from Rio to fetch Dolores

off. Even as he stood on the bridge watching, he wondered whether she was all right, whether Don Sebastian had caused her any trouble. There was no sign of her whatever. Kingston was anxious, and eager to land.

"Get a boat ready as quickly as possible, won't you?" he drawled. Outwardly he was completely unconcerned, but inwardly his feelings were keenly alert.

"Yes, sir; only I don't like the look of that reef——"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Kingston. "I can steer a boat safely ashore, captain. I've been here before, you know."

"Of course, sir. Will you take the little or big boat?"

"The little one, please, Morrison. Jove! But I bet Miss O'Brien is about sick of the simple life, don't you?"

"It's certainly rather lonely on an island by yourself, sir," replied the skipper. He was a stolid individual, kind-hearted, and rather dull on any matter other than navigation. Kingston had grown to like him during the voyage, and felt that he could be trusted.

The yacht was quite close to the island now, and anchored just opposite to the little bay, which was guarded by a reef of jagged rocks. Further in could be seen the sloping beach, with the grove-like expanse of the banyan-tree, but of life there was no sign. The sailors and officers gathered against the rail interestedly.

They knew that somewhere on the tiny island a woman was living in a tent all alone—a woman from America, with plenty of money to spend, and nothing to do. At least, they thought these were the facts.

What would they have said had they known that a second person was there, a prisoner? The existence of Don Sebastian could never be guessed, and Kingston had already hit upon a plan by which he could get Dolores away, and leave the Spaniard there, without the latter's presence becoming known to the ship's officers and crew.

Kingston had had some slight fears that Don Sebastian would escape Dolores' vigilance, and disclose his presence immediately. He was somewhat reassured when no sign of life whatever could be seen.

With a splash one of the boats dropped from the davits into the transparent water. The sun was shining brilliantly overhead, and the very deck radiated the heat. The brass-work and steel was almost too hot to lay hands on. Kingston seemed utterly unaffected by the heat. He rapidly descended the accommodation ladder, and stepped into the boat.

A minute later it was bowling over the calm sea in the direction of the reef, which was passed in perfect safety. The sailors looked about them interestedly. They were Englishmen, and were curious to see the daring woman who had essayed to stay on this island for several weeks in absolute solitude.

Although the banyan-tree could be plainly seen, the door of it was closed, so the sailors were quite unaware of the unique use to which it had been put. The boat grounded, and Kingston sprang out, carrying a small hand-bag.

"Wait for me here," he said shortly. "I don't suppose I shall be gone long, but Miss O'Brien is somewhere near the centre of the island, I think. As that's over a mile from here, it's not surprising she hasn't heard us."

He turned, and walked leisurely up the beach, passed the banyan-tree, and continued onwards to the path which led to the Brotherhood's storehouse and Dolores' tent. Not a sound could be heard above the insects buzzing and an occasional bird. Kingston began to feel just a little apprehensive. Had anything happened?

He turned the corner, and came into view of the arbour. Then he started in surprise. Seated on the rough seat was Don Sebastian, fast asleep. Ten yards off, leaning against a tree, with a revolver in her hand, stood Dolores de las Mercedes, her beautiful face flushed and expectant.

She saw him first, and when he looked she was holding her hand up for silence. Kingston stepped eagerly forward and grasped her hand. A thrill passed through her as she felt his grip. All the terrible weight seemed lifted off her shoulders and transferred to Kingston's. To his shoulders it was nothing.

"You have come!" she murmured, looking into his eyes. "Thank Heaven, you have come!"

"Yes, I've come, Miss Dolores," he replied. "I've come to take you off this desolate rock and convey you back to civilisation. I myself have already succeeded in doing that, and in changing my identity. Frank Kingston is my name from now onwards, and yours is Kathleen O'Brien. You seemed in no way surprised at my changed appearance."

"I knew you would be changed," she whispered, "and looked for somebody such as you now appear to be. When you arrive in England the Brotherhood will not trouble to look at you twice."

"I admit I give the general impression that I am a fool," smiled Kingston; "and, really, I shall find it useful in my campaign against the Brotherhood. I want them to think me—if they ever have cause to suspect me—utterly incapable of brain-work or sustained thought."

"You will be safe from them," declared Dolores; "for, to judge by outward appearances, you are a small-brained dandy. As I know you to be exactly the opposite—that you are clever, strong, and practically nerveless—I cannot look upon you as other people would. In spite of your appearance and your acting, I find it impossible to picture you as anything but brave and powerful."

Kingston laughed quietly.

"You are very complimentary," he said. "But I hardly expected to find such a peaceful state of affairs as this. Our friend seems in no way troublesome. Tell me—have you been in danger at all—have you been persecuted by this man——"

"No, Mr. Kingston. I assure you Don Sebastian has been like a baby in my hands," explained Dolores, glancing at the quietly slumbering Spaniard. "Fortunately for my peace, the shock he received had some effect on his general health, and all the time you have been away he has been as quiet as a child."

"I'm pleased to hear that," said Kingston, in a relieved tone. "Still, I might have known the scoundrel could never have got the better of you. It would take a clever man to do that."

"And are you really going to rescue me now?" she asked eagerly. "Are we going right away from this horrid place?"

"By night I hope to be well on the way to England," replied Kingston quietly. "I have a lot to tell you, and you a lot to tell me, I expect, so the sooner we get on the ship the better. You must not forget that you are an American woman——"

"Of Irish extraction, to judge by the name," smiled Dolores. "That is not uncommon in America. The captain thinks you are one of those hare-brained Yankees, so please act the part just a little bit. Put on an air of bravado, and say you've 'real enjoyed yourself!'"

"Very well; but I cannot realise that I'm to be really rescued. Ten years I was to stay here. The French Government little think how long of the ten years I mean to stay! But we cannot go just like this, Mr. Kingston. Don Sebastian may wake up——"

"Of course! We shall have to attend to him."

"It is impossible to bind him," she cried, still looking at Kingston rather curiously. He was so vastly different to what he had been when he was Graydon. His appearance was completely altered; only his lazy eyes and quiet drawl still remained the same.

