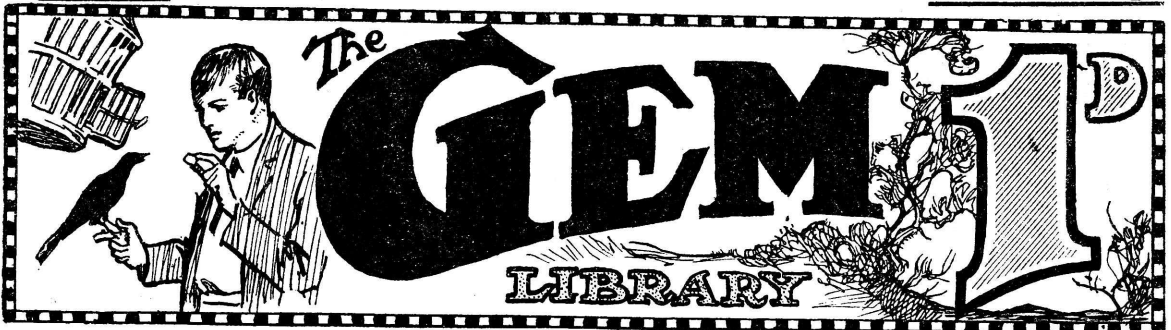


Every

Thursday.



Complete Stories for All and Every Story a Gem!

[Our Readers are informed that the characters in the following Story are purely imaginary, and no reference or allusion is made to any living person. Actual names may be unintentionally mentioned, but the Editor wishes it to be distinctly understood that no adverse personal reflection is intended.]



For the Head's Sake

A Splendid,
Long, Complete Tale
of TOM MERRY & CO.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

CHAPTER 1.

Wet!

RAIN!

Rain, and more rain! The fellows at St. Jim's had never seen anything like it. There had been heavy rains in that part of Sussex before, certainly. But within the recollection of the oldest inhabitant—who, of course, was Kildare of the Sixth—there had been nothing like it.

"The rain, it raineth every day" had become a true saying at St. Jim's.

One half-holiday, a Saturday, had been "mucked up," as the juniors elegantly expressed it, by the rain; but they had tried to be patient. But when the rain continued all through Sunday, and all through Monday, and all through Tuesday, with scarcely any intermission, the St. Jim's fellows became, as Jack Blake said, "fed up."

But fed up or not, they still had to listen to the rain coming down. It dashed on the class-room windows; it spouted off the old red roofs, it foamed in the gutters of the quadrangle.

It was Wednesday now, another half-holiday; and all through the morning the rain had been streaming down with steady persistence.

The boys sat for morning lessons in dim class-rooms—dim from the cloudy sky, and from the rain with which the panes were fogged.

After lessons they collected in the passages, or looked out of the windows, and said things about the weather—things which were not complimentary to the climate of their native land.

Tom Merry, and Manners and Lowther, of the Shell, opened

the big door, which had been closed all the morning, and looked out into the rainy quad.

The rain was coming down in sheets, and there was a keen, cold wind blowing from Wayland Moor, dashing the rain-drops against wall and window.

"M-m-m-my hat!" gasped Manners, as a gust of rain came into his face drenching his hair and his collar. "M-y-y-y-hat!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form. "Bai Jove! This is simply wotten! Get the door shut, you asses! I have had a spinkie on my twousahs already!"

"Blow your trousers!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What price this weather for cricket?" asked Jack Blake, coming up, and staring out gloomily into the wet and steaming quad.

"Cricket! My hat!"

"We had a match on for this afternoon."

"We shall have to play it in the Form-room, then, or play marbles instead," said Monty Lowther.

"Shut that door!" bawled Kildare, of the Sixth, looking out of his study. "Everything will be blown away, you young asses! What did you open it for?"

"Oh, it's all right, Kildare—"

"Shut that door at once."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boy!"

"Bear a hand!" said Tom Merry, grasping the door.

There was no doubt that the wind was blowing into the School House. It came in at the wide-open doorway with a fell swoop, and tore down the passages, and up the staircases,

Next Thursday:

"TOM MERRY & CO.," AND "THE BROTHERHOOD OF IRON."

shrieking and howling. It brought heavy drops of rain in with it, spattering them over the juniors in the hall.

There was a yell from all quarters.

"Shut the door!"

"All serene!" called back Tom Merry, of the Shell. "We're shutting it—or we're trying to, anyway!"

Trying to, indeed, was all that the Terrible Three were doing. The door was big and thick and heavy, and required an effort to move it, in any case. Now the strong wind was bumping against it, as the chums of the Shell tried to shut it, and they simply could not do it.

"Lend a hand, Gussy!" shouted Manners.

"Sowwy, deah boy—"

"Lend a hand, you ass!"

"Weally sowwy, Mannahs, but I am afraid that I should get my clothes splashed if I came neah the door. Othahwise, I would oblige with pleasure, Mannahs!"

"You giddy ass—"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Blake—Herries—Kangaroo—lend a hand!"

The juniors named rushed to the rescue. They flung themselves at the door from behind, in a row, all pushing at the heavy oak with all their strength.

The door swung to.

Then came a terrific burst of wind before it could be fastened, and it swung open again, hurling the juniors back in a staggering crowd.

"M-my hat!" gasped Blake. "Hold on!"

"Buck up!"

"Stand firm!"

"Pway stick to it, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying the scene with his monocle jammed in his eye. "Don't give in!"

"Come and help!" roared Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Stick to it!" gasped Blake.

They hurled themselves at the door, and battled with the swooping wind. The gale raged through the passages and staircases of the School House, shrieking madly round every corner, and tearing away caps from pegs, and papers and books from tables. Voices yelled from a dozen directions.

"Shut that door!"

"Stop your silly tricks!"

"I'll come to you in a minute."

"Bai Jove! There will be twouble if you fellows don't get that door closed," D'Arcy remarked. "Buck up, you know, and put your beef into it."

"Come and help, you ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Shut that door!" came a roar from Darrel's study.

"All right, Darrel! Buck up, for goodness' sake, you chaps!"

A dozen juniors were jamming themselves against the door now. They forced it slowly shut in the teeth of the wind.

Arthur Augustus stood by and encouraged them.

"Bai Jove! You're gettin' on wipping!" he exclaimed.

"That's first-rate, you know! Now, then, all togethah, deah boys, and you'll do it, you will, weally. I am so sowwy I can't help you. Go ahead!"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

The door swung to. The juniors jammed their feet along it, to keep the wind, that was battering on the outside, from hurling it open. The weight of the door, and the force of the wind, required all their strength.

"Gussy—"

"Yaas, deah boy!"

"Come and fasten the door, while we hold it!" yelled Blake. "What are you standing there like a graven image for?"

"I wefuse to be compared to a gwaven image!"

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come and fasten the door!"

"Undah the cires—"

"While we hold it, you chump!"

D'Arcy gave the door a look. It was close up now, and if the heavy iron latch was lifted into place, it would be secure. There was no rain blowing in now, and the door was safe to approach.

"Vewy well, Blake!"

"Buck up!"

D'Arcy approached the door in a leisurely manner. It would not have been like him to hurry his movements. Haste and hurry did not assert well with the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Buck up!" shrieked Tom Merry. "We can't hold it long!"

"Vewy well, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus lifted his hand to the latch. But it was

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Come to London to see the Coronation.

at that precise moment that the juniors' resistance to the force of the wind gave way; the swell of St. Jim's had been a trifle too leisurely. The door swung a couple of feet open, and through the aperture came a perfect storm of wind and rain.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing in the direct path of it, as his hand fell away from the latch.

Splash!

A driving torrent of rain hurled itself upon the swell of St. Jim's, and he staggered back with a wild gasp.

"Ow! Gwreat Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake breathlessly. "You've got it!"

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! Yow!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy staggered against the wall. He was drenched to the skin, his white shirt was a limp rag, his elegant Eton jacket hung like a sack. The juniors roared with laughter, and as their efforts relaxed, the wind swept the door open, and they were hurled away.

"Oh!" gasped Tom Merry. "Ow! Ha, ha, ha! Yow!"

"Shut that door!"

Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, came out of his study. He frowned at what he saw in the hall.

"Come, come, you must not have the door open!" he exclaimed.

"We can't get it shut, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, I see?"

"Ow! I'm wet! Bai Jove! Gwool!"

Mr. Railton smiled as he glanced at D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's was a woeful-looking figure now. The stalwart House-master lent his shoulder to the task, and the door was forced shut and fastened. The wind, as if disappointed, howled and roared wildly past the door, and round the corners of the School House. The old ivy rattled and creaked and shook, and the rattle of window-frames answered.

"What a giddy storm!" said Tom Merry.

"Ow! I'm wet!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is all the fault of you wottahs—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall have to go and change!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You unsympathetic beasts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus squelched away upstairs to change his clothes. He was certainly right about the juniors being unsympathetic. They seemed to see only what was comic in D'Arcy's mishap; and they roared over it

CHAPTER 2.

A Fourth-Form Raid.

DINNER in the School House at St. Jim's that day was not a cheerful meal. Probably it was equally uncheerful over in the New House. The rain was dashing on the windows, and a cloudy mist hung over the school.

Stories were told of flooded roads, of broken telegraph-wires. It was such a storm as even Taggles the porter did not remember; and Taggles had been at St. Jim's practically from time immemorial. There was a legend to the effect that Taggles the porter had once, in the dim long ago, been a boy—but some of the juniors declared that they didn't believe it. Taggles was to them as much a part of St. Jim's as the old clock-tower, or the ivied walls, or the cut and defaced oaken desks in the Form-rooms.

Taggles had a long memory, but Taggles declared that he did not remember a rain-storm like this, ever since he had been at St. Jim's. He had known the Ryll in flood, but never so high as it was now—and it was rising higher. The boys felt a thrill as the news went round that the school boathouse was flooded. For the boathouse was on a higher level than the road to Rylcombe. If it was flooded, it could only be a matter of a very short time before the road was flooded, too. The road had been flooded before, long ago, so Taggles said. But it was a serious matter. It meant that St. Jim's would be cut off from the village and the railway—and the only communication with the outer world would be by means of the Head's telephone.

"My hat!" said Jack Blake, as the juniors came out after dinner. "If the road's really in flood, we shall be in a fix. What about grub?"

"Gwub?" repeated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Yes, grub!" said Blake. "St. Jim's isn't provisioned for a siege, you know, and we get our grub from the village and from the farms. If the road's flooded, the tradesmen's carts can't get here—and I suppose Sands, the grocer, for instance, won't come swimming here with a bundle of bacon-rashers held in his teeth."

"Weally, Blake——"
 "We shall be in danger of starvation," said Blake solemnly,
 "and in case we have to resort to cannibalism, like chaps in
 an open boat at sea——"

"Weally——"
 "I think it ought to be settled that Gussy is to volunteer."
 "Look here——"
 "Gussy isn't very fat, except about the head, but——"
 "I wefuse to listen to these wibald wemarks, Blake. I suppose
 the Head will have laid in a lot of provisions at the first
 sign of dangah of the woad bein' flooded."
 "Come to think of it, I dare say that's so," said Blake.
 "We sha'n't need your services after all."
 "I weward you as an ass."

"What on earth are we going to do this afternoon?" said
 Blake, yawning. "I get indigestion if I stick indoors after
 dinner. Digby is a jolly lucky bargee to be away from St.
 Jim's at a time like this."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Cricket will be off for the next thousand years, I suppose,"
 grunted Blake, who was given to exaggerate when he
 was exasperated. "I think this weather is rotten! A fellow
 can stand some rain, but this is going too far. I'm fed up."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Hallo, Lumley! Doing anything this rotten afternoon?"
 Jerrold Lumley-Lumley stopped, with a nod. Lumley-Lumley,
 once known as the Outsider of St. Jim's, was seldom
 called the Outsider now. He was going steadily on his way
 to becoming respected and popular, though there were
 fellows in the Fourth who said that the Outsider was only
 biding his time, and that he would break out again worse
 than ever. That would have been difficult, for Lumley-Lumley
 had been undoubtedly a first-class blackguard in his
 earlier days at St. Jim's. But the better-natured boys
 admitted that it was due to his peculiar training, and that he
 had of late shown what really good qualities there were
 in his nature.

"I'm doing nothing, I guess," said Lumley-Lumley, who
 had never lost that American trick of speaking. "It's a
 frightful bore."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 Blake stretched himself.
 "I think I shall get up a row with somebody," he said.
 "I can't stand doing nothing. Are you spoiling for a fight,
 Lumley?"

"No," said Lumley-Lumley, laughing.
 "Are you, Gussy?"
 "Certainly not, deah boy."
 "Herries! I say, Herries, come and have a row with me,"
 said Blake imploringly. "You're an ass, you know, and
 your dog Towser is a regular tripehound."

Herries grinned.
 "I'm going to feed Towser now," he said. "You can go
 and eat coke."

"Going to feed Towser!" roared Blake. "In this rain,
 and three hundred yards at least to the kennels?"

"Yes," said Herries, stoutly.
 "Well, you're an ass!"
 "Towser would miss me if I didn't come," said Herries.
 "Besides, he wants his run, you know. A dog gets rotten
 if he's left in his kennel."

"A run! In this rain?"
 "Well, it is a bit thick," said Herries, glancing at the
 window. "But I'm going to put a mac. on, and wrap some-
 thing over my head. I shall cut across in no time, and get
 back——"

"But if you're taking Towser for a run——"
 "I was thinking of giving him a run in the house here——"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "You ass——"
 "Oh, I can't stop here jawing!" Herries declared, and he
 rushed off.

"My only hat!" said Blake. "There will be trouble if
 Herries brings that bulldog into the house! Why, he'll be
 mud from nose to tail, and——"
 "I object to Hewwies's dog, in any case. He has no
 respect whatevah for a fellah's twousahs."

Blake yawned.
 "Oh, blow your twousahs, and blow Towser, and blow
 Herries! What are we going to do? Let's go and have a
 row with the Shell."

"Weally, Blake——"
 "Come on, Gussy! No funking, you know."
 "It is impossible for a D'Arcy to funk anythin'," said the
 swell of St. Jim's loftily. "Howevah——"
 "Bother your 'howevers!' Come on——come on, Lumley!"
 Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"I guess I'm on," he remarked.
 "You see, I'm bored," said Blake. "Something must be
 done. A fellow can't be bored. The Shell are a cheeky lot
 of bounders. Let's make 'em sit up."

"Hear, hear!" said Levison of the Fourth.
 "Faith, and I'm wid ye!" said Reilly. "Come on,
 Mellish!"

Mellish hesitated.
 "I've got some lines to do," he said.
 Jack Blake gave a snort.
 "You mean you want to keep out of the row," he said.
 "Go and eat coke, Mellish! Come on, you fellows, and
 let's wipe up Tom Merry's study!"
 "Hurrah!"

A crowd of Fourth-Formers, gathering in numbers and
 noise as they proceeded, made their way to the Shell passage.
 D'Arcy caught Blake by the arm before they reached the
 study tenanted by the Terrible Three.

"Blake, deah boy——"
 "Come on!" said Blake.
 "I was thinkin'——"

"Don't start that now, Gussy. No good going in for a
 thorough change just before a study raid——"
 "You ass!"

"Come on!"
 "I was thinkin' that if we are goin' to waid the Shell, I
 had bettah wun and change my twousahs. These are wathah
 decent twousahs, and I don't want to have them mucked
 up, you know. I sha'n't keep you waitin' five minutes."

Blake chuckled.
 "You won't keep me waiting five seconds," he said.
 "Come on!"

"Weally, deah boy——"
 "Here we are!"
 Jack Blake hurled the door of the study open, and the
 Fourth-Formers rushed in pell-mell, with a wild yell.

CHAPTER 3.

Something Like a Row.

THE Terrible Three were at home.
 Tom Merry was looking out of the window into the
 rainy quad, with a gloomy shade on his brow, and
 his hands thrust deeply into his pockets. Manners was de-
 veloping some films in his daylight developer, and devoting
 all his attention to that object. Monty Lowther was stand-
 ing on the hearthrug looking at Manners's occupation, and
 whistling dismally.

The weather had a most depressing effect on the spirits of
 the chums of the Shell. It was not only that they couldn't
 get out to play the cricket match with Figgins & Co., of the
 New House—they couldn't get out at all. And to those
 cheerful and lively spirits confinement to the house on a
 half-holiday was torment itself.

The sudden irruption of the Fourth-Formers startled the
 Terrible Three. Tom Merry swung round from the window,
 and Manners looked up from his developer. Monty Lowther
 left off staring at Manners, and stared at the new-comers
 instead.

"Hurroo!" roared Reilly. "Go for 'em!"
 "Bump them!"
 "Down with the Shell!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry took his hands out of his pockets. Monty
 Lowther made a clutch at the poker. Manners roared.
 "Get out, you asses! You'll spoil my negative!"

Blake paused.
 "Negatives?" he asked. "What are they photographs
 of?"

"I've been taking Tom Merry and Lowther——"
 "Then the negatives are spoiled already, and they don't
 matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You chump——"
 "Wipe up the study!" said Blake. "We've come here for
 a row, you chaps. We're going to bump you for your cheek.
 How dare you be in the Shell while we're only in the Fourth?
 I can't stand swank! Go for 'em!"

"You utter ass——"
 "Wreck the study!" said Levison.

The Terrible Three lined up and hit out. Study raids were
 common enough in the junior passages, and they were not
 wholly taken by surprise. In a few seconds Tom Merry's
 study was the scene of a wild and whirling conflict.

D'Arcy's misgivings concerning his trousers were more
 than realised. Monty Lowther swung an inkpot round, and
 the contents of it splashed over three or four juniors, and
 D'Arcy among the rest. Ink in streams swamped over Gussy's
 waistcoat and trousers, and the unfortunate Fourth-Former
 gave a wild yell.

"Ow! Beast! Yah! Ass! My twousahs!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "My twousahs are wuined——"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go for 'em!"
 "Rescue, Shell!" roared Tom Merry.
 "My twousa—"
 "Rescue!"
 "Sock it to them!"
 "Hurrah!"
 "Buck up, Fourth!"
 "Rescue!"

There was a rush of footsteps in the passage as Kangaroo and Clifton Dane and Bernard Glyn, from the end study, came racing to the rescue. They piled into the study, where there certainly was not much room for them. They were followed by Gore, from the next study, and then Skimpole, and Taylor, and Mason, and Smith major. Fellows piled into the study till it was swarming, and there was "standing room only," as Monty Lowther would have said if he had had breath enough. But very quickly there was not even standing room, and the combatants rolled on the floor, and over the furniture, and over each other.

The table was over by this time, and Manners's developer was on the floor, the negatives in it presumably still developing. They were undoubtedly in the greatest peril of being over-developed. But Manners had forgotten even photography in his excitement. The swarming study was full of the trampling of feet, and yells of laughter, and yells of another sort.

"Go for 'em!"
 "Knock them out!"
 "Bai Jove!"
 "Ow!"
 "Go it!"

The afternoon had promised to be deadly dull, but Blake had certainly thought of an excellent means of causing some excitement.

There was excitement enough now in Tom Merry's study, and to spare.

A voice rang along the passage—a voice of authority. It was the voice of Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, but the excited juniors did not even hear it.

Kildare came striding along the passage.

He paused at the door of the study in amazement. Blake and Monty Lowther were pommelling each other in the doorway, and the study was crammed with struggling juniors.

The conflict, which had started in fun, seemed to be continuing in earnest.

"My hat!" ejaculated Kildare.
 "Go for 'em!"
 "Down with the Shell!"
 "Pile in, deah boys! Wipe them up! They've spoiled my twousahs!"
 "Yah!"
 "Go it!"
 "Take that!"
 "Ow! Wow!"
 "Stop this!" roared Kildare.
 "Phew!"
 "Kildare!"
 "Cave!"

The conflict died away.

It was not only because Kildare was captain of the school and head prefect of the School House that the juniors obeyed his voice so promptly—it was not merely the fact that he wielded the power of the cane. Kildare had an influence quite apart from his position. Fellows who disregarded other prefects never disregarded Kildare.

The row in Tom Merry's study ceased.

The dishevelled juniors stood gasping and panting, and looking very sheepishly at the captain of the school.

Kildare regarded them sternly.

"You noisy young rascals!" he exclaimed.

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief.

The handkerchief came away reddened.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, groping for his eyeglass. "I must say I agwee with Kildare—you are noisy wascals!"

"Well, of all the cheek—"

"Bai Jove! My monocle is bwoken!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"What is this row about?" demanded Kildare.

"It's about over!" said Lowther, deliberately misunderstanding.

The juniors grinned.

"Don't be funny, Lowther!" said Kildare. "What was the cause of it?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Tom Merry, at whom the St. Jim's captain seemed to be looking for information. "What was it about, Kangy?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Noble. "What was it about, Blake?"

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READ "HARRY WHARTON'S DOWNFALL," in this week's "MAGNET" LIBRARY, Now on Sale, Price One Penny.

"Blessed if I know!" said Blake. "What was it about, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Look here—" began Kildare.

"Oh, I can tell you!" said Lumley-Lumley, who was nursing his nose.

His nose was a very prominent feature upon his face always; but it seemed to have been increased in size since he had charged into Tom Merry's study with Blake & Co.

"Well, Lumley, what was it about?"

"The weather!"

"Eh?"

"I guess it was the weather," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Lumley!"

"I guess that's so," said Lumley-Lumley, with a grin.

"We were all spoiling for trouble, and I guess we found it!"

Kildare could not help laughing.

"You will take a hundred lines each!" he said. "They will help you to pass the time, as it seems to be so heavy on your hands."

"Oh!"

"You can do the lines after tea, however," said Kildare.

"At present you had better go and get yourselves a little tidy for the lecture!"

"The what?"

"It begins in five minutes."

"The—the what?"

"The lecture!" said Kildare severely. "If you hadn't been amusing yourselves in this peculiar way, you would have known that the Head has arranged to give a lecture this afternoon, and all those who have nothing to do are expected to attend. You had better go and get yourselves decent!"

And Kildare strode away.

"Bai Jove!"

CHAPTER 4.

Mellish is Sorry.

"B AI Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus.

The juniors looked at one another in dismay. They did not mind the lines so much; that was only to be expected. They had had a royal row, and they were willing to "face the music." But the Head's lecture—that was a thing they had not bargained for.

"It's wotten!" said D'Arcy.

"Beastly!" commented Lowther.

"Nice sights we are, to turn up at a lecture, I must say!"

"It's rotten!" exclaimed Gore angrily. "They've no right to make us attend a lecture on a half-holiday! It's a new thing altogether!"

"Well, it does seem a bit rotten," agreed Tom Merry, in accord with Gore for once. "I don't know what the game is."

"It's rotten—it's caddish!"

"Taking a rotten advantage of us!"

"Blessed if I'm going!"

"Faith, and I won't either!"

"Let's stay away in a body!"

"I'm game!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't be did!" he said. "The prefects would be sent to look for us. We shall have to turn up in Hall."

"It's tyranny!"

"Might as well be in Russia!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'd better get cleaned up, though," suggested the practical Manners. "We've got to go, and we can't turn up in Hall in this state!"

"Bai Jove, no!"

"Oh, come along, then!" growled Blake. "Look here, it's rotten, rotten, rotten!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors dispersed in an extremely discontented frame of mind.

It was true that they had been bored almost to tears by confinement in the House and the deadly dullness of the weather, and driven to study rows as a last resource for breaking the monotony.

But, all the same, they felt the infringement of their rights at the idea of a lecture being fixed on a half-holiday.

Rights were rights, anyway; and the juniors had a right to keep their half-holiday to themselves, and be bored as much as they liked. That was the way they looked at it.

Levison and Mellish and some more choice spirits of the Lower School were soon discussing the possibility and the advisability of getting up a "rag" in the lecture hall, and perhaps spoiling the whole affair for the Head.

"I suppose the old fellow is doing it for our good," said



"Mein poys," gasped Herr Schneider, making a wild leap upon the table. "I implores you mit yourselves, and to drive him out, after, ain't it!" (See page 10.)

Mellish, with a sneer, as he talked it over with Levison in the passage. "It's to prevent us from eating our heads off in idleness, you know, and quarrelling among ourselves. All the same, I'm not going to have my afternoon taken up."

"No fear!" said Levison.

"It's unjust, rotten, beastly!" said Crooke, of the Shell.

"Of course it is, and I don't care what his motives are!" said Mellish. "In my opinion, the old duffer— Ow!"

Mellish broke off as a hand descended upon his shoulder, and he was shaken till his teeth came together with a click.

"Ow! Yow! Groo!" he gasped. "Leggo! D'ye hear? Leggo, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry looked at him with blazing eyes.

"You cad!" he exclaimed, shaking away.

"Ow! Leggo!"

"What did you call the Head?"

"I called him an old duffer! Ow!"

"You worm!" said Tom Merry scornfully. "You'd squirm soon enough if he could hear you! You'll take it back—do you hear?—and say you're sorry!"

"I won't!" Mellish yelled.

"Then I'll jolly well make you sorry!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaroooh! Leggo!"

"Are you sorry?"

"No, you beast!"

Tom Merry shook the cad of the Fourth till his teeth rattled. Mellish was, as a matter of fact, quite as big as Tom Merry, and there was no reason why he should not have put up a fight, excepting that he had not the courage. He wriggled in the grasp of the hero of the Shell.

"Now then, are you sorry, Mellish?"

"Yah! No!"

Shake, shake, shake!

"Are you sorry for speaking caddishly of the Head?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"Are you awfully sorry?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Groo! Yes!"

Tom Merry released the cad of the Fourth. Mellish gasped for breath, and clutched at his rumpled collar to put it straight.

"Thank you, Merry!" said a quiet, deep voice.

Tom Merry started and swung round.

An imposing figure in cap and gown stood there.

It was the Head!

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NEXT WEEK:

"THE SCHOOL WITHOUT MASTERS."

CHAPTER 5.

The Lecture.

TOM MERRY flushed crimson.

He stood looking at the Head, with startled eyes and crimson face—dumb!

He had not had the faintest idea that the Head was near at hand when he took Mellish to task. Had he known it, nothing would have induced him to act as he had done.

He realised in a moment the unpleasant possibility that he might be considered as having acted after the manner of the "good boy" in a story-book, the goody-goody hero who always tries to be noble and succeeds in being priggish—a character that Tom Merry held in just horror.

Tom Merry was brave, manly, and fearless, and decent all through; but there was nothing about his character in the slightest degree tainted with priggishness.

"Thank you, Merry!" said the Head. "I am glad to learn that some juniors, at least, do not approve of hearing their head-master spoken of disrespectfully."

"Oh, sir! I—I didn't see you, and—and—"

The Head smiled.

Dr. Holmes was looking very pale and worn; he had not been well lately. He had a kind smile, which seemed to light up his whole face.

"There is nothing to be ashamed of, Merry," he said quietly. "You acted in a proper way. Boys should be ashamed of doing wrong; I hope that no boy under my care will ever be ashamed of doing right."

Tom Merry was silent.

Mellish stood trembling. He knew that the Head must have heard what he said as he came down the passage, and he was nearly sick with terror.

The Head looked at him sternly.

"It is you who should be ashamed, Mellish," he said. "I shall not punish you, as I will make no use of words overheard by accident. I trust that on reflection you will be ashamed of yourself!"

The Head walked on, with rustling gown.

"Oh!" gasped Mellish.

Crooke sneered.

"You knew the Head was there, Merry!" he said.

"I did not know."

Crooke shrugged his shoulders.

"It was a good stroke," said Levison. "You'll be in the Head's good books now, Merry—you'd be excused if you cut the lecture even. Lucky dog!"

Tom Merry breathed hard.

"I did not know the Head was there," he said. "I never saw him, any more than you did. I wouldn't have said a word to Mellish if I'd known. I don't want to curry favour with the Head. You confounded sneering rotter." Tom Merry broke out angrily, "you know I didn't know he was there!"

Levison grinned.

"I don't blame you—" he began.

"It was clever!" said Crooke.

"Jolly clever!" sneered Mellish.

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

"You know you're lying," he said. "You know I didn't know the Head was there. Say another word like that, and I'll begin on you—three at a time, if you like!"

"Oh, I'm done!" yawned Levison. "There have been enough rows this afternoon, and we've got to get to the lecture, too. The Head's gone in!"

And the three young rascals sauntered away, grinning to one another. Tom Merry was left standing with a red and angry face.

Tom Merry was one of the best-tempered fellows in the School House, but he was very angry now. He knew that Levison & Co. would make what capital they could out of what had happened. They would try to represent him as trying to curry favour with the Head, and that was a thing so foreign from Tom Merry's nature that it stung him more deeply than anything else they could have done.

"Coming to the lecture?" asked Monty Lowther, joining him in the passage. "Hallo, what's the matter?"

"Nothing," said Tom Merry, rather shortly.

"Nose hurt?"

Tom Merry rubbed his nose.

"Yes, a little," he said. "It's nothing."

"Come on, then."

The chums of the Shell proceeded to the lecture-hall. A crowd of juniors were going the same way.

Many of them bore the signs of the late combat in the Shell study. All of them were looking discontented.

Whether there was anything to do or not, all of them resented having their half-holiday taken up in this manner. It was not a very reasonable attitude; but youths of fifteen and under are not the most reasonable persons in existence.

Gore, and Mellish, and Levison, and others were talking

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in whispers of "ragging" the Head as much as they dared, during the lecture.

As a rule, Tom Merry would have been very much down on that kind of thing.

Now he was silent.

After the incident in the passage, he was somewhat inclined to join in any unruliness himself, if only to show the fellows that he didn't want to curry favour with the Head—a weakness on his part; but no one is without weakness at times.

The seniors were taking the lecture more good-humouredly than the juniors. Knox and Sefton, who had been arranging to have a little secret smoke in their study, were looking bad-tempered. But most of the Upper School seemed to welcome the lecture as a relief from the dull monotony of the rainy afternoon.

"It's jolly decent of the Head!" Darrel was heard to say. "I know he's not well—he has been seedy for days. I know the doctor from Rylcombe is seeing him. He's going to give the lecture to help us out through the afternoon."

Kildare grinned.

"The youngsters don't seem to appreciate the kindness of it," he remarked, with a glance at the discontented faces.

"Ungrateful little beggars!" said Darrel.

The New House fellows were crowding into the lecture-hall. Figgins & Co., of the New House, looked as glum as the School House fellows. Fatty Wynn, it is true, was not so glum as the others, which was probably due to the fact that Fatty Wynn had brought a bag of tarts under his jacket, to be consumed surreptitiously during the lecture.

"Hallo, Figgy!" said Blake. "You chaps are in for it, too?"

Figgins grunted.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"The whole school's got it in the neck," said Fatty Wynn.

"Have you chaps brought anything to eat?"

"Bai, Jove, no!"

"You should," said Fatty Wynn. "I hear that the lecture is on the history and antiquities of St. Jim's. I've got a bag of tarts, and if I can get into a quiet corner I shall get to sleep when I've eaten them. Nothing like jam tarts for making you sleepy."

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Well, I can't go to sleep," said Blake. "I've a jolly good mind to stamp on the floor, though. Don't see why we should be dragged in here."

"Wathah not!"

"Oh, rats!" said Kerr.

"Eh?"

"Rats!" repeated Kerr serenely. "I'll be bound it'll be a jolly good lecture; and the subject's interesting enough, ain't it?"

"Yes; but—"

"It's having our half-holiday taken away, you see."

"Well, what were you going to do with your blessed half-holiday?" demanded Kerr.

"I don't know—"

"Mooch about and bite your nails, I suppose?" said the Scottish junior, with a sniff. "You ought to be jolly glad to get a decent lecture to come to, instead!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wats, and many of them!"

"I fancy you're alone in your views, Kerr," sniffed Kangaroo.

"The majority's against you, my boy," said Figgins.

Kerr sniffed.

"Well, you know what Ibsen says: 'The majority's always in the wrong,'" he replied.

"My hat! The young beggar reads Ibsen—"

"Bai Jove, you know, I couldn't read that, you know!"

"No!" said Kerr sarcastically. "Jack the Giant-killer' is more in your line, Gussy!"

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Silence, there!"

"The Head!"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Blake.

Then there was something like silence.

CHAPTER 6.

The Rag.

DR. HOLMES was on the platform, now. The Head looked very pale, and his pallor reminded the juniors of the fact that he had been under the doctor's hands for the past week. The Head was a robust man, considering his years, but he was a hard worker. If he did not feel up to the mark, it was hard to persuade him to leave his duties. He was likely to die in harness. He continued to take the Sixth Form, and to perform the services in the chapel, instead of taking the rest that the

medical man recommended. For the past two or three days, however, he had left the Sixth Form to Mr. Railton, though he still continued his duties in chapel. The fellows who were near enough to the Head to see his face clearly, could see under what stress he was labouring at the present moment. He was in no fit state to give the lecture in the school-hall, and he had evidently nerved himself for it by a great effort.

But the juniors, crowded in the back of the hall, saw nothing of the Head save his gown and a glimmer of his face. They knew it was the Head, and that was all. He was far from them, and the light was not good.

They saw him taste from the glass of water that stood ready for him, and then face his audience.

Then Gore and Mellish, simultaneously, began to stamp on the floor.

Stamp—stamp!

The sudden sound echoed very audibly through the hall, and there was a general turning of heads to see who was the cause of it.

As if it had been a signal, the stamping was taken up in various parts of the hall.

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley stamped harder than anyone, careless if he was detected. In turning over a new leaf as regarded his conduct, the Outsider of St. Jim's had not lost his old reckless hardihood of character.

Crooke and several other fellows answered back to stamping by scuffling their feet, and then, one by one, the other fellows joined in the rag.

Stamp—stamp! Scuffle—Scuffle!

The noise was great, and it was growing.

The Head did not speak.

He stood looking at the audience, as if startled and confused by the sudden beginning of the rag.

Never before had the juniors dared to rag the Head.

Other masters had sometimes come in for such attentions, but the general respect felt for the Head prevented any demonstration of the kind in his case.

It was not considered the "thing" at St. Jim's to show disrespect to the Head of the college.

But, as a matter of fact, the whole school was in a state of nerves at this time. The endless rain, day after day, necessitating confinement to the house, had caused depression, weariness, and bad temper. The moist atmosphere, too, had a lowering effect upon everyone. The Head, himself, was unwell. The boys were all in a state of nerves and nervous depression, easily capable of turning to unwholesome excitement and ill-humour.

Hence this outbreak, unprecedented in the history of St. Jim's.

Among the juniors, Tom Merry, as a rule, would have stood up for order—in any case where the Head was concerned.

But owing to the unfortunate incident in the passage, Tom Merry did not feel in the mood to interfere now.

He was more inclined, as we have said, to take part in the rag, to show that he was not "sucking up" to the masters, as Mellish would put it.