"If we left him bound, I'm afraid he would die a rather uncomfortable death," he said, after a moment. "No, Miss Dolores, I have got another idea. He must be rendered helpless until the ship has had ample time to get out of sight."

"There is the cave," exclaimed Dolores quickly. "We could put him in there——"

"You have forgotten that the ship is just outside the bay, and that a boat containing three men is waiting for me on the beach. There is not a moment to be lost. If we are long the officers will begin to have suspicions that everything is not as it seems."

"Then what do you propose?" she asked. "I place myself entirely in your hands. I know I can trust you implicitly, as I could trust no other man. You will do that which is right, I am confident."

"I shall do my best," replied the other, giving Don Sebastian a quick glance. "Up till now everything has passed off in a manner that leaves nothing to be desired. It has been success all along the line. My old self is dead, Don Sebastian will be thought by the Brotherhood to have run off with the gold and returned to London——"

"Returned to London," she repeated.

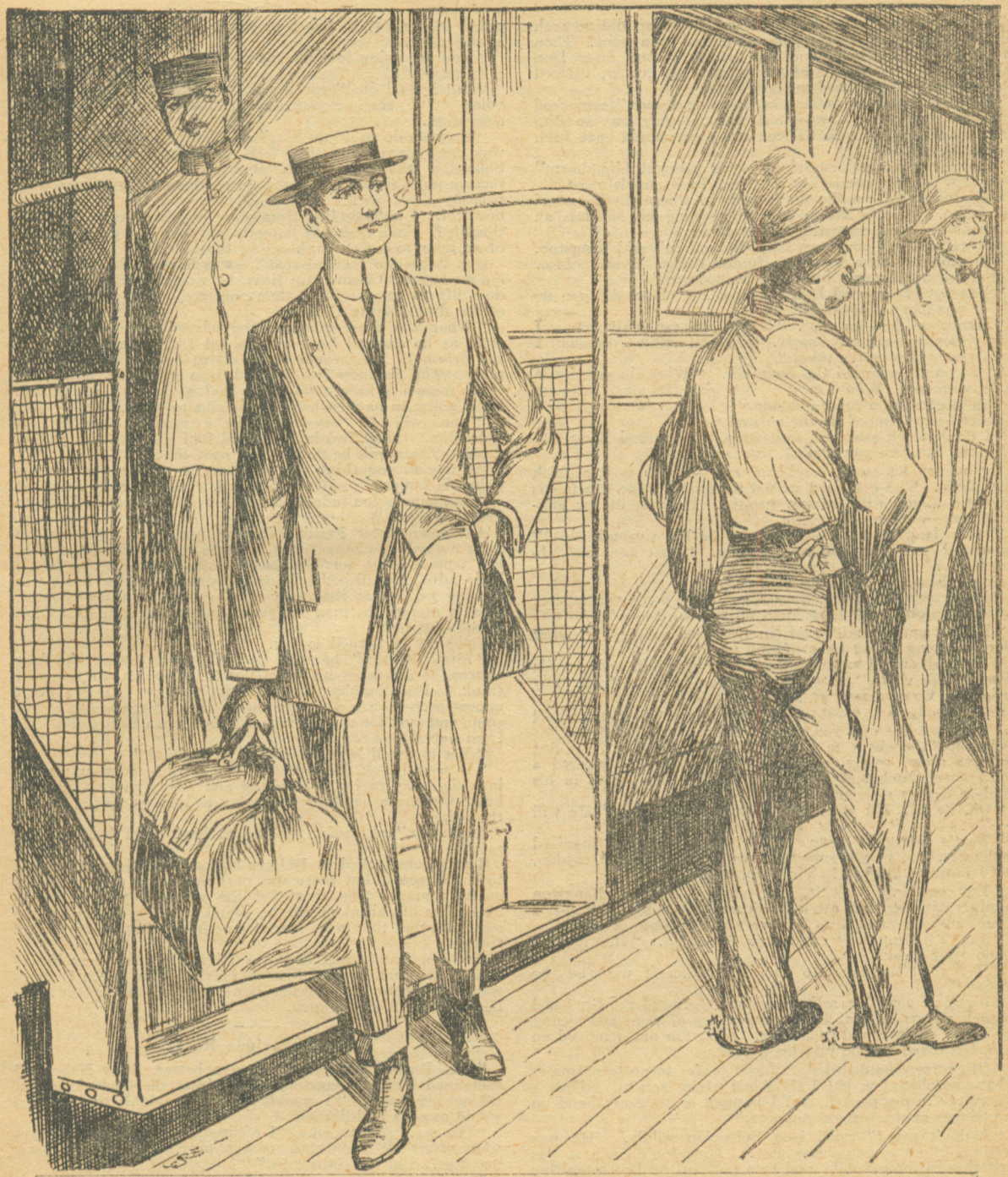
"Yes; it is part of my plan. Once more, and once more only, I am to assume the disguise of our friend who is so peacefully oblivious to all that is being said about him. You will be escaping from a position as bad as my own, and the French Government will fondly think you dead. And all this—everything—is due to your arrival upon the island. Really, Miss Dolores, I bless this Monsieur Lemerre you talk about so harshly."

She laughed.

"And I," she cried, looking straight into his eyes, "I am glad I came here, and so gave you the opportunity of escaping. I am glad I met you, for you have made me forget my usual work—made me only want to exert all my powers against this monstrous Brotherhood of Iron!"

"And you make me enthusiastic—— Ah, our friend is awaking, I believe."

Don Sebastian had moved. He looked a strange figure in Kingston's flannels, and his face was haggard and pale. Not a spark of pity could be felt for him, however. He was one of the greatest scoundrels unhung, and any amount of suffering was not too great.



In place of Don Sebastian, the Spaniard, a well-groomed, clean-shaven young man—henceforth to be known as Frank Kingston—stepped out of the train. (*See page 20*).

He opened his eyes sleepily, and found those of Kingston gazing straight into his own. He started violently, and rose to his feet, still somewhat dazed, staring from Kingston back to Dolores as if in a dream.

"Who are you?" he asked hoarsely. "What are you doing here? Have you come to rescue me? Have you——"

"No, Sebastian. I have merely come here to rescue the young lady by your side. You will, from this time onward, have plenty of opportunity to find out for yourself what it is like being on this island with no one but yourself for company——"

"Good heavens! You are not going to leave me here alone?"