He did not take part. But he sat quite still and silent, with his eyes straight before him, saying no word.

The excitement grew.

For a full minute the masters and prefects, taken by surprise, allowed the disturbance to go on uninterrupted.

In that minute it grew and grew, and the noise became deafening.

Stamp, scuffle, thump, whistle, and murmur!

The lecture-hall echoed with disorderly sound.

Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, sprang to his feet.

"Silence!" he shouted.

No notice was taken.

The disturbance continued.

"Silence!"

Still the noise continued.

Mr. Railton came striding down the hall with an angry brow.

Then it ceased.

By the time the School House-master was upon the spot, all the juniors were sitting quietly, with demure expressions upon their faces.

Mr. Railton cast a flashing glance round.

"How dare you make this disturbance!" he exclaimed.

There was a faint murmur.

"What is the matter with you? How dare you treat the Head with such gross disrespect!" the House-master exclaimed indignantly. "I am ashamed of you!"

"We want our half-holiday!" piped a voice from the back.

Mr. Railton swung in the direction of the voice.

"Who spoke?"

There was no answer.

"I command the boy who spoke to step out!"

No one stirred.

The School House-master bit his lip. It was evident that the speaker did not mean to own up, and that the other fellows would not betray him.

"Keep silence here!" said the House-master. "Any boy creating any further disturbance will be punished!"

Again a murmur.

Mr. Railton affected not to hear it, and returned to his place.

Dr. Holmes had stood with one hand resting upon his table while this was going on. The Head was evidently not himself. In his normal state of health, he would have dealt very promptly with the insubordination. Now he allowed it to pass. And this slackness, of which the disturbers did not realise the cause, emboldened them.

"The Head hasn't said a word!" whispered Blake.

"He hasn't a word to say!" sniffed Kangaroo. "He knows we're being done out of our half-holiday!"

"Just so!" agreed Manners.

"It's rotten!"

"Unjust!"

"He's just going to begin."

"So are we!" grinned Gore.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head had opened his lips to speak. But even as the first words came forth, the disturbance recommenced.

Scuffling of feet was followed by loud murmuring, and even hissing.

The Head started.

"My boys!" he exclaimed.

But his words were lost in the din.

"Keep it up!" grinned Crooke. "We'll make him sick of the lecture before he's started it! Go it!"

"Stamp away!"

"Yah! Yah! Boo!"

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! I wegard this, on reflection, as bein' in wotten bad form, you know."

"Rats!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Shut up, D'Arcy!"

"Go it, you chaps!"

"I pwotest. It's wotten, bad form to wag the Head, and I uttably wufuse to have anythin' to do with it."

"Oh, ring off!"

"I wufuse to wing off. I—"

"Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The noise grew deafening again. Mr. Railton came down the hall, looking like a thundercloud. Several prefects came with him. The noise died away.

"The prefects will stay here, among the juniors, and keep order, as the Lower School seems intent upon behaving in this disgraceful manner," said the School House-master, his voice trembling with anger.

"Bai Jove!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Blake suddenly. "Look at the Head!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Look!"

Every eye was turned upon Dr. Holmes, as he stood at the table, supporting himself there with his hand on the edge. The stately form of the doctor was seen to sway unsteadily.

"He's ill!"

"Hold him!"

"Good heavens!"

Darrel of the Sixth leaped upon the platform.

He was just in time to catch the swaying form of the doctor as he fell.

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NEXT
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CHAPTER 7.

Cut Off.

At a moment the St. Jim's lecture-hall was in wild confusion.

Darrel had lowered the doctor to the platform, and was supporting the grey head upon his knee, and calling for assistance.

In a few seconds Mr. Railton reached him.

"Dr. Holmes! My dear doctor!"

The Head looked at him dizzily.

"Get me away from this," he murmured.

"Help me, Darrel—Kildare—Rushden!"

"Yes, sir."

The seniors gathered round the Head. He was raised from the floor, and stood feebly upon his feet. With the aid of the House-master and the prefects, he was half-led, half-carried from the lecture-hall by the door at the upper end.

The hall was left in confusion.

Everybody was talking at once, and nobody was listening.

The strange attack of the Head had taken the whole school by surprise.

Everyone remembered now that he had been unwell during the past week, and that he had looked "seedy" as he came into the lecture-hall.

Had the effort been too much for his strength, added to the painful excitement caused by the rag?

The authors of the rag could have kicked themselves hard, now, as Monty Lowther miserably remarked.

They were all anxious to exculpate themselves, not so much in the eyes of others, as in their own eyes.

"I didn't know he was ill," said Blake. "I mean, I'd forgotten, and I never thought it was anything serious."

"I didn't, either."

"Never thought about it."

"Bai Jove, wathah not!"

"It's rotten."

"I wonder if he's bad."

"It was caddish to treat him like that, anyway," grunted Blake. "He's been a jolly good Head-master to us, and treated us a lot better than we deserve."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Poor old chap!"

"Hallo! Here comes Railton."

"He's going to speak! Shut up, ye fellows, let's hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Mr. Railton came back into the hall, and the voices died away into silence. There was a dark cloud on the House-master's face.

He held up his hand.

"I hope that those who have been guilty of this wretched disturbance will feel a sense of shame now!" he exclaimed.

Dead silence.

"The Head is ill—very ill—much more so than was supposed, and what has happened here to-day has brought matters to a climax. That is all I have to say. You are dismissed; there will be no lecture. Keep as quiet as you can."

"Yes, sir."

The juniors were strangely silent.

The whole crowd quitted the lecture-room. The threatened lecture was "off," with a vengeance.

But no one felt pleased at that.

The juniors, especially, were not in a humour to be pleased. The Head was ill—very ill—and they had chosen that very time for treating him as he had never been treated before—with open disrespect.

Their cheeks were burning, and their eyes were downcast as they crowded in silence out of the lecture-hall.

Mr. Railton had his wish. Those who had taken part in the disturbance were undoubtedly feeling thoroughly ashamed of themselves.

Even Mellish and Crooke and Levison had nothing to say. It would have been dangerous for them to air their usual opinions at that moment. The juniors were in no humour for Mellish's sneers or Crooke's cynical remarks.

Silence had fallen upon all.

The Head was ill!

How ill, they did not know; but they could guess, from Mr. Railton's tone and manner, that it was serious.

The rain was still beating incessantly upon the windows; the weather still lowered gloomily over the school, but the juniors were not thinking of that now. They were not thinking of drenched cricket-fields and abandoned matches. They were thinking of their Head-master, lying in his room, awaiting the doctor from Rylcombe.

Their cheeks flushed with shame as they thought of that scene in the lecture-hall, and of the Head standing there, his faint voice dying away under the disturbance.

"It's rotten," Tom Merry said, as he stood at the hall

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window, with his hands in his pockets, looking out gloomily into the drenching rain. "Beastly!"

"We're all sorry about it," said Lowther.

"Yes, I know; but—"

"But that doesn't undo it," said Manners. "It's a rotten shame! But you didn't have anything to do with it, Tom; you were sitting as mum as a mummy all the time."

"I ought to have helped stop it."

"Oh, rats! You couldn't know the Head was seedy. I hope he isn't very bad. I wonder when the doctor will get here?"

"That's what I'm thinking of," Tom Merry said quietly.

"The doctor!"

"Yes. How is he to get here?"

"How is he to get here?" repeated Manners. "I suppose he will come in his trap, as usual."

"He can't. The road's flooded."

"My hat! I'd forgotten that."

"I dare say a trap could get through the flood," said Monty Lowther. "It can't be very deep on the road."

"He hasn't been here to-day," said Tom Merry. "He usually came in the mornings to see the Head. He hasn't been to-day. I fancy the road's stopped."

"The telephone was going in the Head's study this morning, too," Lowther remarked thoughtfully. "The doctor may have phoned to him that he couldn't come. But he'll manage to get through, as soon as he knows that Dr. Holmes is really worse, and in a serious state."

"Yes, I suppose he will manage it somehow then."

Lumley-Lumley joined the chums of the Shell. His face was very gloomy.

"Rotten, isn't it?" he said.

"About the row? Yes."

"I was as bad as anybody," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. "I don't deny it. But I never knew that the Head was rocky. I wouldn't have done a whisper if I'd known."

"Nobody would, I fancy."

"I guess so. We're all in the same boat. What's going to be done about getting a doctor here?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"Mr. Railton has phoned to Dr. Taylor."

Lumley-Lumley shook his head.

"Then you haven't heard?" he said.

"Heard—what?"

"The wires are broken, owing to the flood," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Broken!" Tom Merry exclaimed, catching his breath.

"Yes."

"Then we're out off!"

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"Yes, cut off. There's no way of getting to Rylcombe—of sending word to anyone, excepting by the road."

"And that's impassable," said Monty Lowther.

"I guess so."

And then the juniors stared out of the window gloomily. St. Jim's was cut off from the outer world—until the floods should subside.

What was going to be done?

CHAPTER 8

Towser is Taken In.

HERRIES had missed the scene in the lecture-hall. He had been feeding Towser, and in that absorbing occupation he had forgotten all about the promised lecture for the afternoon. Towser was in a state of depressed spirits, like everybody else at St. Jim's. Towser missed his usual exercise, and Towser looked very doleful as he blinked at the rain. He turned up his nose at his food, and hardly condescended to touch a mouthful, much to Herries' concern.

But Herries had made up his mind what to do. He released Towser from his kennel, and led him towards the School House. In that blinding rain it was impossible to take a run in the open air, but Herries knew what he could do. Why shouldn't Towser have his little run along the endless passages of the School House?

There was no reason that Herries could see, unless it was a reason that dogs were not allowed in the School House. It was a special occasion; besides, Herries refused to recognise that as a reason at all.

Besides, why should anybody know?

Herries remembered—a little too late—that a lecture was impending. Everybody would be in the lecture-hall—he would really have the School House to himself.

Nothing could be better—the moment could not have been more judiciously chosen. Herries bent his head to the wind, and rushed off towards the School House with Towser.

The rain came drenching down.

Herries had a macintosh on, and thick boots, and a cycling-

cape wrapped over his head; but he was considerably wet before he reached the house. As for Towser, he was soaked, and covered with thick mud from nose to tail.

But Towser didn't care.

In spite of the rain, he was rejoicing in his freedom, and trying to run round and round Herries in his delight.

He succeeded in tripping Herries up once, and smothering him with mud; but Herries didn't mind. He reached the School House, and entered by the side door which gave access to the Form-room passage.

Towser seemed unwilling to come in. Herries coaxed him in finally, and closed the door. Then he shook a shower of raindrops off.

"My hat!" murmured Herries. "I think I'd better get him up to the study and give him a rub down before he has his run."

It really seemed advisable. Towser was reeking with rain and mud, and he left a muddy trail wherever he moved. Herries dragged him off to the stairs, and thick mud was left on every step trodden by Towser.

To Herries' surprise, fellows were standing about the passages and staircases. Some of them said things about Towser.

"Oh, rats!" said Herries. "Why ain't you fellows at the lecture?"

"Haven't you heard?" asked Clifton Dane.

"Heard rats!" said Herries. "I've been feeding Towser. I've no time for lectures."

"The lecture's off."

"All the better."

"The Head's ill."

"The Head?"

"Yes, fainted in hall."

"I'm jolly sorry for that," said Herries. "All right, Towsy, I'm coming!"

And he piloted the bulldog upstairs. Herries had expected to have Study No. 6 to himself, while he gave Towser his rub down. He opened the study door, and found Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sitting there. Digby, usually the fourth occupant of the study, was abroad.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his head, and seemed almost petrified at the sight of the muddy bulldog.

D'Arcy had, of course, changed his clothes since the row in Tom Merry's study, and excepting for a slight swelling on his aristocratic nose, he looked the elegant swell of St. Jim's once more.

"Bai Jove, Hewwies!" he ejaculated. "What do you mean by bringin' that howwid beast here, you howwid ass?"

"I'm going to give him a rub down."

"The study will want a rub down, after you've done it," said Blake.

"I suppose I can't leave him like that."

"Oh, sling him out of the window!" Blake suggested.

"Ass!"

"Bai Jove, I wefuse to have that howwid bulldog wubbed down in this study!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "It will make the place howwid. You are bound to splash somethin' or somebody."

"You can get out."

"I wefuse to get out. You can hardly expect me to wefire in favah of a beastly bulldog, Hewwies."

"Then lend a hand, and make yourself useful," said Herries crossly. "Get me something to rub Towser down with."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Your silk muffler will do."

"You uttah' ass!"

"Well, some handkerchiefs, then."

"I wefuse to discuss such a widiculous suggestion."

"Shut up, then!" said Herries. "Give me a duster, Blake."

Blake grinned, and handed Herries a duster. Towser certainly needed a rub down, but he did not seem to be in a humour for it. He twisted and wriggled as Herries started operations.

"Quiet, old dog!" said Herries. "It's for your good, you know. Quiet, old doggy! Isn't it wonderful, you chaps, how he obeys the slightest sound of my voice?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Quiet, Towsy!"

Towser made a snap at the duster, and wriggled himself away, and rushed under the table.

"Towser! You beast—I mean old doggy! Towsy! Come out!"

Towser declined to come out.

"Towser! Towsy!"

Towser did not budge.

"Wonderful!" said Blake, winking at the ceiling. "Amazing how he obeys the slightest sound of your voice! Hem!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Herries crossly. "I like a

dog with some independence of character. Towser isn't one of your sneaking mongrels that do just as they're told. Come out, Towser, old boy! Come on!"

"Poke him out with the pokah," suggested D'Arcy.

Herries glared at him.

"You fathead!"

"Weally, Hewwies—I was only makin' a suggestion."

"Towsy, old boy!"

G-r-r-r!

"I should weally wecommand the pokah—"

G-r-r-r!

"Shove your hand under the table and pull him out, Blake."

"No fear!" said Blake promptly.

Herries snorted.

"I suppose you're not afraid of his biting, are you?" he exclaimed.

"Why don't you pull him out yourself, then?" demanded Blake.

Herries did not appear to hear the question.

"Towsy, old boy! Come out, Towsy!"

G-r-r-r-r!

"Better lift the table away," said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! Pway get that beastly bulldog out of the studay as soon as poss."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Lend a hand with the table, and don't jaw," said Herries.

The juniors grasped the table, and lifted it away. It tilted a little in the process, and some books and an inkpot slid off upon the floor; but Herries said that could not be helped.

Towser was disclosed; and Herries made a dive to get hold of the chain attached to his collar. Towser dodged, and his master rushed round the study after him.

"Shut the door, Blake," gasped Herries.

But Towser was first—even if Blake had been inclined to shut the door, and keep him in—which he certainly wasn't. Towser rushed out of the study, and Herries rushed after him, and then Blake shut the door.

"Bettah lock it," suggested Arthur Augustus, with a grin.

And Blake grinned, too, and locked it.

CHAPTER 9.

Herr Schneider Makes Terms.

"WHAT'S that blessed row?" exclaimed Manners peevishly.

Everybody seemed to be peevish just now in the School House. It was the same in the New House. There was a rumour that Figgins and Marmaduke Smythe had been pommelling one another over there, but perhaps it was only a rumour. In the School House, certainly, fellows seemed inclined to grow snappish on the smallest provocation. Manners had great causes of provocation, personally. The negatives he had been developing when the Fourth-Formers invaded the study had remained in the developer for a couple of hours, with the result that the unfortunate photographer had to throw them away. It was no wonder that Manners was peevish.

There certainly was a row in the passage, too—fellows running and calling. Tom Merry grunted as he rose from the armchair.

"Sounds like a dog loose," he said.

"Young Wally with his blessed Pongo, I suppose," snorted Lowther.

"Or Herries and Towser."

"Oh, even Herries wouldn't be ass enough to bring Towser into the house on a day like this," said Manners.

"I'll soon see," Tom Merry remarked, and he opened the study door.

"Stop him!"

It was Herries calling. Towser was dashing along the passage with chain trailing and clinking. Perhaps he thought Tom Merry had opened the study door on purpose to afford him a refuge. At all events, he dashed in.

"Stop him!"

"My hat!" exclaimed Lowther, jumping up. "Keep that beast out! He's smothered with mud! Kick him out!"

"Towser! Get out! Shoo!"

"Shoo!"

"Shoo!"

But Towser declined to be "shooed" out.

He retreated into a corner and growled, and showed a set of teeth that might well have made a foe hesitate.

"M-m-my hat!" said Manners. "What a savage-looking beast! Herries had better come and tako him out."

"Yes, rather!"

"Shoo!"

"Shoo!"

"You can't shoo him out—you'll have to boot him out," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't be funny!" implored Manners. "Ain't the weather bad enough, without being funny, too!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, rats—"

"Cheese it, both of you!" said Tom Merry. "No need to rag one another because it's raining. Get the stump out of the corner, Lowther, and we'll drive the beast out."

"Get your bat."

"Good!"

Armed with a bat, a stump, and the fire-shovel, the three chums advanced upon Towser.

Towser growled.

Herries arrived panting at the study door.

"Let my dog alone!" he roared.

"Take your blessed dog away, then," said Lowther.

"Towser, old boy!"

Towser growled. Herries coaxed him.

"Come on, old boy—this way, Towser! Good dog!"

Towser blinked at him and sat tight. Herries advanced upon him cautiously, and caught hold of the chain. Towser made a sudden jump, and jerked it out of his hand, and dashed out of the study.

"Stop him, Kangy."

Kangaroo wisely did not attempt to stop Towser. He would certainly have been smothered with mud, and very probably bitten. Towser raced off, with a crowd of juniors after him. The Terrible Three joined in the chase. If Towser were not recaptured, there would very likely be trouble for Herries. It was not the first time Herries had got into trouble for bringing his bulldog into the School House.

"Oh, you duffers!" shouted Herries. "Why don't you stop him?"

"Faith, and why don't you?" exclaimed Reilly.

"Oh, don't jaw!"

"Mein Gott! Vat is tat after?"

Herr Schneider, the German-master of St. Jim's, who had his quarters in the School House, came out of his study.

The fat German was short-sighted, and he did not see clearly anything excepting that some sort of a chase was going on in the corridor.

"Poys," he shouted, "stop mit yourselves! Tat you stop tat running after! You was hear me, ain't it, mit yourselves!"

"Stop him!"

"Ach! Mein Gott!"

Herr Schneider jumped clear of the floor as Towser rushed towards him.

He made one wild bound back into his study.

Towser rushed in after him.

It was the natural instinct of the dog to pursue whatever was running, and he dashed after Herr Schneider as a matter of course.

The fat German-master rushed round his table and turned, panting; but Towser followed him round, with gleaming teeth and fiery eyes.

Whether Towser would have used his teeth on the fat limbs of the German-master is a question. But Herr Schneider certainly thought that he was going to use them.

He dashed round the table, with Towser snorting almost at his heels.

The juniors reached the door of the study, and stood gazing in amazement.

Herr Schneider would never have been taken for a sprinter, but certainly he seemed to develop a wonderful turn of speed as he raced round the study table.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Go it, Schneider!" yelled Lumley-Lumley.

"Go it, Towser!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Towser came up with the gasping German. Herr Schneider felt rather than heard him just behind, and he made a wild leap upon the table. The fat German would never have suspected himself of such activity—but terror lent it him. He landed on his hands and knees on the table, knocking books and inkstand, papers and German dictionaries and grammars flying in a shower on all sides.

There he remained, while Towser dashed round the table, growling with disappointment, apparently puzzled to know what had become of his enemy.

Herr Schneider cast an imploring glance towards the door.

"Mein poys," he gasped, "drive him out mit himself, ain't it, before! I implores you mit yourselves, and to drive him mit you out, after, ain't it!"

Herr Schneider's English was mixed, but his meaning was clear.

Herries came shouldering his way through the grinning crowd at the study door and strode in.

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"Herries," gasped Herr Schneider, "tat is your tog! You have done ferry wrong to pring him into te house mit himself before; but if you get him away I pardons you!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Herries succeeded in getting his feet on the trailing chain and stopping Towser. Then he got a grip on the collar. Instantly all Towser's fullness vanished, and he became perfectly quiet and obedient.

"Come on, Towser!"

Herries led the bulldog from the room. Tom Merry closed the door; but through the closed door came the sound of chuckles in the passage.

Herr Schneider was as red as a beetroot as he descended from his undignified perch upon the table.

"Mein Gott!" he murmured.

He regretted that hasty promise to Herries. But a promise was a promise, and Herr Schneider felt that he could not retract it now. But he mentally promised Herries some very close attention in the near future.

"You'd better get that beast out of the house while you've got him, Herries," Tom Merry remarked.

Herries grunted.

"I'm going to give him a rub down."

He tried the door of Study No. 6. It was locked, and Herries kicked vigorously at the lower panels.

"Open this blessed door!"

"Towser there?" came Blake's voice from within.

"Yes."

"Then we're not opening the door."

"Wathah not!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"But I want to bring Towser in!" shouted Herries.

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wats, deah boy!"

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

"Wats!"

Herries snorted.

"I suppose you don't mind if I come in and give him a rub down in your study, Tom Merry?" he remarked.

"Don't I?" said Tom Merry. "If you want him brained with a poker you can bring him into my study."

"I suppose you wouldn't mind, Lumley—"

"If he were brained? Oh, no!"

"If I bring him into your study!" roared Herries.

"I'll brain him myself if you do!"

"I say, Kangaroo—"

"Sorry, got an engagement!" said the Cornstalk, walking away down the passage.

"Gore, old chap—"

"See you another time," said Gore.

Herries looked round wrathfully at the grinning juniors. There seemed to be no takers for Towser.

Kildare came along the passage and settled the matter. He stopped and glared at Towser and at the mud he had plentifully spattered over the passage.

"Herries, take that dog back to the kennels, and write out a hundred lines of 'Virgil' for bringing him into the house!" rapped out the captain of St. Jim's.

"Oh!" said Herries.

And he departed with Towser.

The juniors watched him through the window. Towser was getting his run—Herries and the bulldog disappeared at top speed through the rain.

CHAPTER 10.

Lumley-Lumley's Fall.

"RAIN!"

It was still coming down!

Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's—seldom, as we said, called the Outsider now—came into his study, yawning dismally. It was the blackest half-holiday he had known at St. Jim's.

The Head lay sick in his own House. Taggles, the porter, had been sent to attempt to carry a message to Rylcombe, since it was discovered that the school telephone was cut off.

He had not yet returned. Few believed, however, that Taggles would succeed in getting through. The fellows were all feeling the Head's sickness keenly enough, and it reacted upon their spirits. Lumley-Lumley, who was always keenly alive to his very finger-tips, seemed to feel the general depression more than anybody else. He growled aloud as he came into his study with his hands in his pockets.

Mellish was there with Levison. There was a smell of tobacco in the study, and, from the way Mellish held his hand under the table, it was evident that he had just thrust a cigarette out of sight.

Lumley-Lumley frowned.

Time had been—and not so long ago—when Lumley-Lumley

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was leader and chief in this kind of thing; and his study in the Fourth Form passage was the centre of all the black-guardism that went on in the Lower School.

That time had passed.

Lumley-Lumley had changed; but his old associates had not done so. Lumley-Lumley had, however, reformed himself without becoming priggish. He advised the others to do the same, but he did not preach at them.

Some of his former followers had followed his example; but Mellish and Levison were not among them.

They seemed to take a delight in keeping up the old traditions of the "smart set" in the Lower School, and in annoying Lumley-Lumley on the subject; and as they shared the Outsider's study, they were able to do that very easily.

There was generally a scent of tobacco in the study, and it was a continual exasperation to the Outsider, especially as any suspicious prefect, knowing his old habits, might put his head into the study at an inopportune moment and jump to the conclusion that the black sheep of the Fourth had been smoking again and, in fact, relapsed into his old habits.

The two young rascals looked at Lumley-Lumley, with a sneer, as he came in.

"Will you have a cigarette?" asked Mellish, withdrawing his own smoke from concealment as he saw that the newcomer was only a junior.

"No," said Lumley-Lumley.

Levison drew a pack of cards out of his pocket, where he had hastily thrust them as the door opened.

"We were going to have a little game to while away the time," he said. "This weather is enough to drive a chap dotty. We can't get out, and nothing's going on indoors, and all the fellows are looking as solemn as owls because the Head's seedy. I'm sick of it, and I should think that you are! What do you say to a game of banker?"

"No."

"Oh, don't be righteous, you know!" yawned Levison. "Haven't you kept up this new game long enough? I never could stand good little Georgie!"

Lumley-Lumley flushed.

That was his tenderest spot, so to speak. He had strength of mind enough to lead a decent life, in spite of the past, but he dreaded being considered "goody-goody."

"Oh, shut up!" he said roughly.

"Been reading 'Alec; or, Bit by Bit' lately?" sneered Mellish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lumley-Lumley did not reply. He sat down and put his feet on the fender and opened a book.

"Play!" yawned Levison.

The young rascals began to play. They were playing for coppers, and a great many coppers changed hands, with silver among them.

The click of the money, and the swishing of the cards, woke old memories in Lumley-Lumley's mind.

He glanced up from his book more than once.

Levison caught his eye, and grinned. He knew what was passing in the Outsider's mind.

After that Lumley-Lumley kept his eyes fastened upon his book; but he was no longer reading.

The old thoughts, the old feelings, were coming back. At any other time Lumley-Lumley would have resisted; he would have driven the thoughts from his mind. If he could have gone out to the cricket-pitch or to the gym., or even dropped into Tom Merry's study for a chat, it would have been different.

But the time was well chosen for temptation. He was bored to death, and everybody else in the School House was bored to death.

The incessant rain made going out impossible; and as for a chat, the fellows had chatted with one another till every subject was worn threadbare, and they grew snappish with boredom.

"Hang it," said Levison suddenly, "you've cleared me out, Mellish!"

Mellish grinned.

"Only five bob!" he said.

"It's all I had."

"Borrow some of Lumley."

"Oh, Lumley-Lumley's turned too good to lend a chap a half-a-sov.!" said Levison.

"I'll lend you some tin if you like," said the Outsider, looking up.

"Good! You can have it on Saturday—or now, if I win."

With that fresh capital Levison started again. He was looking angry and anxious—the inevitable feelings roused in gamblers who cannot afford to lose it.

The game was changed to nap now, and Levison conned over his cards anxiously.

"Look here, Lumley," he said. "What would you call?"

Lumley-Lumley glanced at his cards. After all, he could do that without playing himself—in fact, it was only polite.

The junior was already beginning to juggle with his conscience. It was the first step downward.

"Make it nap," he said.

"Good! Nap!" said Levison.

Levison won. The luck had changed. The little pile of money lying before Mellish on the table gradually changed sides, and Levison grinned and returned the Outsider his loan of ten shillings. Mellish was not grinning now; he was scowling.

"Why don't you take a hand, Lumley?" urged Levison. "Three makes the thing livelier than two. This is rotten!"

"I don't play."

"Just for once! We don't get weather like this every day, you know, and a chap must do something to keep his blood in circulation."

Lumley-Lumley hesitated.

The old spirit was still strong within him. He had hitherto been able to keep it within bounds. But it was growing too strong for him now.

Levison, as if Lumley-Lumley had consented, dealt out cards for three. Mellish and Levison took up their hands.

"Waiting for you, Lumley!" said Levison, without looking round.

One moment more the Outsider hesitated, then he took up the cards. The tempter had won!

"Three!" said Mellish.

"Nap!" said Lumley-Lumley.

They played.

Lumley-Lumley was taking his last trick when the study door suddenly opened. The three juniors started to their feet. In their eagerness, they had not noticed the tap on the door, and it was immediately followed by the opening of the door.

Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, stood in the doorway, looking in.

CHAPTER 11.

The Black Sheep.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY groaned aloud. In an instant he realised what his conduct had cost him. The accusing glance of the House-master was not needed.

The fruits of long effort had been thrown away in that reckless moment. In Mr. Railton's eyes he was again the old Lumley-Lumley—again the reckless Outsider leading other fellows into wicked ways—once more the black sheep of the Fourth, hard-hearted, reckless, incorrigible.

He could read all that in one glance of the House-master's face.

Levison and Mellish were silent. Mellish was trembling, terrified almost out of his wits at being caught gambling by the House-master. Levison was cool, but his heart was sinking.

There was no possibility of disguise. There lay the cards on the table—the cards and the money.

Mr. Railton was silent for some moments.

"I am sorry to see this," he said at last.

"Oh, sir!"

"You have been gambling—playing cards for money!"

"Yes, sir," said Levison.

"Is this your promise, Lumley-Lumley?"

The Outsider bowed his head.

He was not so much to blame as the others. He had been tempted, and he had entered into the play with hesitation and misgivings. But in his worst days, Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was not the kind of fellow to shield himself behind others.

"I'm sorry, sir!" he faltered.

"You have said that before, Lumley!"

Lumley-Lumley winced.

"I know I have, sir," he said. "I—I suppose I haven't a right to expect you to believe me. But this is the first time since—since the time you were so kind to me, sir, and I stopped that kind of thing."

"The first time, Lumley?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you are going back to your old ways?"

"No, sir. I—I know I'm to blame," said the Outsider desperately. "I—I suppose I'm a fool! I don't ask not to be punished, sir."

"It is not a question of that, Lumley. You will certainly be punished. But I feel that you are not to be trusted! So long as you associate with the other boys you will lead them into temptation!"

Levison did not say a word.

One word from him would have cleared up that aspect of the case, but he did not choose to utter it. It was much better for him to be supposed to be the victim instead of the tempter.

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"THE SCHOOL WITHOUT MASTERS."

Mellish was equally silent. If the brunt of the punishment fell upon Lumley-Lumley, all the worse for the Outsider, and all the better for him.

Lumley-Lumley's lips opened and closed again.

Mr. Railton was watching him closely.

"Who was responsible among you for this play?" he asked.

"I guess we were all to blame, sir!"

"I know that, Lumley. But from your record, I cannot but consider that you were the worst. If the Head were not ill, I should take you before him at once. As it is, the matter will stand over until he has recovered. Meanwhile, I shall see that you have no opportunity of leading other boys in your Form astray. Mellish and Levison will occupy other studies for the present."

Mellish drew a deep breath, and Levison clicked his teeth. It was natural that Mr. Railton should take this view of the matter, yet it seemed to the chief delinquents too good to be true.

"You will leave this study to Lumley-Lumley," said Mr. Railton. "Kindly refrain from speaking to him again until you have permission!"

"Yes, sir," said Mellish.

"Each of you will take five hundred lines!" said Mr. Railton. "That is a light punishment for what you have done, but I am taking into consideration the fact that you were acting under the influence of that wicked boy! You will go into Hancock's study for the present, Mellish, and you, Levison, into Blake's!"

"Yes, sir."

"I trust, Lumley, that you will reflect over this, and if by any chance Dr. Holmes allows you to remain at this school, I hope the lesson will not be lost on you!"

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley did not reply.

He stood like one crushed.

Mr. Railton quitted the study, closing the door behind him. The three juniors looked at one another.

"You rotten cads!" said Lumley-Lumley.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"You've got it in the neck, and no mistake!" he remarked.

"If you'd been decent, you'd have owned up!"

"Owned up! To what?"

"Making me play!"

"I didn't make you play! I invited you. But I suppose you're old enough to know your own business, ain't you?" said Levison. "What rot! I couldn't make you play! You'd play of your own accord, or not at all!"

Lumley-Lumley burst into a bitter laugh.

"Quite right!" he said. "I guess you're right, too! I suppose I'm as big a blackguard as you are, if you come to that!"

"Look here, Lumley—"

"Shut up!" said Lumley-Lumley. "I've had enough of you, anyway!"

He picked up the cards, and flung them into the fire. Levison made a movement as if to save them, and Lumley-Lumley thrust him back.

"Stand off, you cad!"

"They're my cards!"

"Why didn't you tell Mr. Railton so?"

Levison was silent.

The cards burned up, and were consumed. Lumley-Lumley turned to the two cads of the Fourth with a bitter expression upon his face.

"Get out of my study!"

"Your study!"

"I guess you heard what Mr. Railton said. I'm not fit for good lads like you to associate with—I'm tainted! Anyway, this is my study now—mine alone till further orders! Get out!"

"I'll go when I choose!" said Mellish.

Lumley-Lumley threw open the door.

"You'll go when I choose!" he said.

Mellish did not move. The Outsider advanced towards him with his hands clenched, and Mellish sidled round the table. He slipped out at the door with a scowling face. Lumley-Lumley turned upon Levison.

"Are you going?"

Levison yawned.

"Oh, yes; I'm sure I don't want to stay! I can't say that I find your company either cheerful or beneficial! Sorry if you get expelled!"

And Levison stepped out of the study.

Lumley-Lumley clicked the door shut, and threw himself into a chair. The rain beat against the panes; the clouded sky was growing darker.

"I guess it's all over now!" Lumley-Lumley said miserably, staring into the leaping blaze of the fire. "What a fool I've been!"

He turned his head as a junior entered the study. It was Tom Merry. There was a keen and cheerful look upon

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Tom Merry's face as the firelight played upon it. It was very dusky in the study now, and the dancing firelight made the only illumination, and Tom Merry could not clearly see the face of the Outsider.

"Glad you're here, Lumley!" he exclaimed. "I've got an idea—if you're game!"

"Oh!"

Tom Merry peered at him in the dusk.

"Anything wrong?"

"Oh, no!"

"I thought your voice sounded queer."

"I guess it's nothing. Sit down and get on! What's the idea?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Shall I light the gas?"

"No. Sit down!"

Tom Merry sat down. He was wondering a little, and he could not help thinking that Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was out of sorts; but, after all, everybody at St. Jim's was out of sorts that day. The Outsider sat very quietly in the dusk, staring at the fire.

CHAPTER 12.

Yes or No?

TOM MERRY peered at Lumley-Lumley in the gloom of the study.

When a gleam of firelight played upon the Outsider's face, Tom Merry thought that it looked unusually pale.

But he could not be sure.

"Well, what is it?" asked Lumley-Lumley restlessly.

"Taggles has come back."

"He can't get through?"

"No."

"I guessed that was how it would be. I went up the tower before sundown, and looked with my field-glasses," said Lumley-Lumley. "The meadows are all under water, and it's deep on the lane."

Tom Merry nodded.

"So the message can't get through to the doctor?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"No," said the Shell fellow. "Taggles gave it up, and then Mr. Railton tried in the Head's dogcart. It was overturned in the flooded road, and he came back. And the horse was nearly drowned!"

"My hat!"

"It seems that it's impossible to get through," said Tom Merry; "and, as it's dark now, it will be harder. I don't know how Dr. Taylor will get here, even if a message gets through to him."

"Can he swim?"

"I don't know; but not that distance, certainly."

"What about a boat?"