"That is precisely what I am going to do," replied Kingston coldly. "For eight years I have enjoyed the privilege myself, and now you, as my gaoler, are going to have your turn."

"Who are you?" cried Don Sebastian frenziedly. "Who are you? Ah, I know—I can see now! You are Graydon!"

"You are mistaken, my friend. My name is not Graydon. I dropped that for ever when I left this island last month. To-day I leave it in your sole charge, and shall perhaps return in some months' time——"

"Is there a ship here now?" cried Don Sebastian wildly.

"There is, but I am afraid you will never see it," drawled Kingston.

"You fool! I'll let myself be seen, and then the officers will save me!" Don Sebastian twirled round like lightning, and darted off down the path. Dolores cried out in a startled voice, expecting Kingston to dash off in pursuit.

The late occupant of the Iron Island, however, did no such thing. Quite calmly he stooped and picked up a stone. Then he drew his arm back and let fly. A second later Don Sebastian, just as he was about to turn the corner, uttered a cry of pain, and crashed to the ground.

"I don't, as a rule, believe in throwing stones," remarked Kingston coolly, "but, really, it was the only way to stop him. Had he let himself be seen our game would have been completely ruined."

"But I cannot understand how you brought him down," exclaimed Dolores wonderingly. "See, he is unable to rise."

They hurried down the shady path to where the Spaniard had fallen. He was sitting up and hugging his left leg, an expression of pain cortorting his features.

"It was entirely your own fault, Sebastian," said Kingston. "You shouldn't attempt such a foolish thing. A sharp blow on the calf muscles will bring any man down."

"You fiend!" snarled Don Sebastian. "How did you do it? It was like a rifle-bullet."

"Hardly as bad as that. Come, you can walk now. I simply cannot wait any longer. Are you coming, or shall I carry you? One or the other."

"I'll come," growled the Spaniard. "What do you mean to do with me? Whatever it is, I'll give the alarm as soon as you're gone, and rouse the ship."

He rose, and limped up the pathway.

"I don't think you will, Sebastian," murmured Kingston. "In fact, I'm sure you won't! Just see here!"

He opened his small hand-bag, and took from it a thick steel chain. The Spaniard looked on sullenly, the fire in his eyes still alight with intense passion. He was fit for anything now—even murder.

"How long would it take you to file through this?" inquired Frank Kingston meditatively. "Just how long, do you think?"

Don Sebastian glared, but said nothing.

"Surely you heard me, Sebastian. Why don't you answer my simple question? How long, do you think——"

"I don't understand," said the Spaniard sullenly. "What are you trying to get at, confound you?"

"I merely want to know how long it would take to file through this chain," repeated Kingston calmly. "It's only curiosity. Come along, we are waiting to go."

"Let me have it," said Don Sebastian. "I want to feel it. I don't know why you want to know, but I'll tell you."

He took the chain in his hands and examined it. But his eyes shone wildly, exultantly. Suddenly he uttered a cry, stepped back and swung the heavy chain round in his hand—a deadly weapon.

"Oh, he will kill you!" cried Dolores quickly. "He will ——"

"That's what I mean to do!" snarled the Spaniard exultantly. "I've got something on my side now, Graydon, and I mean to kill you! I'm desperate——"

"You certainly look it, my friend," drawled Kingston calmly, standing his ground without flinching. "But I should advise you to drop that very useful piece of chain."

"Yes, I'll drop it!" cried Don Sebastian. "But it shall be on your head!"

"If it's all the same to you, I'd rather it were on the ground."

Kingston's complete self-possession infuriated the Spaniard to such an extent that he uttered a cry of rage and swung the heavy chain round in the air. Kingston never moved an inch, but dived a hand into his pocket.

"Of course," he drawled, "if you prefer to go to extremes I have no objection, but I shouldn't advise you to. There's a revolver in my pocket, and I happen to have my hand on the trigger at the present moment."

"I don't care!" cried Don Sebastian wildly. He was heedless of all consequences now. Kingston's coolness was irritating in the extreme, and to a man in the Don's position it was ten times worse. It drove him to a frenzy, and caused him to show courage he would never have done otherwise.

In a second he stepped forward, swung the heavy chain up, and prepared to bring it down on Kingston's head. Had he done so it would probably have meant death; but Kingston seemed not to feel it. With one jerk it was in his own fingers, and Don Sebastian was standing baffled and impotent.

"You murderous dog!" said Kingston sternly. "You treacherous scoundrel! By Jove, Miss Dolores, I didn't think the fellow was such a rotter! Go into the storehouse, Sebastian; I've had enough of this, and mean to leave you."

"I shall break loose——"

"Quite right—you will, but not until the ship has disappeared below the horizon. After that you can do what you like; it will not affect us in any way, I assure you."

"What do you mean to do to me?" asked Don Sebastian.

"It is quite simple. You see this chain? Well, I am going to hook it to this iron staple at one end and to you at the other."

"You are going to chain me up?"

"Precisely!"

"But I shall die!" exclaimed Don Sebastian, in a terrified voice. "I shall remain a prisoner until I perish of starvation."

"You can do so if you like," said Kingston pleasantly. He was really enjoying this talk with the Spaniard. Don Sebastian was the first member of the Inner Council to receive punishment, and he could not have been more appropriately dealt with. "I shall give you the opportunity, however, of getting free from your imprisonment. You see this file? Well, I should judge it will take you every minute of an hour to cut through one of those links."

Don Sebastian realised that he was being foiled, and cried out in anger. Chained up there he would have to work for dear life to get free, and then only see, perhaps, the smoke of the disappearing Coronet.

"We really must safeguard ourselves," murmured Kingston, as he stepped back and joined Dolores after securing the prisoner. "It would never do to let you spoil all our plans. The darkness has descended on your day, Sebastian, while mine has barely dawned. And somehow I feel that a lot is going to happen before it begins to wane."

"You will be discovered in a week!" snarled Don Sebastian. "The Brotherhood will find you and put you to death. There will be no leniency next time."

"I'm glad you think the punishment you are now undergoing is lenient," smiled Kingston. "I scarcely found it so, but since you admit it was—well, you've nothing to grumble about."