"The water isn't deep enough for that. It's ten or twelve feet deep in the hollows, you see, and only six inches or a foot on the high ground. In two or three places the road is still above water. You remember the hill where we've free-wheeled down?"

"I remember."

"The Head is getting worse," said Tom Merry. "They say that the effort he made this afternoon quite knocked him up, and then the reception he got in the lecture-hall was the finishing touch."

"It was rotten."

"Beastly."

There was a short silence. Lumley-Lumley stared into the fire. Probably he was thinking more of his own troubles than of the Head's at that moment. He turned suddenly round to Tom Merry.

"You said you had an idea?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"About getting through to Rylcombe?"

"Yes."

"You want me to help you?"

"I thought of it."

"Go ahead!" said the Outsider tersely.

"I'm a good swimmer," said Tom Merry. "I don't want to swank, but you know that. I've taken the top swimming prizes in the Lower School, and beaten competitors from the Fifth. You're just as good, though you haven't gone in for it so much. You fished the miller's little girl out from the millstream; and a fellow who can swim there can swim pretty nearly anywhere, I think."

"Well?"

"We two might go together."

Lumley-Lumley drew a quick breath.

It was a startling proposition. Tom Merry was proposing something from which most of the St. Jim's fellows—seniors as well as juniors—would have shrunk; and small blame to them.

To face a dark, flooded road, in the heavy rain, on a dark night—it was no light task for anybody to undertake.

But there was something reckless and devil-may-care in it that just appealed to the nature of the reckless Outsider.

And Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was at that moment in a mood of reckless deeds. He had ruined himself at St. Jim's, he knew that.

It seemed to the remorseful, unhappy lad, at that moment, that he would have cared little even if the floods had swept him away to death.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Tom Merry anxiously. Lumley-Lumley looked at him in the darkness.

The firelight flashed up, and played upon his face, and showed it strangely pale and eager, the eyes strangely gleaming.

"Do you know what you are proposing?" he asked. "I think so."

"We may lose our way in the dark and the rain; we may get into the flooded fields; we may be swept into the river."

"I know that."

"When we turn our backs on the school, it may be for the last time," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley deliberately.

"We may be going to our death, Tom Merry."

"I know it."

"And you don't care?"

"Yes, I do care; but it's for the Head's sake."

"For the Head's sake?" repeated Lumley-Lumley.

"Yes."

Tom Merry felt a keen sense of disappointment. Knowing Lumley-Lumley's reckless nature as he did, he had imagined that the Outsider would leap at this reckless adventure. The Outsider was the only fellow he would have asked, for the Outsider was the only swimmer in the Lower School whose powers equalled Tom Merry's. And swimming would be needed more than anything else.

"You do not care to come?" asked Tom Merry slowly. The Outsider laughed.

"Why don't you ask me in plain English if I'm afraid?" he said.

"I didn't mean that. Any fellow has a right to hang back from such a thing; it wouldn't be cowardice."

"I'm not afraid."

"Do you care to come, then?"

The Outsider was silent for a moment. Tom Merry waited.

There was a strange inflexion in the voice of the Outsider when he broke silence at last, his eyes gleaming strangely still, as he fixed them upon Tom Merry in the dusk.

"For the Head's sake?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"Suppose," said Lumley-Lumley slowly—"suppose, Tom Merry, that instead of being the kind of fellow you are, you had been brought up among tough and rough people—that you'd had to fight for yourself in a hard world before you were ten years old—that you'd knocked about the cities of Europe and America till you'd become as hard and unscrupulous and determined as the men you had to contend with—and suppose after all that wealth came into the family, and you came into a school like this, among fellows of your own age, who hadn't seen as much life in their fifteen years as you had seen in fifteen days."

"Well?"

"Under those circumstances, I dare say you'd have started at St. Jim's as I did—you'd have been nicknamed the Outsider, perhaps."

"Perhaps," said Tom Merry.

"And suppose you turned over a new leaf, and became decent, and tried to be like the better sort of chaps, and succeeded, in a way, then you'd have been tempted, I suppose, to fall back into the old ways sometimes."

"I suppose so."

"And suppose that once—mind, once only—you'd fallen back, acted in the old blackguardly way, chiefly through being bothered and tempted by a worse rotter than yourself—"

"Lumley!"

"And that at that very moment you were discovered by a master—"

"Ah!"

"And that your conduct was to be reported to your headmaster, as soon as he was sufficiently recovered to hear about it, so that at the earliest convenient moment you could be expelled from the school—"

"You don't mean—"

"Yes, I do."

"Oh, Lumley, I'm so sorry!"

The Outsider gave a hard laugh.

"If things were like that with you, Tom Merry, would you be keen to help in getting the doctor for the Head?"

Tom Merry was silent.

"Would you?" repeated Lumley-Lumley, with an indes-

cribable irony in his voice. "Haven't you an answer to give?"

"I don't know."

The Outsider laughed again. Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"I understand you," he said slowly. "What I should do in your place I don't know. I don't set up to judge you, anyway. I'll go alone."

Lumley-Lumley rose too.

"You won't go alone," he said.

Tom Merry peered at him, trying to read his face as the firelight gleamed up.

"What do you mean, Lumley? You've just said that you don't want to come."

Lumley-Lumley laughed a curious mocking laugh. "Never mind what I've just said," he replied. "I guess I was only talking, anyway. I'm coming."

"But you said that—that—"

"That I shall be expelled from St. Jim's as soon as the Head is well. It's true. Railton has done with me, and I dare say I deserve it."

"I'm sorry—"

"Thanks!"

Tom Merry winced a little. He could not understand Lumley-Lumley at all just now; but he understood that the Outsider was labouring under a stress of conflicting emotions.

"You don't want to come," he said.

"Perhaps not."

"Then stay."

"I'm coming."

"You'll risk your life."

"I know that."

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"You mean it—you're coming?"

"Yes."

"You're a sportsman all through, Lumley," said Tom Merry, holding out his hand. "Give us your fist."

They shook hands. No more was said. In silence they quitted Lumley-Lumley's study.

The rain was still dashing in torrents against the panes.

CHAPTER 13.

Gussy Wants to Go.

"**B**AI Jove! Not goin' out!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that surprised exclamation.

He had just entered the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House, with a match-box in his hand. To his surprise he found that the gas was already lighted, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley, the Outsider of St. Jim's, was there, donning a thick-soled pair of boots, lacing them up tightly. A pair of gaiters and a heavy macintosh lay on the bed beside him, and a cap with flaps to be drawn down over the ears.

Lumley-Lumley gave a start.

"Hang it! What do you want here?" he exclaimed roughly.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stopped, and jammed his monocle into his eye, and surveyed the Outsider with some indignation.

"Weally, Lumley," he exclaimed, "I twust I have the wight to entah my own dorm if I wish. I came here for a clean collah."

The Outsider uttered an impatient exclamation.

"I was stwuck by surpise at seein' you prepawin' to go out, in such weally abominable weathah as this," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "It is, howevah, no bizney of mine, and you can go to Jewicho for all I care."

"Hold on, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, deah boy? Can I help you?" asked the swell of St. Jim's, placated at once by the civil tone of the Outsider.

"Look here, I don't want the fellows to know I'm going out," said the Outsider abruptly.

D'Arcy's brow darkened a little.

"None of the old twicks, I hope, Lumley?" he said. "I don't think I could undertake to keep a secwet in that case."

The Outsider laughed impatiently.

"Do you think I should be going down to the Green Man to play cards on a night like this?" he demanded.

"Well, you are such an awful boundah, that there's no tellin' what you might be doin'," said Arthur Augustus.

"Howevah, I am quite willin' to take your word."

"I'm going out with Tom Merry."

"Vewy well; that makes it all wight, deah boy. I won't say a word."

"Thanks!"

"Ready, Lumley?"

Tom Merry stood in the doorway. He looked a little uneasy at the sight of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in the dormitory. The two juniors had intended to keep their expedition

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a dead secret. They had a well-grounded fear that if it were known, they would be forbidden to leave the school.

D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the hero of the Shell.
"You seem to be keepin' this expedish a secwet, Tom Mewwy?"

"Yos, Gussy. Don't say a word, there's a good chap."
"Vewy well. But it seems vewy weekless to me to go out in this wotten weathah. You will uttably wuin your clothes."

Tom Merry laughed.
"I have put on my oldest ones," he said.
"That was weally vewy thoughtful of you, deah boy. But—"

"Ready," said Lumley-Lumley.
Tom Merry hesitated a moment.

"You can keep a secret, Gussy?" he said. "I'd rather tell you where we're going, in case of—of accidents—if you'll keep it dark."

"I do not approve of keepin' secwets as a wule, deah boy, but in this case you can wely upon me."
"We're going to Rylcombe."

"Bai Jove!"
"To fetch the doctor."
"For the Head?"
"Yea."

The eyeglass dropped from Arthur Augustus's eye, and fluttered at the end of its cord. He stared blankly at Tom Merry.

"You can't go!" he exclaimed.
"We are going!"
"You'll nevah get through."

"We shall try."
"I guess so," said Lumley-Lumley.

"You wun feafuhl wisks, deah boys!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's, somewhat agitated. "You can't go! It's imposs! The woad is flooded, and Taggles says he was neahly drowned, and the dogcart was upset with Mr. Walton in it. He's had to be taken to bed; he twisted his arm when the dogcart went over."

"I know that."
"Kildare asked him for permission to twy to get through, and he wufused."

"I know."
"Well, you ass, you can't go—I won't let you!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I'm not goin' to have you two chaps gettin' ddowned like wats!"

"We're going to try it, Gussy. It's for the Head's sake. The doctor doesn't know he's ill—I mean, doesn't know he's worse, and he won't let anyone try to get through the flood. We've got to get through somehow."

"You can't! I won't allow you to twy."
"Rats!"

"Bai Jove! I'll call Kildare—I'll call Lathom!"
Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Remember your promise, Gussy!"
"Bai Jove!"

"Not a word to a soul!"
"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"I've told you, for only one reason," said Tom Merry quietly. "If we don't come back, if—if anything should happen, it will be best for Mr. Railton to know. Don't say anything till bedtime. If we're missing then, you can tell Mr. Railton that we've tried to get through."

D'Arcy looked distressed.
"It's too awf'ly wisky," he muttered.

"It can't be helped."
"Look here!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as if struck by a sudden and brilliant idea. "Look here, deah boys, I'll come, too!"

Tom Merry shook his head.
"No, Gussy. Two will be enough."

"What is required on an occasion like this, Tom Mewwy,

is a fellow of tact and judgment," said D'Arcy firmly. "It will be evah so much bettah for me to come."

"You'd spoil your clothes," said Lumley-Lumley, with a grin.

D'Arcy hesitated one moment.
"I'll wisk that, deah boy!"
"It can't be done, Gussy. You're not up to so much rough business as Lumley and I are, and you're not so good a swimmer."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
"You stay here, Gussy, and tell Railton if we're not back by half-past nine," said Tom Merry. "I expect we shall get through all right."

"But weally—"
"You can come and let us out, and cover our retreat."
"It would be evah so much bettah for me to come."

"No, no!"
"Vewy well, Tom Mewwy, I suppose this is your bizney. I will let you out of the house," said Arthur Augustus.

"Come on, then."
Arthur Augustus let the two juniors out by the side door. The wind was howling past the School House wall, laden with rain.

The darkness was intense.
"Bai Jove, what a night!" murmured D'Arcy. "Good-bye, deah boys, and good luck."

"Au revoir!" said Tom Merry.
The two juniors plunged away into the darkness and rain. D'Arcy closed the door, with some difficulty, and turned back.

There was a cloud of deep thought on D'Arcy's brain as he went slowly back to the Fourth-Form quarters. Hancock slapped him on the back in the passage.

"Wherefore that thoughtful frown, Gussy?" he queried.
"Eh?" said D'Arcy starting.

"What are you thinking about?"
"About Tom Mewwy—I mean Lumley—that is to say, the wain, or, wathah, the Head," said Arthur Augustus, somewhat confusedly—"that is to say, pway mind your own bizney, deah boy."

And he walked away, leaving Hancock staring after him in astonishment. Arthur Augustus was keeping the secret.

CHAPTER 14.

Through the Flood.

BLINDING rain and darkness! No one could have known St. Jim's, its surroundings, every wall and clump of knotty ivy, better than Tom Merry did!

But even Tom Merry, of the Shell, was at a loss now. The rain dashed and tore into his face, and swept over him and drenched through the macintosh. The wind roared round his ears, and cut at his face like a knife. For some minutes he was deaf and blind.

A hand grasped his arm and led him on. It was Jerrold Lumley-Lumley's. Lumley-Lumley was the first to recover himself.

They tramped on through the dark. Tom put his mouth close to Lumley's ear, and shouted.

"Where are we going? Is this the way?"
The Outsider chuckled.

"I guess so."
"But—"
"You're lost?"
"Yes."

"I'm not. I've tracked game through woods as black as your hat while you were doing Latin irregular verbs, I guess. Come on."

He dragged Tom Merry onward.

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The boys marked with a X on the photographs published on the back page of No. 164 of the GEM Library, having sent in their applications, have duly received the GEM Free Hampers. The names and addresses of the lucky winners, who attend the Ross Place Municipal School, Ardwick, and Ardwick Central School, are as follows:

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A driving torrent of rain hurled itself upon the swell of St. Jim's, and he staggered back with a wild gasp. "Oh! Gweat Scott!" he gasped. (See p. 2.)

Blinding wind and blinding rain.

Tom Merry bumped into soaking ivy, and water drenched down upon him. He groped out with his hands—it was a school wall; there was the ivy in wet masses, there was the slanting oak he had often climbed.

"My hat!"

Lumley-Lumley crouched under the shelter of the wall. The wind swept past them and left them soaking in the rain.

"Well, Tom Merry?"

"You must be able to see like a cat, Lumley."

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"Perhaps I can. Well, here's the wall. Take your breath, and let me help you over."

"Oh, rats! I can manage by myself."

"Just as you like."

Lumley-Lumley clambered up the ivy.

He drew himself upon the wall, clutching at the stone, and at the ivy to save himself from being torn away by the shrieking wind.

Tom Merry was beside him in a moment.

"All serene, I guess."

"Yes," gasped Tom breathlessly.

"Come on, then."

Lumley-Lumley dropped into the road.

Tom Merry followed, and they stood close to the school wall to evade the wind. Lumley-Lumley peeled off his macintosh.

"That's no good, I guess," he said. "I sha'n't be any wetter without it. Do the same, Tom Merry—we may have to swim any minute."

"Good egg!"

They flung the soaked macintoshes down by the wall. Then they faced the wind that swept up the flooded road.

Tom Merry knew the way well enough, black as the darkness was. The road was well defined—high hedges or fences, and gaunt, shadowy trees, blacker than the black sky.

They tramped off towards Rylcombe.

There was not an inch of their clothing dry—their skin ran with water under their clothes. But they did not heed it.

Lumley-Lumley stopped with an abrupt exclamation.

"Look out, Tom Merry! Here's the water!"

They halted.

They were at the head of a declivity that sloped down towards the village of Rylcombe—a steep slope where the St. Jim's cyclists had free-wheeled down at reckless speed many a time and oft.

But that low-lying slope was flooded now. The waters of the Ryll were flooding over low meadows, flooding the deep

country lanes, and the lower part of Rylcombe Lane was under water. That countryside was very hilly, and the road followed the rise and fall of the land, and the lane, usually dry and dusty, was now a succession of islands.

The water swished up to their knees as they halted.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"It's deep, I guess."

"A foot deep here—six yards deep in the hollow," said Tom Merry.

"I guess so."

"We shall have to swim."

"Good."

Lumley-Lumley drew a thin, strong cord from his pocket, and tied it to his own waist, and then to Tom Merry's. It would save them from being swept apart in the swirl of the wild waters.

Tom Merry peered into the gloom.

Nothing was visible save an occasional gleam from the waters as they rolled and eddied and swirled.

"I wonder if the hedges are covered—"

"I guess not—not all the way."

"If we miss them, and get out into the fields—"

"I've a light."

"What?"

Lumley-Lumley chuckled. He drew an electric lamp from under his jacket, and pressed the button. A long arrow of brilliant light shot out into the rain.

It gleamed on the surface of the troubled waters, and on the drenched hedges rising from the flood, and the trees with drooping beaten branches.

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "You think of everything!"

"I guess I learned to do that—when I had to. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Then come on. I've kicked off my boots."

"I'll do the same—better without them."

They plunged into the flood.

The waters swirled and eddied, and they were swung into the hedge, but they fought their way out again, and swam on, beating along the half-submerged hedges.

In a hollow of the road the hedges were quite under water, and they floated over the tops into a flooded field.

But Tom Merry felt the hedge beneath his dragging feet, and realised that they were leaving the road, and shouted to Lumley-Lumley.

In the roar of the wind and the flood the Outsider did not hear.

Tom Merry jerked at the cord.

Lumley swam back.

"What's the row, Tom Merry?"

"You're leaving the road."

"My hat! Lucky I had the cord on!"

"This way."

"Good bizney!"

They swam down the road. The water shallowed as they came to the opposite rise, and in a few minutes more they were tramping barefoot through mud.

"The road again."

"Good!" gasped Lumley-Lumley.

"Hark! The wind!"

A terrific burst of wind crashed down upon the flooded lane. The trees groaned and shivered, and the water roared and eddied. Tom Merry felt a great wave pass over his head, and he struck out wildly.

The water hurled him to and fro as if he had been a cork.

His senses were swimming, but he fought for his life—bravely, desperately.

Crash!

The shock almost stunned him. He realised what had happened—the flood had dashed him into the branches of a half-submerged tree. He clutched out, and caught hold, and the waters roared below him.

A numbing pain gripped his right arm, and he let go his hold with it, clinging to the tree only with his left. Lumley-Lumley caught hold of a lower branch with one hand, and turned on the electric lamp with the other.

The light glimmered up to Tom Merry's face, and showed it dead pale and contracted with pain.

Lumley-Lumley grinned up at his comrade. This wild adventure was after the Outsider's own heart.

"I guess that was a close shave for both of us," he said.

"Yes," muttered Tom Merry.

"Ready to come on?"

"No."

Lumley-Lumley stared up at him.

"Not ready?"

"No."

The Outsider looked alarmed.

"You're not hurt?" he asked quickly.

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"Yes—my arm. I—I can't swim again."

Jerrold Lumley-Lumley gritted his teeth.

"My hat! You're crooked?"

"Yes."

"Thunder!"

CHAPTER 15.

The Doctor

LUMLEY-LUMLEY was silent. It was a cruel caprice of fortune, when the comrades were almost at their journey's end.

What was to be done now?

Tom Merry was crooked. He could not swim a stroke, and he knew it. When the pain in his arm was gone, perhaps, not now.

He forced a laugh.

"I'm sorry to muck it up like this, Lumley. It can't be helped."

"Hang it!"

"You must go on."

"And leave you?"

"Yes."

"I can't do it, Tom Merry."

"You must," said Tom Merry steadily and firmly. "You must, Lumley! You're going to the village to get the doctor for the Head."

"Yes, but—"

"Give the cord to me—you won't want it again. I'll tie myself in the tree in case I slip, and wait for you. You must come back this way, if you get through at all. Then you can help me back to the school, perhaps. It won't be so jolly hard getting back with the wind behind us."

"But—"

"There's nothing else to be done, Lumley. You've got to get through and get word to the doctor."

Lumley contracted his brows.

He felt that Tom Merry was right, but to leave him there went sorely against the grain. But there was, as Tom Merry said, nothing else to be done.

"I guess you're right, Tom Merry," he said at last.

"Good-bye! Get on!"

"Right-ho! Take the lamp and send out a flash at intervals, then I shall not miss you coming back."

"Good!"

Lumley passed the electric lamp up to Tom Merry. The cord followed it. Tom Merry wedged himself into a fork of the tree and passed the cord round him, and bound it to the branch.

"Safe?" asked Lumley.

"Quite safe."

"I don't like leaving you."

"That's all right—it's for the Head's sake. Buzz off!"

Lumley-Lumley struck out in the swirling water under the trees.

He swam for a dozen yards, and then his feet touched mud again—he was on another rise of the flooded road.

This time he knew he was on the last acclivity leading into the village of Rylcombe. Rylcombe was built far above the peril of floods. Lumley-Lumley tramped on through the mud and darkness.

The water grew shallower, and ceased. He tramped through clinging mud, and now the lights of the village glimmered ahead through the rainy mist.

Rylcombe at last.

Lumley-Lumley tramped wearily into the village—wearily, but with indomitable spirit. The streets were deserted—every house was closed and shuttered against the storm.

Lumley-Lumley made his way to the doctor's house. Black as the night was, he found the house without difficulty, and groped his way through the dark, rainy garden and thundered at the door.

It was some minutes before it was opened. No one, naturally, expected a visitor on such a night.

The door was opened a couple of inches at last by a startled maid-servant. At the sight of the wild figure without she shrieked, and tried to close the door, but Jerrold Lumley-Lumley had his foot in the doorway already.

The girl shrieked again.

"I want to see Dr. Taylor," said Lumley-Lumley breathlessly.

Another shriek of alarm.

"I want to see—"

There was a deep voice in the hall.

"What is the matter?"

The door was swung open. An athletic man stood in the open doorway looking at Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. It was Dr. Taylor.

He uttered a startled exclamation at the sight of the stumbling, drenched, mud-covered figure of the junior.

"Come in at once!"

He dragged the junior into the hall. Lumley-Lumley was stumbling with exhaustion now; his task over, his strength seemed to be spent. His brain reeled as he was lifted in the doctor's powerful arms and carried into an adjoining room. He came to himself as he lay on a sofa, with something warm and bitter in his mouth, and he gulped it down. Dr. Taylor was bending over him.

"Where have you come from, my boy?"

"St. Jim's."

The doctor looked at him intently.

"How could you come from St. Jim's? The road's flooded—at the foot of the hill, in the hollow, the water is twenty feet deep."

"I've got wet, I guess."

Dr. Taylor smiled.

"You were a brave lad to attempt it," he said. "It is a marvel to me that you got through. But why did you come?"

"The Head."

"What is the matter?"

"He's ill."

The medical gentleman looked puzzled.

"Dr. Holmes was to call me up on the telephone if he required me," he said. "I should have managed to get through somehow, but I was not called."

"The telephone's not working."

"Oh!"

"It's cut off," Lumley-Lumley explained. "It's through the flood, I suppose. Taggles tried to get out this afternoon to get here, and after him Mr. Railton, but they couldn't."

"And then you tried?"

"It was Tom Merry's idea. He suggested it, and we came together," said Lumley-Lumley faintly.

The doctor started.

"Then where is Tom Merry now?"

"He hurt his arm, knocking against a tree in the flood. I've left him on the road—we shall pick him up as we go back."

"What is the matter with Dr. Holmes?"

"He fainted in the lecture-hall this afternoon, and he's in bed now. I think it's pretty serious—Mr. Railton thinks so."

"And I never knew, though now I do know, how I'm to get to St. Jim's is more than I can tell," the doctor muttered. Lumley-Lumley sat up on the sofa.

"I guess you must get through somehow, sir, and I, too."

The doctor shook his head.

"You had better stay here, my lad, and my housekeeper will look after you."

"I guess not, sir. I'm going back for Tom Merry. I told him I should come back. I'm ready now."

The doctor paced the room. His face was dark with thought. He was a young man, keen and athletic. He did not shrink from the danger, but how was it to be done?

Lumley-Lumley watched him

"Can you swim, sir?" he asked.

The doctor coloured.

"Yes, a little," he said, "but nothing much. I should have no chance in the flood—it's a miracle you got through."

"I guess I can swim," said Lumley-Lumley. "We shall have the wind behind us getting back to St. Jim's, that's something."

"True. But—"

"I guess it's up to you to manage it somehow, sir."

The doctor smiled.

"I shall manage it somehow," he said. "The question is, how? I wonder— But I shall have to try."

He stepped to the door and called out an order. Then he returned to Lumley-Lumley.

"I shall ride," he said. "As for you, my lad, you had better remain here."

"Can't be done, sir!"

"If you are determined to return—"

"I guess so."

"I've no doubt I could find Tom Merry—"

"I'm going back for him, sir."

The doctor shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Very well; I can't stop you. Will you have something to eat or drink—"

"Thanks—no!"

"I shall be ready in five minutes; warm yourself at the fire."

"Thanks!"

The drenched junior steamed at the fire while the doctor was preparing for the dangerous attempt. Dr. Taylor came in in a few minutes, dressed for riding, with a leather bag strapped on his back. Lumley-Lumley turned from the fire and followed him out into the wind and rain. Outside, stamping in the rain, a horse was waiting with a man at its head. The wind roared down the old High Street of Rylcombe, answered by the dull surge of the flooding waters outside the village.

CHAPTER 16.

Through.

TOM MERRY was waiting.

Round him was darkness, broken only by the titful gleams upon the surface of the flooding waters.

The lad was numbed with cold, penetrated by the tearing wind. But he waited with cool patience. His arm was hurt—it was only a twist, but it made it impossible for him to use the limb, and he knew that he could not swim without assistance. There was nothing for it but to await the return of Lumley-Lumley.

When would he come?

At intervals Tom Merry turned on the electric light of Lumley-Lumley's lamp, and flashed it across the surging, booming waters.

It was a guide to Lumley-Lumley when he should return.

In the gleam of the light when he turned it upon the flood, Tom Merry observed that the waters were still rising.

The torrents of rain that had descended for days had flooded the Ryll far above its usual level, and the low lands beside it had long been under water. The flood was creeping up now, higher and higher, and if it crept up much farther, the lowest houses in Rylcombe would be invaded. Tom Merry knew that the waters must now be in at the back doors of the Green Man, the inn on the slope of the bank. Higher and higher—rising almost visibly—the water lopped round the tree where the junior clung.

Tom Merry untied the cord, and retreated to a higher branch.

The water lapped below him, as if hungry and impatient for its prey. Tom Merry's eyes were turned longingly in the direction of Rylcombe.

Would Lumley-Lumley never come?

He flashed out the light, as the sound of splashing came to his ears. Splashing there was enough of all the time, but his keen ear, listening intently, detected the sound made by a horse. The electric gleam shone out over the waters, and there was a shout:

"Tom Merry!"

Tom gasped with relief.

"Lumley! Hallo!"

"You're still there, then? Show the light!"

"Right-ho!"

The electric light lay like a white bar across the black waters. Into the light came the white face of Lumley-Lumley, and he clambered into the tree beside Tom Merry, spluttering and gasping.

"Where's the doctor?" Tom Merry exclaimed.

"He's here!"

"Mounted?"

"Yes."

Tom Merry flashed the light round, and strained his eyes to see. The figure of the doctor loomed up, black and dripping. He was sitting his horse steadily, as the animal steadily swam in the flood. The horse's nostrils steamed above the surging water, as he swam on strongly.

Tom Merry caught only a momentary sight of the horse-man. Dr. Taylor passed him in a few seconds, and Tom heard the horse splashing on in the darkness.

"My hat!" said the Shell fellow. "He's taking a big risk!"

"I guess so."

"I'm ready to go."

"The doctor thinks we'd better get into Rylcombe, and stay at his house," said Lumley-Lumley, with a chuckle. "In fact, he's told me to. He can't help us to the school—it's all he can do to get through himself."

Tom Merry echoed the Outsider's chuckle.

"We're going back to St. Jim's," he said.

"I guess so."

"Besides, the doctor mayn't get through so easily—he may want help."

"I guess that's what I was thinking of. How's your arm?"

"Stiff."

"Hold to me with the other one."

"Right!"

They slipped into the water.

Lumley-Lumley struck out stoutly in the direction the doctor had taken. The wind was blowing hard behind them, and it

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ANSWERS

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seemed to help them on. Lumley-Lumley had appeared exhausted when he stumbled into the doctor's house at Rylcombe, but his strength returned with the need for it. He was all himself now, as he swam on steadily through the flood, supporting Tom Merry.

Tom Merry held on lightly. He knew how to incommode the swimmer the least that was possible. And he helped himself a little. Lumley-Lumley hardly felt his weight, as they swept on towards the rising ground.

"Here we are!" said the Outsider.

They were tramping through mud again.

There was nothing to be seen of Dr. Taylor. The horse-man was probably well on his way to the school, or—

Tom Merry looked at the flooded fields, and shivered for a moment. If the man had been swept away towards the flooded Ryll, there was little hope for him. He had taken the risk of that when he set out—it was his bare duty.

Tom Merry put the thought out of his mind. The water was lapping their feet again—they had to swim.

"Soon through now," said Lumley-Lumley.

They fought their way on through surging waters. Something splashed by them in the darkness—something that splashed, and rolled, and whinnied. Tom Merry felt a deadly sickness at his heart. It was a horse that had swept by, struggling in the flood—it could only be Dr. Taylor's horse.

Where was the doctor?

"By gun!" muttered Lumley-Lumley.

"The doctor!"

"I'll hold you while you turn the light on."

Tom Merry swept up his sound arm, with the electric lamp in his hand. The gleam of light barred the blackness of the water.

Tom swept it round in a circle.

"Doctor!" he shouted. "Where are you?"

The gleam lighted upon a white face that showed for a moment over the waters. Lumley-Lumley grasped at it, and his grasp closed upon something.

"I've got him!"

"Hold on, for goodness' sake!"

"All right!"

"Doctor! Doctor!"

The doctor was struggling—he had not lost his senses. He grasped Lumley-Lumley's shoulder, and gasped for breath.

"Hold on to me, sir."

The doctor tightened his grasp, as a sign that he understood; he could not speak. Two minutes later they were treading the mud, and the rolling flood was behind. The doctor lay gasping in thick mud, exhausted—too exhausted to speak. Tom Merry was panting helplessly.

"Thank you, my lad!" the doctor gasped at last, when he found his voice. "You have saved my life!"

"I guess so, sir!"

"My horse lost his footing at the finish, when we should have been safe in another minute. We were just getting out of the water when he slipped over. I hope he will save himself. But I should have been gone, only—"

"It was lucky we didn't stay at Rylcombe, sir."

"My word, yes!"

After a few minutes' rest they tramped on towards St. Jim's. As they came in sight of the school there was a glare of lights from the gates. Tom Merry started.

"My hat! The school seems to be on the qui vive!"

Lumley-Lumley laughed breathlessly.

"It must be past half-past nine," he said. "We've been a jolly long time coming, you know. D'Arcy has told them about us, and they're watching for us, I guess."

"I suppose so."

Lumley-Lumley shouted.

"Hallo!"

A shout came back from the night.

"Hallo! Bai Jove, is that you, Lumley, deah boy?"

"I guess so."

"Thank goodness, bai Jove!"

And a crowd of fellows rushed out from the gateway, careless of the drenching rain, to surround them, and march them into the school.

"Bai Jove! You've got the doctor, then?" D'Arcy exclaimed.

"I guess so."

"Gweat Scott! I must wemark that you are a wegulah hewo!"

"Rats!"

"Weally, Lumley—"

"More rats!"

"Let's get in," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I hope the Head isn't worse, Blake?"

"Just the same, I believe," said Blake. "But it's ripping to have got the doctor. This way, sir. Can I carry the bag?"

And the three were marched into the School House triumphantly.

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CHAPTER 17.

A Word for Lumley.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had kept the secret of the expedition until the stipulated time had expired.

But when the bed-time of the juniors arrived, and Tom Merry and Lumley-Lumley were both absent, he had to explain. The anxiety that was felt at St. Jim's we need not describe. Nobody thought of bed. A crowd of fellows waited under the shelter of the old stone gateway, to watch for Tom Merry; and it was decided that if the return was delayed much longer, a party of prefects should go out and look for him.

But that was not needed now. Tom Merry and Lumley-Lumley had returned, safe and sound, and they had brought the doctor with them. The fellows in the School House were in a state of delight only tempered by the knowledge that the Head was ill. But for that, they would have cheered till the old walls rang again.

Tom Merry and Lumley-Lumley were marched off to a dormitory to be rubbed down and put to bed. Dr. Taylor was taken in charge by Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, and accommodated with a change of clothes before he went in to see the Head. The doctor seemed little the worse for his adventure, perilous as it had been. As for Tom Merry and Lumley-Lumley, they were feeling tired, but very cheerful and satisfied.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, for the hundredth time. "Bai Jove, it's wippin'! You know, deah boys, I weally think I couldn't have done it myself!"

"Hear, hear!" said Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You're a pair of giddy heroes, that's what you are!" said Kangaroo. "And your names ought to be put down on the Golden Roll of St. Jim's!"

"Yaas wathah!"

"Oh, rats!" said Lumley-Lumley.

"And many of 'em!" said Tom Merry promptly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's a pity," said Herries reflectively.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"What's a pity, ass?"

"Why, that all that risk was run, when I've thought of a much simpler plan," Herries explained. "Towser could have taken a message."

"Towser!"

"Towsah!"

"Yes," said Herries. "I could have tied a note to his collar, you know, and told him to take it to the doctor's house in Rylcombe. Towser's an awfully intelligent dog. He would have got there all right."

"Bai Jove!"

"I don't think!" remarked Blake.

"Look here, Blake—"

"I don't suppose Towser would have reached the doctor's house; but he might have been drowned, so upon the whole I'm sorry you didn't try it, Herries," Manners remarked, in a reflective sort of way.

"You silly chump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How's your arm now, Merry?" Lumley-Lumley asked.

"Only a bit stiff. It will be all right in the morning.

No harm done," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I'll be off now."

Tom Merry had rubbed himself dry in the Fourth Form dormitory, and Blake had brought his pyjamas for him. D'Arcy enveloped him in a handsome dressing-gown—Gussy's own and best—and Manners put slippers on his feet. Tom Merry was marched off to his own dormitory, and in a few minutes more was in bed and sleeping soundly.

The rain was still pattering against the panes when the St. Jim's fellows turned out the next morning. But it was slighter now, and there was a gleam of sunshine on the drenched, dripping quad.

Tom Merry descended with the other fellows. His arm was stiff, and he was a little tired still, but that was all. Lumley-Lumley looked very fit when Tom met him downstairs. But the Outsider's face was very grave.

"Heard anything about the Head?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes. I've seen Dr. Taylor this morning. He's staying here for the present," said Lumley-Lumley. "The Head's in a pretty bad state. Not dangerous, you understand, but serious, and he'll be ill for some time."

"Poor old chap!"

Lumley-Lumley smiled in a peculiar way.

"You're anxious for him to recover?" he asked.

Tom Merry stared.

"Of course!"

"I'm not!"

"What do you mean?"

The Outsider shrugged his shoulders.

"You've forgotten what I told you last night, then—I'm to be expelled as soon as the Head is well enough to expel me."

Tom Merry started. Truly, the exciting events of the night, and his anxiety about the Head, had driven from his mind what the Outsider had told him.

"It can't be so bad as that, Lumley!"