A moment later Frank Kingston was hurrying down the path towards the banyan-tree, Dolores by his side. Now that the tension—that terrible tension—was relieved, she felt a little faint, and disinclined for conversation. Her heart was beating rapidly at the prospect of escape, and she thought what a marvellous man Kingston was underneath—but what a fool outside!

Suddenly he turned to her.

"Miss Dolores," he said seriously, and letting the lazy expression die from his eyes, "we're going to get away, I think. But there's not a moment to lose. If we don't appear soon there's a chance one or more of the sailors might come and look for us. Sebastian's shouts can be heard almost from here."

"Yet it would look peculiar if we hurried."

"It would look decidedly peculiar. So as soon as we get into sight try to be as laughing and merry as you can. I know the strain has been great, but as soon as we get aboard the ship——"

"I know," she said, smiling at him. "I'll do as you say."

The sailors looked at Dolores curiously as they rowed her to the Coronet, but there was nothing in her appearance to excite remark. She chattered the whole way to the ship about her life all alone on the island, and the sailors had no suspicion that they were leaving another human being behind them.

And he, frantic and hot, was filing away for dear life at the chain which secured him, while the steam yacht Coronet weighed anchor and set her bows towards the southward—bound straight for London.

An Audacious Ruse.

"Ah, I'm so glad to see you're better, Miss Dolores!" exclaimed Frank Kingston, rising from his deck-chair and taking her hand. "I was beginning to think the reaction would mean a real illness."

"Oh, no!" she smiled. "I realised how silly it was to give way after all the tension was over, and pulled myself together. I'm all right now."

They were on the spotlessly clean deck of the Coronet, and Dolores seated herself beside Kingston under the canvas awning. It was afternoon of the same day, and the tropical sun blazed down pitilessly. The Iron Island had long since disappeared, and Dolores had given way at first. Now, however, she appeared as unconcerned as he.

"So we're really off at last," murmured Kingston. "By Jove, Miss Dolores, I can hardly realise it! And you are my good angel! If you had never come to the Iron Island I should have been dead by now—murdered!"

"It's the force of circumstances," she replied, looking very attractive in her light muslin costume. "Had you not been on the island it would have been hopeless for me to escape."

"But together we have foiled them all. I am supposed to be dead, you are supposed to be dead, and the man Fraser, whom I rescued at Rio, is also supposed to be dead. Really, a most remarkable state of affairs."

"And you are free to exact your vengeance on the infamous Brotherhood of Iron for marooning you out here for eight years!" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes. "I feel almost as bitter against them as you do yourself!"

"Apart from my own troubles there will be a keen pleasure in wrecking the organisation," drawled Kingston. "It is a most villainous band, and it will be, I think, the essence of irony to spend their own money in bringing about their destruction. They will think Don Sebastian has the money, and will exert all their efforts to finding him. He will be traced to London and then the trail will disappear completely."

"I don't think I quite understand," said Dolores.

Kingston put her in possession of his plans; how he had consigned the seven cases of gold to Don Sebastian in London, and how he intended disguising himself again and fetching them—from right under the very nose of the Brotherhood. The audaciousness and daring of the plan were enough to insure success. Kingston had simply left the money in the Brotherhood's keeping until it suited his pleasure to fetch it.

Dolores was delighted with the scheme.

"It must succeed," she declared. "The very daring of it will carry you through, Mr. Kingston. Oh, I should just love to see it all! But that's impossible, for it's a man's work. Still, there will be plenty for me to do——"

"For you to do?" repeated Kingston curiously.

"Yes," she replied quietly. "I want to help you, if you will let me; I want to assist you in your great campaign. Your story has gripped me, and I wish to take part in the wrecking of the society. I have seen and heard so much of it by now that I seem to bear them a grudge myself."

"But I am going to be terribly stern," said Kingston tensely. "I am going to make everybody pay—they shall all suffer. And suppose I killed a man?"

Dolores looked startled for a second, then smiled.

"You wouldn't do that," she cried confidently; "I know you wouldn't do that!"

"But how about your own affairs?" he asked. "What will become of them?"

"I have my fortune with me," she replied. "It is not a great one, but ample for me. I cannot go back to France, for the Government would perhaps detect me, and send me back to the island. As things stand, I am dead—I shall be Kathleen O'Brien in London, and shall be an independent woman. And I know I could help you. When you are in any difficulty I might possibly find a way out; two brains are better than one, you know."

Kingston was silent for a moment.

"I should simply delight in having you by my side in this work," he said after a bit. "We have been brought together in a manner almost Providential, and it was your wits which got me out of my terrible difficulty. But, Dolores—it seems so formal to say 'miss'—do you fully realise what you will be doing? Do you see that by assisting me you might be running into danger and risks without number?"

Dolores smiled.

"I have thought of it all," she said, "and have concluded that as I have heard so much of this Brotherhood I cannot rest unless I am taking part in your work. As to the danger, it is nothing. You are equal to a dozen ordinary men—your strength is marvellous—and you will see that I am not hurt. I can trust you, Mr. Kingston. Will you let me help you? Shall I be in your way?"

"In my way?" repeated Kingston enthusiastically. "How could you be in my way? I owe everything to you, and know that if you really mean to throw in your lot with my own the success of our enterprise—an enterprise unlike any other in the world—is absolutely assured!"

"I do mean to throw in my whole interest with you!" cried Dolores eagerly. "I could wish for nothing better!"

"Then the Brotherhood of Iron is doomed beyond all question!" exclaimed Kingston. "But it shall not be ruined in one blow. Eight years I have been made to suffer, and their punishment shall be prolonged for many months. They will know that somebody is striking at them, but they will never find out who it is! Gradually, little by little, the Brotherhood shall be wiped out, until not a single member remains!"

. . . . . .

"England at last! By Jove, what a glorious moment this is!" cried Frank Kingston enthusiastically, as he gazed at the Cornish coast through his binoculars. "It's a long time since I was here, you know, Miss O'Brien—a very long time!"

A couple of officers were within hearing, so Kingston had to address Dolores by her proper name. She, also, was looking longingly at the cliffs ahead. Although the day was cold and chill, and the sea rather rough, both of them thought the view one of the best they'd ever seen in their lives. It was England—dear old England!—they were home!