"I guess it's quite as bad as that. I tell you I was caught gambling—for money—and—and Railton jumped to the conclusion that I had led the others into it."

"You didn't?"

"No."

"Who were they?"

"Levison and Mellish."

"I understand," said Tom quietly. "It was awfully hard cheese on you, Lumley. And why didn't you explain?"

The Outsider laughed.

"And show up as a sneak as well as a blackguard?"

"But—"

"Still, I didn't quite mean what I just said," muttered the Outsider. "I hope the Head will get well soon. I'm going, anyway."

"But—I say—"

"I guess I shall go without waiting to be kicked out," said Lumley-Lumley.

"But after what you've done now, Lumley—"

Lumley-Lumley made an irritable gesture.

"Oh, rot!" he said. "I did no more than you did—less, in fact, as it was your idea in the first place. I don't want to make capital out of that—hang it!"

The Outsider swung away with a gloomy brow. Tom Merry stood silent for some minutes, and then he walked quietly to Mr. Railton's study. The House-master was not there, but he came up just as Tom was turning away from the door.

"Good-morning, Merry. They have told me what you did last night—you and Lumley. Are you feeling any the worse?"

"Very little, sir. I came here to speak to you—"

"Come in."

Tom Merry followed the House-master into the study. Mr. Railton looked at him attentively.

"You have acted very bravely, Merry," he said, "and so has Lumley-Lumley. I am only sorry that Lumley's other qualities are not equal to his courage."

"I came here to speak to you about Lumley, sir, if I may."

Mr. Railton's face hardened.

"I'm afraid I cannot listen to any plea for him, Merry. He has proved that his reformation was only a pretence."

"May I tell you what I know, sir?"

"Certainly."

"But—but you won't consider it sneaking, sir?" said Tom Merry, turning very red. "I can't clear Lumley without involving the other fellows, and—and if there is to be any punishment for them, I—I can't speak."

Mr. Railton nodded.

"I understand you perfectly, Merry. I shall make no use whatever of what you tell me, excepting in favour of Lumley, if you can help him."

"Very well, sir. Lumley's told me about it. You found him gambling—playing cards for money. I know it was beastly rotten, sir. But—but I am quite sure that it was his first slip, sir, since—since he started afresh."

"How can you be sure of that, Merry?"

"I know him well enough to be sure, sir. We've been friends all the time, and I've seen a lot of him. I know he does not possess even a pack of cards now."

"Then the cards I saw—"

"They belonged to somebody else, sir."

Mr. Railton looked very thoughtful.

"I know it's the truth, sir," said Tom Merry. "Lumley wasn't the leader in what happened. Since he's changed, other fellows have tried to get him back into the old ways—I know that for a fact. I don't want to mention names, but I want to clear Lumley. I know it wasn't he who started that and got the others into it. It was the other way about. I'm as sure of that as I am of anything, sir."

"If you are quite sure of that, Merry, it makes a great difference, of course. The appearance of the matter was that Lumley's reformation was nothing but a pretence, and that he was leading other boys into his own wicked ways."

"It was just as I've told you, sir."

Mr. Railton compressed his lips.

"I shall have a talk with Lumley, Merry. What you have said throws quite a different light on the matter. Send Lumley to me."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry joyfully.

CHAPTER 18.

All Serene.

JERROLD LUMLEY-LUMLEY was in the House-master's study for ten minutes, and Tom Merry waited in the passage for him. When he came out, the Outsider's face was very bright. He grasped Tom Merry's hand and shook it hard.

"Thank you!" he said.

"Is it all right?"

"I guess so!"

"Good!"

"I owe it all to you, I suppose," said Lumley-Lumley, as they walked away. "I guess I'm obliged to you, Tom Merry! Railton was very decent. Of course, he piled it on about the pluck of going through the flood to fetch the doctor, and I stood that rot as well as I could. Then he made me explain about the card-playing, and as you'd said so much, and he undertook to let Mellish and Levison alone, I explained. He believed me. I never expected him to."

"Why not?"

"Well, you know I—I wasn't always quite up to the mark in—telling the truth," said Lumley-Lumley, flushing. "I—I guess it wasn't put in my early curriculum, Tom Merry. I suppose he takes your word all right, though, and you've answered for me, and so he believed me, too. A chap who has told lies has no right to expect his word to be taken at all—it's cheek. I never expected it. But Railton's taken it, and—and all's serene—Hallo, Mellish!"

Mellish, of the Fourth, looked at them with a sneer.

"Leaving to-day, Lumley?" he asked.

Lumley-Lumley laughed.

"I guess not!"

"Oh! You're not going to be expelled till the Head's well, I suppose?"

"No—and not even then!" grinned Lumley-Lumley. "I'm going to be changed out of your study, that's all, and I sha'n't have the pleasure of your company, or Levison's, again, and I guess I sha'n't miss it!"

And he walked on, leaving Mellish staring.

"I'm jolly glad it's turned out like this," said Tom Merry. "Only—only do take a little more care after this, Lumley, there's a good chap."

Lumley-Lumley nodded.

"I guess I sha'n't play the giddy ox again in that way!" he said.

And Lumley-Lumley, as a matter of fact, was not likely to do so. The lesson he had had was sharp enough for him.

There was a great deal of anxiety that day about the state of Dr. Holmes. For that day, and the next, and several following days, the familiar figure was not seen about the school.

Until the flood subsided, Dr. Taylor remained at St. Jim's—he had no choice about the matter—and the other Rylcombe medical man had charge of his patients. But when the rain had ceased, and the roads were made passable, the doctor still came every day to the school.

Dr. Holmes left his bed at last. But it was known that he was in no state to take up his duties at St. Jim's again. His convalescence was likely to last some time, and the boys of St. Jim's learned that he was going away for a change of air, and that Mr. Railton would take his place while he was gone.

Before he went, however, he received from all the lower school a voluntary apology for their conduct on the day of the lecture. The Head had not said a word about it himself. The apology was voluntary, and it touched the kind old gentleman very much. He told the boys so, in addressing a few words of farewell to them before he quitted the school, to take the train to Southampton, whence he was to cross to France.

On the day of the Head's departure, all St. Jim's turned out to see him off. The whole staff of masters, and the chief prefects, made up a party to accompany him to Southampton to see him off; but all St. Jim's determined to go as far as Rylcombe, at all events. Tom Merry & Co. came out strong on that occasion, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, indeed, proposing to hire a brass band—or, more exactly, a brass band—but being over-ruled. It was a proud moment for both Tom Merry and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley when the Head shook them by the hand before all the school, and publicly thanked them for what they had done that night in the flood—a proud moment, though a somewhat embarrassing one. And strange enough it seemed to Jerrold Lumley-Lumley when the school cheered him—the one-time Outsider—with the ringing cheers he deserved for what he had done for the Head's sake.

THE END.

(Another splendid long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. next week, entitled: "The School Without Masters," by Martin Clifford. Order in advance. Price one penny.)

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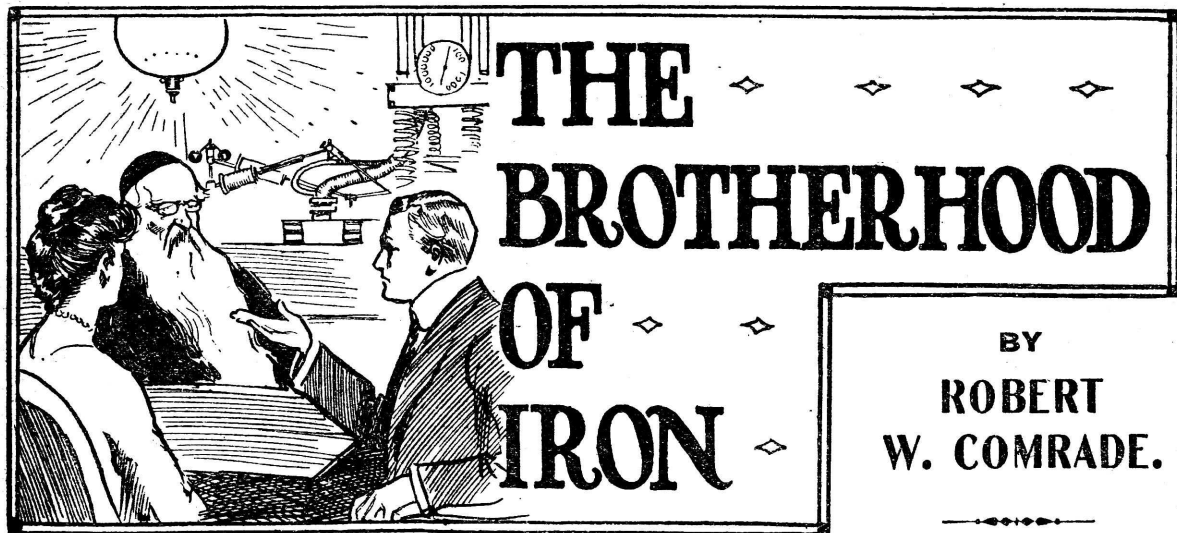
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A Thrilling Tale of Modern Adventure on Land and Sea.



THE BROTHERHOOD OF IRON

BY ROBERT W. COMRADE.

INTRODUCTION.

Frank Kingston, a young Englishman, is engaged on a secret campaign against a criminal society called the Brotherhood of Iron, his aim being to break up the society by ruining the members of the Inner Council. He has the assistance of Miss O'Brien, an accomplished young lady, Professor Graham Polgrave, a clever scientist and inventor, Carson Gray, a detective, Fraser, a manservant, and a lad named Tim.

Kingston has brought nine Inner Councillors to book, one by one, when he hears of a plot to kidnap the Crown Prince of Balataria. The Brotherhood's yacht, the Unicorn, has orders, he hears, to hold herself in readiness for a voyage to the Iron Island, where the kidnapped prince is to be confined, just as Kingston himself once was.

"This is a serious matter," says Carson Gray, with whom Kingston is staying. "It looks like proving a puzzler."

(Now go on with the story).

Professor Polgrave's Decision.

"Not exactly, Gray," said Kingston languidly. "I am pleased, rather than otherwise, that this affair has happened so closely on the heels of the conclusion of the Zeetman case. I do not like idleness, and really a sea-voyage sounds rather welcome just now."

Carson Gray pulled rather a wry face.

"Then I am to lose my visitor," he said ruefully. "You're a lucky beggar, Kingston. Somehow, you seem to get in for all the fun."

Kingston laughed, and slipped his hat on his head.

"Good-bye for the present," he exclaimed. "I am going on a visit to Professor Polgrave. Before night I will return and let you know what has been decided. I know you are interested."

"Very," replied Gray. "Thanks for thinking of me!"

A moment later Frank Kingston was walking leisurely downstairs. By his manner one would imagine that he had weeks in which to work. When Kingston was hurrying, however, he did not appear to be doing so, for he set about his task with a methodical exactness which to an ordinary man would have been impossible. Even as he walked down Great Portland Street his mind was already filled with ideas for the coming battle.

He could not help feeling a trifle sorry for Carson Gray, for he knew that the detective would dearly have loved to go into this adventure with him. But that was impossible, mainly because Gray could not get away from London for the necessary period of time. Kingston would have been delighted with his company, but he knew that Gray was full up with work.

He took a taxi to St. John's Wood, and felt a sense of pleasure at the thought of meeting Professor Polgrave once again. He had not seen the old gentleman since leaving London for the Grange Asylum, and was anxious to tell him

everything that had occurred, and how successfully the drug had acted upon Dr. Zeetman.

The house in which the professor lived looked as dilapidated as usual when Kingston strolled up the path. The trees and bushes were now beginning to show some sign of bright green, which gave them a fresher and more attractive appearance.

"Good-morning, professor!" exclaimed Kingston genially, when the door was opened in response to his customary ring. Professor Polgrave stood in the doorway, an expression of welcome surprise on his white-bearded face.

"You have come at last!" he cried. "Come in, dear friend—come in, and tell me everything that has happened. You cannot tell how eagerly I have been awaiting this visit."

Kingston entered, and walked along the well-lit passage which led to the cellars. He could hardly repress a smile as the professor hurried before him, nodding his head with evident pleasure.

"I knew you'd come!" he exclaimed. "I was sure of it. Upon my word, Kingston, you and your noble work have made me feel a young man again, and I want to participate in your magnificent crusade."

In a very short time the pair were standing in the laboratory, beneath the brilliant glare of the professor's marvellous lamps. As usual, he was engaged upon some experiment, but he would not admit for a moment that he had been disturbed.

"No!" he exclaimed emphatically "You are never in the way, Kingston—never. Come whenever you like, and stay as long as you like. But what has been happening at this asylum? Tell me everything that has come to pass since your last visit here."

Without loss of time, Kingston did so, and his narrative was continually being interrupted by the curious old gentleman's exclamations and interjections. He wanted to know every little detail, and would not be satisfied unless he had the whole story. Kingston knew he was pressed for time, but this made no difference. He owed a great deal to the scientist, and had no intention of disappointing him.

"Splendid!" cried Polgrave, when he had heard all. "To one who doesn't know anything it may seem a hard fate for this scoundrelly doctor, but you and I, Kingston, know perfectly well that it is by far the best thing which could have overtaken him. And so everybody has been cleared out?"

"Everybody, professor; and none of them have the remotest suspicion as to my real identity. But the episode is over now, and another claims my attention without even a day's respite!"

Professor Polgrave chuckled.

"It is not like you to waste time, my brave rescuer," he murmured, rubbing his hands together with pleasure. "I almost expected to hear those words from your lips; but tell me, what is the fresh case?"

"It is one of far greater importance than the Zeetman

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affair," replied Kingston quietly. "It is connected with the Royal House of Balataria!"

"Royalty, eh? Dear me, there is no telling to what length this infamous Brotherhood will go! But I have never heard of Balataria. I presume it is a small kingdom on the Continent?"

"Yes, a very small country, hardly any larger than Monte Carlo, and not so extensive as Servia. I will tell you everything about it—everything, that is, that I am aware of myself. There is much that is obscure to me as yet, but before evening I hope to know everything."

Without delay Kingston told his companion of the news which Crawford had brought so suddenly. The scientist was a little startled when he learned that his new-found friend was going away on such a long voyage.

"If you are going to the Iron Island," he exclaimed, "I shall see nothing of you for weeks—perhaps months!"

"I am afraid that is so, professor. But you may rely on my visiting you the very instant I set foot on English soil again. It is imperative that I should go to the Pacific, as you will readily understand. Everything is at stake, for should the Unicorn succeed in reaching the Island Don Sebastian and Colonel Marsden will be rescued, and the whole truth of my identity will be known to the Council."

"Yes, yes, my good preserver; I quite understand that," said Polgrave, with a worried expression. "But I cannot bear to think of the weeks I shall spend here alone. I have grown to look forward to your frequent visits—Ah, but wait a moment! What is to prevent—Yes, yes, Kingston, it shall be so!"

The professor's face suddenly lost its dismayed expression, and in place screwed itself up into that well-known genial smile. His eyes disappeared into mere slits, and he chuckled to himself with enjoyment.

"I am afraid I do not understand," smiled Frank Kingston.

"You will in a moment. I have thought of a way out of the difficulty, good friend. I have decided what to do. You shall take me with you to the Iron Island."

For a second even Kingston was taken aback by this abrupt statement, and the confident manner in which it was spoken. The professor was absolutely sincere.

"You will accompany me to the Iron Island?" repeated Kingston, quite surprised. "By Jove, professor! Do you really mean it?"

"Mean it? With all the sincerity in the world, Kingston! When the Coronet sails for the Pacific, she will carry me aboard as a passenger!"

A Satisfactory Interview.

Frank Kingston grasped the professor's hand and wrung it warmly.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "I cannot tell you how surprised I am! I had not the slightest notion that you would think of coming yourself, professor."

"You do not mind?" inquired Polgrave rather anxiously. "I shall be welcome?"

"Welcome?" echoed Kingston. "Why, of course you will be welcome, professor! It will be a treat to have you on the yacht. Besides that, the voyage will do you all the good in the world. After these years of strenuous study a holiday is just what you need. But there is no time for preparations, you know—the Coronet starts to-morrow."

The professor rubbed his hands with keen delight.

"The sooner the better!" he cried. "Upon my soul, Kingston, I am feeling quite a young man again. I am more than surprised with myself for having decided on this course—more than surprised! But I was sure you would not object."

"There is one thing I wish to point out," said the other, in a more serious tone. "This mission is not being undertaken for the mere pleasure of it, and there is a chance that danger may be encountered."

"Danger? What do I care for danger?" cried the old scientist. "It is quite enough for me to know that I shall be on the Coronet under your care. My only fear is that I shall be in the way—that I shall prevent you attempting certain things which you would not hesitate to do were I absent."

"Set your mind easy on that score, professor," laughed the other. "You will not be the least in the way, and I am positive that Dolores will be delighted with your company."

"So she is going, too? Good—good! Better and better! Well, well, what do you mean to do now?"

"I mean to find out how the Crown Prince is to be kidnapped," drawled Frank Kingston. "The only persons who know the plans are the councillors themselves, and I shall now pay a visit to one of these gentlemen."

"But he will tell you nothing," said the professor.

"On the contrary, I shall get to know all I want from him. The Crown Prince arrives in London to-day—has already arrived, in fact—and it is not the way of the Brotherhood to

let grass grow under their feet. My man Crawford could not tell me very much, but it is important that I should know all."

"But how do you mean to attain your end?"

"I will tell you, professor."