"Make for Plymouth, Morrison," said Kingston, walking up to the captain. "I want to have a walk round the town and stretch my legs. I've forgotten what it's like to walk on solid ground."

"Very good, sir," replied Captain Morrison. He was a quiet man, but with a decidedly masterful look about him—a look which showed him to be a sailor from heel to crown. "Shall we stay the day there, sir?"

"Oh, no, Morrison, rather not!" said Kingston, smiling. "I want to get to town, you know! We shall just have a walk round, then come back!"

"I understand, sir," replied the skipper, being entirely deceived by Kingston's affected manners. "I'll have the boat ready as soon as we get near enough."

"That'll do rippingly!"

He strolled back to Dolores, who was rather puzzled at this stoppage. She understood that Kingston was making every effort to reach London quickly, and here he was stopping at Plymouth to stretch his legs! There was something behind it evidently.

Presently they were being rowed ashore, and both were genuinely interested. Dolores, of course, had been away from civilisation for comparatively little time—no more than a holiday. But Kingston, who had left England eight years ago, was simply longing to see the old familiar scenes again; to talk to the people and generally enjoy himself. He didn't forget, however, that he was supposed to be a gold-miner from South Africa; a young fellow who had struck lucky before having gone through the hardships usually associated with digging.

Although his whole being was quivering with emotion inwardly, he was outwardly calm and cool as the boat drew up against the steps at one of the quays. He assisted his fair companion ashore, then tossed a coin to the man who rowed the boat.

"Wait here until we return," he said shortly.

"Very well, sir."

Kingston and Dolores walked away, gazing interestedly about them, merely behaving as two formal friends—she smiling, and he polite and attentive.

They turned a corner and entered a quiet street. Kingston looked about him swiftly, then addressed Dolores, who wondered what had caused his sudden change of demeanour.

"Come," he said shortly, "there's not a minute to lose!"

"But where are you going?" she queried.

"To the station," he answered—"to London!"

"But the ship——"

"That can follow afterwards!"

"I don't understand," she said wonderingly.

"I will tell you when we are at the station. By hurrying I might just catch a train; I must be in London to-night, Dolores, I must!"

She guessed his reason, but said nothing. Quickly they made their way to the railway-station, and found, on arrival, that there had been no necessity for hurry. The London train did not leave until another fifteen minutes.

"We didn't know," said Kingston, as he seated himself on a bench. Dolores was already there, rather taken aback at this sudden journey of his.

"Why are you going?" she asked. "Surely you will let me know that? I had no idea you intended this when you left the ship."

"It only struck me at the last moment what a lot of time could be saved by doing this, as well as concealing tracks. I intend, to-night, to get the business connected with Don Sebastian all over."

"You are going to secure the cases of gold——"

"The sooner the better," he answered quickly. "Listen; my plan is, I think, a good one. When I—as Frank Kingston—arrive in London, I want to make it appear as if I have only just got there—as if I had not been there to-day at all."

"So that the Brotherhood cannot connect anything with you?"

"Exactly!" he replied. "I want you to come with me as far as the next station, disguising me on the way as Don Sebastian. I have got hair, wig, etc., in this bag, which I bought at Rio. I shall go straight on, while I want you to take the next train back, and continue the voyage to Southampton; telling the captain that I have gone to see a friend, and will meet the boat at Southampton."

"I think I understand," she said thoughtfully. "But you will be careful, won't you? I mean, it is risky work you are contemplating."

"I think you can trust me, Dolores," he smiled. "I shall be all right, and will meet the Coronet at Southampton to-morrow morning. Morrison will never think I have been to London."

A few minutes later the train started. Kingston had selected an empty compartment, and when the express came to a standstill at the first halt he had vanished, and Don Sebastian sat in his place. Dolores stepped out of the compartment without speaking, as if he had been a stranger.

He sat back more easily when the journey was restarted, and adjusted his false moustache and beard in the mirror. Dolores had disguised him really well, and he was confident of the success of his plan.

The first thing on arriving in London was to go and see if Fraser had kept his promise; if he was at the boarding-house Kingston had named. Somehow Kingston felt he would be there, waiting for orders. There had been a look of gratitude in his eyes at Rio, which still appeared before Kingston's vision.

As soon as he arrived at the metropolis he jumped into a taxi—articles which were quite new to him—and drove to the boarding-house, which was situated in Camberwell. Even as he stepped out of the taxi he saw Fraser just leaving the building.

He was disguised cleverly, but Kingston saw through it in a second. Not many people would have done so. Fraser was bearded now, and the colour of his hair was dark instead of being light. He espied Kingston almost immediately, and the latter saw him turn pale and step back a pace.

"Don't go, my friend," said "Don Sebastian," in a low voice, as Fraser made as if to walk rapidly away. "Surely you know who I am? I am glad to see you have kept your promise!"

"You are the gentleman who——" exclaimed Fraser, open-eyed. "Gum, sir, but I thought you was the real Spaniard! Yes, sir; I've kept my promise. I've a lot to thank you for——"

"Tut-tut, man, don't waste time!" said Kingston, producing his watch. "It is now just upon four o'clock; in half an hour or so it will be dark. There's work ahead, Fraser, and I want you to help me. Do you mind taking risks?"

"Risks, sir—with you?" cried the other. "I'll do anything for you, sir—anything!"

The tone in which he spoke plainly told Kingston that he would prove faithful to the end. His eyes were shining with expectation—he was Kingston's slave, ready to do his master's bidding.

"And your name, Fraser, what is it?"

"I'm known as Johnson here, sir," replied the man, looking up and down the quiet street. "I don't think anybody'd recognise me as my old self."

"To most people the disguise is perfect," replied Kingston. "But come, we have no time to spare. I will tell you your work as we walk along."

"Is it up against the Brotherhood, sir?" asked Fraser eagerly.

"In a way, yes. But listen!"

As they walked along Kingston rapidly mapped out his plan of procedure. Provided everything went well there was practically no risk attached to the enterprise.

"There is one important question I wish to ask!" exclaimed Kingston. "Can you manage a motor-car?"

"I used to be a chauffeur at one time, sir," replied Fraser. "After being butler to Sebastian I became chauffeur, as he considered I was too good to waste my time indoors!"

"You can drive, then?"

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Good!"

Nothing more was said until Kingston turned into a large garage. After a short talk and a crackle of banknotes, a large motor-lorry was placed at his disposal. Fraser, after a glance round, declared he could drive it.

Then Kingston, who had thought of an improvement on his former scheme, told Fraser to drive to a certain spot and wait for him there. Instead of riding on the lorry himself, he would travel by taxi; it would seem much more natural.

He was at the agreed-upon place before Fraser—a clear space in Fulham Road. Being in the main street, the lorry, when it arrived, would pass absolutely unnoticed. It was dark now, and a cold wind swept along the roadway. Fraser, considering everything, did remarkably well, for he covered the distance in only ten minutes longer than the taxi.

"Now, then," directed Kingston, "all you have to do is to drive to this address—it's only a mile lower down, towards Putney—and then do as you are told. Be there at six o'clock precisely."

"Is that all, sir?"

"That's all, Fraser; and if we bring this off all right—well, I'll tell you afterwards!"

He smiled, and adjusted the bandage round his face; it still served to assist the disguise. After that it was quick work. Swiftness, of course, was the means of success; often before a person has time to think a matter over it is done. It was so in this case.

With a flourish a taxi drew up opposite a certain house, and Don Sebastian stepped out and mounted the steps. It was only a small house, and the owner himself opened the door. On seeing who his visitor was he immediately became servility itself. Kingston had no difficulty whatever.

Yes, the cases were all stored in an outhouse, he was informed, and had been kept dry, in case their contents might spoil. He thanked the man, and tipped him liberally. There was no suspicion whatever of a trick; and, anyhow, who would want to steal a lot of old specimens?

The lorry came up, the identification number having been temporarily altered just previously, and the cases were quickly packed aboard; Don Sebastian in a loud voice directed the driver to take them to an address in the West End. Fraser knew what to do, however. The West End address was merely a blind, even if notice had been taken as to where they were going. But notice wasn't taken; the matter was thought to be of quite a private nature, and nothing to do with the Brotherhood's business.

So Kingston walked off feeling highly elated. It had been a walk-over. He had hardly expected to get the gold so easily. And the cheek of it!

Fraser had his orders. He took the cases direct to a furniture depository in the East End, near the London Docks. On the way, in a quiet and dark street, he deftly altered the number of the lorry back to what it had originally been. This had been merely a precaution, so that if the Brotherhood's member had taken the number, to trace the lorry would have been impossible.

From that spot the Brotherhood would lose all trace. The boxes deposited in the East End could never be connected with the other matter, for Fraser gave it to be understood that he had fetched them from a ship close by.

And the same night Kingston travelled down to Southampton, feeling well equipped for his gigantic campaign. He had untold wealth at his disposal—the wealth of the Brotherhood—and it would be used against them. They would be wiped out through the instrumentality of their own ill-gotten gains!

It was Don Sebastian who entered the train at Waterloo, but when it arrived at Southampton he had utterly vanished, without a clue left to say what had become of him. The fatuous young man in one of the first-class compartments was not worth a second glance.

The Plan of Action.

"By Jove, Dolores, in all this whirl of gaiety we shall forget all about our work! Nearly two months now since I lodged the gold in ten different banks, and I've done nothing!"

"Yes, you have, Mr. Kingston, you have done a great deal—a great deal that was absolutely necessary!"

Frank Kingston and Dolores were seated at a table in one of the smartest West End restaurants. They had just met by accident. He had been to his club, and she to a theatre. They were great friends, these two—very great friends—but she could not look upon him as an ordinary man. He fascinated her more than ever now, for he seemed such a fool, while all the time she knew that he was one of the cleverest, strongest-willed, and most powerful men on earth. She looked upon herself as a child in comparison.

"Two months and nothing done, you say," continued Dolores. "See what a wrong idea you have. Since you have been in London you have absolutely established yourself. You are known to be a very rich young man—a weak fool——"

"Just what I want," murmured Kingston languidly.

"Of course. People think you absolutely incapable of anything that requires brain-power. They wonder very often what would have happened if you hadn't found your gold first off. In addition, you have been introduced to Lord Mount-Fannell, Sir Robert Gissing, and several other members of the Inner Council!"

Kingston smiled.

"If they only knew!" he murmured. "Yes, Dolores, there's truth in what you say. The preliminary work has been accomplished. I am established as a nincompoop in London society, and everybody quietly smiles and nods as I pass them. Capital—capital! I should be the absolute last man to be suspected of—well, what is going to happen!"

"There can be no suspicion," she replied. "And I, although not nearly so rich as you, am also slightly recognised as being a person of money—and money will do wonders!"

"Without it we should be helpless. And it's our very publicity that makes us so secure."

"Already I have made several friends," she went on. "And my connection with you is unknown. Some people know we are acquainted, but nobody is aware of what we passed through before we arrived in England."

"I refused to allow any report of your supposed escapade on the island to appear," replied Kingston. "It might have sent Mount-Fannell into a train of thought."

"You are safe enough, Mr. Kingston. Fraser, too, will be an invaluable help. He is with us heart and soul. It was

the wisest thing you could have done, telling him everything and engaging him as valet. He has confidence now."

"Oh, Fraser is true as steel!" declared Kingston. "He'll serve me like a faithful dog. The very mention of the Brotherhood brings a scowl to his features. But as you say, I'm established now, and that being the case, I think it is time to commence work—real work!"

She gave him a quick glance, but he sat back in his chair sleepily contemplating his wine-glass. She knew he was acting, and, having been an actress herself, realised how poor she was in comparison to him. It was remarkable how he controlled his facial expression, his movements, and his whole bearing.

"And how do you intend to start?" she queried curiously.

"Well, as this is hardly the place to discuss such an important matter," he drawled, "I must really ask you to wait until to-morrow. I'm going to commence operations to-morrow."

"And you will let me help you?" she asked eagerly.

"We agreed it should be so, didn't we? I can't forget, Dolores, that I owe you my liberty—that it is due to your ready wits that I am here to-night. Anything you say—anything you command—shall be done immediately. I am your servant."

She laughed gaily.

"Then you will be good enough to escort me home?" she asked. "It's getting late, and Louise, my French maid, will be wondering what has become of me, for I nearly always get home early."

"Then we will go at once," he said, "and to-morrow I will tell you of a plan I have conceived. From this time onwards it is going to be work. The pace will be fast and furious, and the Brotherhood of Iron will soon begin to feel the cut of the lash."

"And the first man to receive punishment will be——"

"Detective-inspector Caine," replied Kingston, rising and preparing to depart.

Five minutes later Dolores was in a taxi, and, having directed the driver, Frank Kingston clambered in.

It was a lovely night, cold, but clear and starlit. It was a pleasant ride along Piccadilly, down the Haymarket, across Trafalgar Square into the Strand. The light, the people, the thousand and one taxies and motor-'buses—all served to show Kingston that, in the midst of that vast concourse, he was as secure from discovery as if he had been in the heart of the African forest.

The taxi pulled up sharply in front of the imposing entrance of the Hotel Cyril. In the hall, Kingston bade Dolores good-night, and, while she went upstairs, turned and strolled into the smoking-room. Not that he smoked—no, Kingston had been forced to go without on the Iron Island, and his will-power was strong enough to prevent him getting into the habit again now.

He just looked round, nodded to one or two acquaintances, and then lounged out again. The attendants were very respectful to him, and although he hated being made a fuss of, he affected to like their attentions. He tipped liberally, and was generally liked among the servants.

Proceeding to the first floor, he turned down a broad, electrically-lit corridor, and, halting in front of a door, opened it. The whole suite, consisting of five rooms, was occupied by himself and Fraser. On the opposite side of the corridor another door, similar to his own, could be seen. That suite was occupied by Dolores—or, as she was known at the Cyril, Kathleen O'Brien. Her maid, Louise, lived with her always.

Kingston closed his door and switched on the electric light. Then he touched a bell. A moment later Fraser—a very altered Fraser now—appeared.

"I'm glad you are still up, Fraser," said his master briskly. "Just come into the study—I've something important to say."

"Very good, sir."

He looked at Kingston, and a thrill seemed to pass through him. Up till now he had always seen his master as a languid, indolent dandy. At present, however, although he still wore his clothes in the same affected manner, his face bore a different expression entirely.

Now that he was in the privacy of his own rooms, Kingston allowed his features to relax into their natural expression. His eyes were keen, his firm jaw a litle bit more determined than usual, and his lips pressed close together.

The time had come!

"Now, then, Fraser," he said quickly, as he seated himself in a chair. "To-morrow I'm going to start work in dead earnest, and you've got to help me first!"

Fraser started forward.

"You're goin' to start doin' in the Brotherhood, sir?" he cried eagerly. "At last! Gum, sir, but I am glad! I'll do absolutely anything I can, sir!"

"I know that, Fraser. Now, the other day, if you remember, you told me about that friend of yours—er——"

"Crawford, sir."

"That's the man. Well, you say he's a common member of the Brotherhood?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that he is, as a matter of fact, in a position precisely similar to your own before you bolted to Rio de Janeiro?"

"That's it, sir. Crawford used to be a bad 'un, but I've brought him round, until now he's eager to have done with it all. He wants to get away from the Brotherhood altogether, and thought of runnin' away like I did—only my narrow escape kind of upset him. He isn't goin' to try now."

"Sensible man, Fraser. Does he like the work he's doing? I mean, has he any ill-feeling towards the Brotherhood?"

"Well, I should say so, sir. He'd give all he's got to see them smashed up! He's very bitter! But mind you, he's only like this because he's been in contact with me such a lot. I've always been naggin' at 'im about it, an' at last he's come round to my views. The other members would half kill him if they knew he was against 'em!"

"They needn't know, Fraser—they needn't know a word. This Crawford will be useful to us—very useful—and you've got to bring him round to my view, you understand? When can you see him?"

"He'll be in about seven to-morrow morning, sir."

"Then go and see him. Tell him that you know somebody who is working against the Brotherhood, and get out of him all the facts—all the facts, mind—concerning the next big robbery. Tell him I will give him a hundred pounds if his information leads to anything."

"He'll do it without the money, sir. He'd be as straight as I am if he could, but he can't. There ain't many members who are honest, but he is, sir. I can promise you that."

"All the better, Fraser. He'll be a great help to me. Through him I shall be able to find out the plans of robberies, and help to frustrate them. There are other ways in which he can help, too. But you will have to be careful—very careful."

"But he's straight, sir."

"That may be, but there can be no harm in taking precautions. When you see him, you will tell him you come from Richmond—that you are working there—and when you leave him, go to Richmond."

"Go there, sir?"

"Exactly. Then if you are followed you will be safe. Go to Richmond and enter a big hotel. Stay there for an hour, then return to this address by a roundabout route. It is impossible to be too cautious. Crawford must not know a word about me—not a word! Can I trust you to keep my identity quiet?"

"Absolutely, sir!" cried Fraser. "If you don't wish it, I won't breathe a syllable! I'd cut my tongue out sooner, sir! I can never repay you enough for what you've done for me!"

"Really, Fraser, you weary me," drawled Kingston, lounging back in his chair. "You've got your instructions, and I shall expect you here about ten o'clock to-morrow morning."

"I shall be here, sir, and I shall bring the particulars you need," replied Fraser enthusiastically. "Crawford will do it willingly. And are you really goin' for the Brotherhood now, sir?"

"Tooth and nail, Fraser—to the bitter end!"

(A further long instalment of this thrilling serial story next Thursday, describing the adventures of Frank Kingston and Dolores in London, while working against the Brotherhood of Iron.)

Concluding Chapters of this Great Sea Story.

In the Service of the King.

By LIEUTENANT LEFEVRE.

Read this First.

Oswald Yorke, a young ex-highwayman, joins the Navy as a midshipman under the name of John Smith. His ship, the Cynthia, is despatched to the island of San Andrade to investigate the conduct of a certain family of planters named Wilson, who are suspected of complicity with the notorious pirate, Kester. After searching the island, and finding the Wilsons have fled, the warship gives chase to a slaver sighted in the distance. During the fight that follows Captain Garvin leads a party of bluejackets on board the slaver, and a desperate hand-to-hand fight takes place.

(Now go on with the story.)

From the commencement of the fray the two captains had singled out each other for attack. Up to now they had had to wait their time, but now a path was clear, and Captain Garvin sprang forward, giving point in advance with his sword.

The slaver captain, seeing his enemy, took a step backwards, and swinging his heavy sword brought it down with a tremendous blow.

But Captain Garvin was too nimble for such an attack as this. He had almost counted on it. And with a sudden rush he closed in on the man, and the point of his sword entered the slaver captain's breast. So great was the impetus of the rush that the sword pierced the man through and through.

The captain went down with a crash, Captain Garvin only saving himself by a sudden backward spring. But he was disarmed, for the fall of the slaver captain had twisted the sword out of his hand.

In a flash Burgoyne, seeing Captain Garvin's disadvantage, rushed at him.

"You villain!" gasped Garvin.

It would have been his last word. But for the second time that day Oswald came to his captain's rescue, leaping between Burgoyne and his victim. Oswald met his descending sword with his own. Then the next instant, before Burgoyne could recover himself, Maxwell leaped forward, and passed his blade through his former captain's sword-arm.

As his sword fell from his nerveless grasp, Burgoyne turned, evidently with the intention of saving himself by flight, but ere he could put his plan into execution one of the crew of the Cynthia leaped on to his back, and pulled him backwards to the deck, where he lay stunned and helpless.

The fall of their leader proved the last straw. Passion gave place to a wild, unreasoning terror. Many of the crew of the slaver, preferring death by drowning than the gallows at Port Royal, leaped on to the bulwarks, and sprang into the sea. Those who remained on deck flung down their arms in sullen submission.

The fight was over, and not until it was over, and the victors had time to glance about them, did they realise how desperate a battle it had been.

The deck ran blood; bodies, cruelly hacked and mutilated, lay about in ghastly heaps.

A few—only a very few, considering how the deck had swarmed with men—were living still, and among that few were the two men who had once worn the uniform of his Majesty's Navy.

Burgoyne lay where he had fallen, insensible, and breathing heavily; Brabazon, white with terror, and shaking in every limb, leaned against the foremast.

"Secure that man!" Captain Garvin said sternly.

But as a couple of sailors approached him Brabazon, with a desperate spring, leaped past them, and flung himself down on the deck at Captain Garvin's feet.

"I am innocent!" he shrieked, writhing and grovelling in his terror. "I did not know what sort of craft this was when I shipped on board her. I have not raised a hand against you and your men. I swear—I call upon you all to witness—that I did not raise a hand against you!"

"That will do!" said Captain Garvin coldly. "Your explanations may come later. Take him away."

Dragged to his feet, Brabazon was led away by the two sailors, and taken aboard the frigate, where he was promptly secured under the hatches.

Oswald and Maxwell stood beside the body of their late captain, and looked down into the unconscious face.

"He fought better on the deck of this slaver than he ever did in his life before," muttered Maxwell.

"He must have been mad," said Oswald.

At this moment old Fid came up, and looked at the recumbent body solemnly.

"Better for him if he never opened his eyes again," he muttered. "It'll be a nice ending for one as has been an officer and a gentleman, young gents."

"What?" asked Oswald.

Fid pointed vaguely out to sea.

"The gallers on the quay at Port Royal, or maybe the yardarm of the frigate there."

And now two sailors came up, and raised the still unconscious body, and carried it away.

Though the fight was over, there were still many things to do. The first was to secure the prisoners, and to carry the wounded on to the frigate.

This took some time, and when it was concluded another task, and one of extreme difficulty and danger, lay before them.

Beneath the decks of the brig the slaves were stowed away. All the time during which they had been on deck they could hear the ceaseless struggling and shrieking of the poor wretches penned up in the awful darkness below.

Captain Garvin knew that to liberate them would be to expose himself and his men to great danger. The slaves were not to be treated now like men; they were nothing better than raving wild beasts. Their humanity had been destroyed by the fearful sufferings they must have undergone. There was nothing human in the awful yells that rose through the deck planks.

Captain Garvin was in a quandary. To liberate these maddened wretches would be, he knew, to court disaster. They would turn upon their rescuers the moment that they were free. Yet he could not condemn them to continued punishment in the stifling hold, where dead and living were penned up together. Besides, he had no intention of putting a prize crew on board the slaver.

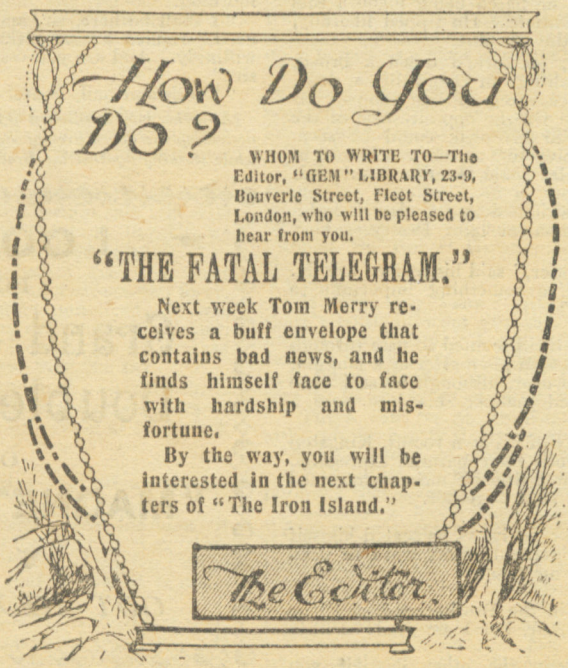
There seemed to be but one course open to him, but he was a humane man, and his soul revolted from it—to scuttle the ship, and send it to the bottom with its living cargo.

And yet it seemed the only thing to do.

Captain Garvin paced up and down the deck of the brig in deep thought. All those who remained alive of the slaver's crew had been taken on board the frigate. Only he and three or four of his men still remained on the slaver's deck.

Maxwell and Oswald came towards the captain, and touched their hats.

(This splendid serial story will be concluded shortly.)



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