Kingston did so, and the old gentleman's face re-puckered itself into a smile of satisfaction. He was feeling somewhat excited that morning, owing to his sudden decision to accompany Frank Kingston to the Pacific.

"Excellent!" he cried. "In that way you will get to know everything. Dear me, Kingston, you are a most remarkable individual—most remarkable!"

Frank Kingston smiled.

"May I stop a few moments longer," he requested, "so that I can disguise myself satisfactorily? For an hour I shall want to become quite another person."

"I will do it for you," declared the professor. "It will save time and allow you to be off the sooner. Seat yourself in that chair, and we will very soon alter your appearance."

And Polgrave proved his words to be true, for at the end of five minutes, having manipulated his hypodermic syringes with his usual dexterity, he stepped back and surveyed his companion critically. All signs of Frank Kingston had now disappeared, and in his place there sat an elderly, clean-shaven gentleman with a decidedly bronzed countenance. Anyone would declare that he had spent the greater part of his life in a tropical climate.

"The very thing," exclaimed Professor Polgrave. "Carry yourself with an erect, military bearing, and the disguise will be very complete."

Kingston surveyed himself in the glass.

"There is no mistake about it," he drawled: "your method of disguising has altogether superseded the old way. Thanks, professor! I will now take myself off and leave you to continue your experiment uninterrupted."

"It was of very little importance, my dear friend," replied the old man. "Besides, I shall have no time now to finish it. I must prepare for departure. Gracious me, Kingston, I am looking forward to this trip with the eagerness of a child!"

"I will see you again to-night," exclaimed Kingston, as he stepped briskly towards the door. When he had arrived he had been wearing a light overcoat, but that was now discarded, and he was attired with immaculate military precision, wearing on his head a silk hat which he had left at the professor's on an occasion such as this.

A few minutes later he was outside in St. John's Wood Road, and he hailed a passing taxi. As he clambered in he instructed the chauffeur to make for the London Docks. Arriving there, he dismissed the cab, and proceeded on foot to his destination.

This was the Unicorn, the Brotherhood's new yacht. She was a fairly large boat, and by the bustle going on aboard and on the quay alongside, it was plain to see she was being prepared for departure. Kingston marched across the gangway as though the ship belonged to him, and stood for a moment looking at some men working close by. One of them looked up inquiringly.

"Kindly take me to Captain Formby," said Kingston, in a pompous voice.

"E's in 'is cabin, sir," replied the man respectfully; "an' 'e said no one wasn't to disturb 'im."

"Tut-tut, my man!" snapped Kingston. "I must see the captain at once. Kindly take him my card, and say that my business is of the utmost urgency—you hear, utmost urgency?"

With a flourish Kingston produced a card-case, and handed a strip of pasteboard to the waiting man. He had given the impression that he was a very important person, and that was his main object. While he was waiting for the man to return he produced a cigar-case, and lit a fat and expensive-looking cigar.

"The cap'n will see you at once, sir," said the man respectfully, returning suddenly. "If you will follow me I will show you the way to 'is cabin."

Without a word Kingston turned and followed the deck-hand amidships. The captain's cabin proved to be a very large apartment, and most luxuriously furnished and decorated. Kingston affected not to notice this, however, but stepped forward with extended hand.

"Ah, Captain Formby," he exclaimed, "pleased to meet you, sir! I see you are busy, but it is imperative that you should spare me a few minutes."

Captain Formby looked up somewhat in surprise. He had no idea what business it was which brought his visitor.

"I am busy, certainly," he replied. "Pray take a seat, Colonel Armytage, and make yourself comfortable."

Kingston accepted the invitation, and then produced a bulky pocket-book.

"My business," he said importantly, "is in connection—Sit still, and don't utter a sound!"

The remaining portion of his sentence took the Inner Court—
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gillor completely by surprise, and he sat back in his chair gazing with dilated eyes at his visitor. Kingston had risen in his chair, had dropped his pompous manners, and was now gazing at Formby with a terrible look in his eyes.

Try as he would, the captain could not speak, and gradually he felt his senses growing numb. He was being hypnotised. He was perfectly aware of that fact, but it was absolutely useless to try and resist. Frank Kingston's will power was ten times as great as his own, and he was like a baby in comparison.

Within thirty seconds Captain Formby was entirely under his visitor's influence, and Kingston chuckled softly to himself. He could not help doing so, for it seemed so ridiculously easy. There before him was a man who would be forced, willy-nilly, to answer every question that was asked of him. Formby had succumbed with surprising rapidity, and Kingston did not waste a moment. All he wanted was the bare facts.

"Tell me," he said sharply, "what are the plans with regard to the Crown Prince Zavier—what was decided at the meeting last night? Don't lie to me, but state the precise facts."

Formby was staring before him with unseeing eyes, entirely under Kingston's control.

"The Crown Prince," he said, in a monotonous voice, "is to be exiled on the Iron Island. He was to have been placed in Dr. Zetman's asylum had matters have been favourable. He will be taken to the Pacific on board this yacht."

"Quite so," said Kingston, never for an instant diverting his gaze from Formby's eyes. "The Unicorn will start to-morrow night?"

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"I cannot say exactly."

"How is he to be put aboard? By what means do you intend to kidnap him?"

"The way it is to be done is a perfectly safe one, and nobody will ever be the wiser—nobody can possibly guess what has happened to the prince. Sir Reginald Newman—"

"The aviator?" Kingston interrupted sharply.

"Yes. He is to do most of the work. To-morrow evening Prince Zavier goes on a visit to the Duke of Loamshire. The duke's residence is near Ipswich, and the prince will travel on his private motor-car, accompanied by the duke himself and Count von Brezen."

"Well?"

"The car will start from the prince's hotel—he is staying at the Metropole—at six o'clock precisely, and will immediately leave for Ipswich. There is a large common over which the car has to travel a little over halfway there, and the chauffeur—who is a common-member of the Brotherhood—will get on this common at exactly a quarter to eight."

"I understood you to say that the car belonged to the prince. How is it that the chauffeur is a common-member of the Brotherhood?"

"The car has been placed at the prince's disposal by Count von Brezen, to whom it really belongs," replied Formby, still in that same dull, even tone. "Once they get on the common the road is very straight, and the chauffeur will let the car go at top speed."

"And where does Sir Reginald Newman come in, and when?"

"Now. He will be waiting near the common, and will recognise the car by the arrangement of its lights. He will be on his biplane, and will immediately rise in the air, fly towards the car, and hover exactly over it, the two vehicles travelling at approximately the same speed."

"But that is impossible!" said Kingston, taken by surprise at this remarkable statement. "No aeroplane could keep to such a straight course."

"Sir Reginald is one of the most skilful of pilots, and there will be no course to keep to, for everything will happen in a few seconds. The prince will be seated in front, with Von Brezen immediately behind. It will be dark, and a thin rope, with a hook at the end, will be dangling from the aeroplane. As it swoops by overhead the count will grasp this rope without anybody else noticing, and fix it to the prince's belt. The aeroplane will then suddenly rise, and Prince Zavier will be lifted from the car and carried away."

"But the thing is ridiculous!" declared Kingston. "It could not possibly be done. The chances are a thousand to one against success."

Formby did not answer.

"I tell you," repeated Kingston, "the plan cannot succeed."

"It can succeed," said Formby, "and will! You forget that the car will be travelling at practically the same speed as the aeroplane, which makes a vast difference. In addition, Sir Reginald will carry a passenger on his machine who will manipulate the rope."

"But the rope will be seen by the others in the car."

"Yes, it will be seen—we want it to be seen; but nobody will notice Von Brezen slip the hook under the prince's belt, for they will naturally be one and all gazing overhead at the aeroplane."

Kingston realised that there was a great deal of truth in Formby's words. It was quite natural that everybody in the car should be gazing overhead. In the darkness it would indeed be a simple matter for Brezen to do his part.

"But suppose there is a wind?"

"That is the only thing which will spoil our plans. An ordinary breeze will not matter, and I do not think there is much chance of a high wind suddenly rising. Should it do so, however, the Chief is now preparing an alternative, of which I know nothing."

"But what is to become of the prince after he has been lifted from the car?" inquired Kingston, still gazing with that concentrated stare into the other's listless eyes. "Where will he be taken to?"

"The coast. This ship will be at anchor within a few miles of the shore, and a small boat will be onside in readiness. The prince will be dropped from the aeroplane into the water, to be rescued immediately. The Unicorn will then set sail for the Pacific, with nobody the wiser. As she is starting from London to-day, suspicion cannot possibly attach itself to her."

"And that is all you know?"

"Yes."

"Who will accompany the yacht to the Iron Island?"

"Myself, Von Brezen, and Rupert Lyle."

"Lyle—eh! What is he going for? I understood he was an exceptionally busy man."

"He is going simply for the holiday, but will not join the yacht until she arrives at a small port in Spain. Von Brezen and he will come aboard together."

"I understand. I think I follow everything now, captain."

Kingston stood for a moment without speaking. He was thinking deeply, but could find no more questions to ask. So he decided to bring Formby back to his senses.

"Now, listen here, Formby," he said sternly, "everything you have said during the last few minutes you are to forget—to absolutely eliminate from your mind. And every word I have said to you will also be forgotten. Do you understand?"

"Yes," replied Formby monotonously, "I am to forget everything."

"When you come to your senses in a minute from now, you will be under the impression that I have been speaking to you for only a few seconds, and that I am still saying the sentence I was uttering when you fell under my influence. You will not know that you have answered a single question. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly clear."

"Then I shall now proceed to count thirty. When I get to that number you will open your eyes, and be absolutely under the impression that I have been here only a few seconds. You will feel no ill-effects from what you have passed through, and will go on talking to me quite unconcernedly."

Kingston's eyes were terribly black and piercing as he said these words, but as soon as he started counting they resumed their normal expression. As he said "thirty," Captain Formby opened his eyes with no sign of having been in a hypnotic trance.

"... is in connection with some cargo I am desirous of having shipped from Dover to Lisbon," exclaimed Kingston, concluding a sentence he had begun to utter when he took a seat on first entering. He held the bulky pocket-book in his hand, and made a pretence of taking some papers out.

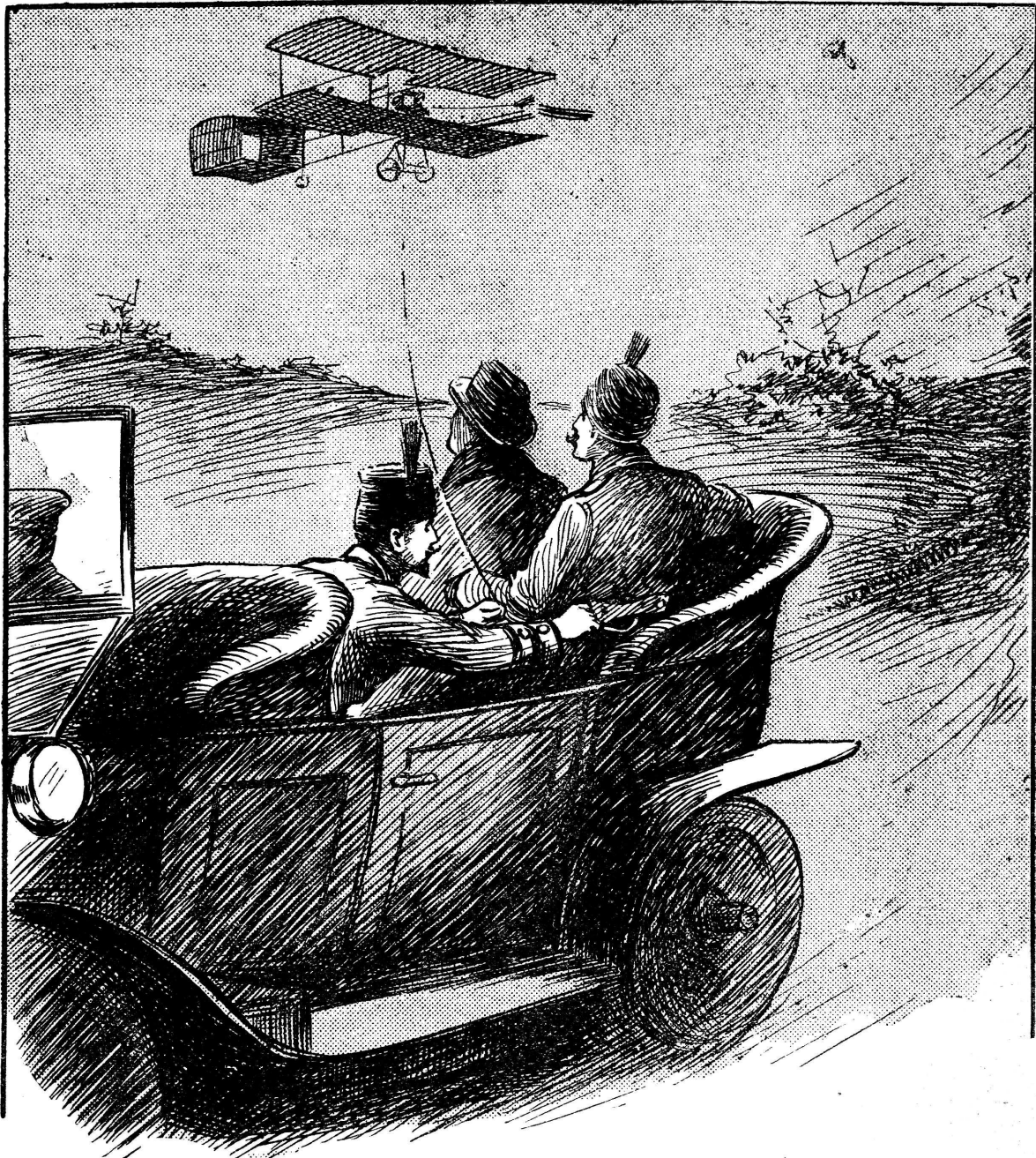
"I am afraid you are making a slight error, colonel," said Formby, with no sign whatever of having passed through anything unusual.

"Error, sir?" repeated Kingston pompously. "Am I wrong in supposing that you are about to set sail for South America? This is the Rose of Britain, is it not? I learnt your name from a man on the quay, and—"

"Pardon me, sir," said Captain Formby, rising, "you are labouring under a mistake. This ship is the pleasure-yacht Unicorn, and the Rose of Britain is a slightly larger craft, docked about a hundred yards lower down. I should have thought there were enough boats and lifebuoys about displaying the name of this ship—"

"I am short-sighted, captain, and must crave your pardon," exclaimed Frank Kingston, rising to his feet hurriedly. "I was certainly under the impression— But I see I am wasting your time. Good-morning, Captain Formby, and a thousand apologies!"

"Good-morning, colonel," smiled Captain Formby. He could hardly help being amused at the other's flustered attitude at finding himself on the wrong ship. Kingston acted magnificently. "I should advise you to apply at the offices of the company, rather than to the captain," added Formby.



Unnoticed by his companions, Count von Brezen slipped the blunt hook on the end of the line under the Crown Prince's belt. (See page 26.)

"You think so? Thanks—thanks so much for the hint. Good-day to you, sir."

Kingston bustled out, leaving the Inner Councillor absolutely unaware that he had, not three minutes ago, revealed to the "colonel" all the Brotherhood's well-guarded plans. He could never learn of what had occurred, and Kingston had been so expeditious with his questioning that the few minutes unable to be accounted for would never be noticed.

On Frank Kingston's part it had been a master-stroke!

Prince Xavier Receives a Surprise.

"By Jove!" murmured Colonel Armytage, as he was being driven Citywards from the London Docks. "By Jove, nothing could have been easier! The way Formby told me everything was simply splendid!"

He lay back in the taxi and considered the matter.

"So Newman is going to use his aeroplane over the job—eh? It sounded risky at first, and hardly practicable, but when it's considered how far advanced aeroplanes have become lately, and what magnificent flying Newman has been doing during the past few months, I do not suppose there is very much in it. In unskillful hands, it would be useless attempting such a thing. Should it come off as anticipated, however, it will be a really splendid method of abducting the prince. He will be taken from the very midst of his friends, and nobody will be able to trace him. Aeroplanes nowadays are far too common to be recognised readily, and Sir Reginald will take care that he is not traced."

Kingston thought the matter over carefully, and his plans were already beginning to form.

"There's plenty of time," he told himself confidently. "I have to-night and all to-morrow before me, and much can be

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accomplished in that time. But I must see the prince—I must have a private conversation with him. How? He's a very public personage, and does not grant interviews to all and sundry."

He considered for a moment.

"Besides, I should not want it known that he had granted an interview to any unknown man, as that might possibly raise suspicion in Von Breczen's mind. I must obtain an interview with him privately. The question is how to do it. Perhaps a few judicious inquiries made in the right quarter will lead to something satisfactory."

Kingston spent over an hour making his inquiries, and when he finally turned his steps towards Great Portland Street, he was feeling considerably pleased.

"I have the whole evening before me," he told himself with satisfaction. "During that time I can go round to the professor and tell him what time to get aboard the Coronet, &c. There is Captain Morrison to be interviewed into the bargain. Dolores, too, must be informed at once of this new move, for I shall certainly want her to go."

He walked briskly up the steps to Carson Gray's front door, and handed his card to Mrs. Webster, who opened the door—he was, of course, still in disguise.

"Kindly take that to Mr. Carson Gray," he exclaimed, "and tell him I am in a terrible difficulty!"

"Very good, sir," said Mrs. Webster, who thought the visitor looked like a client. After the elapse of a few minutes, Kingston found himself in Carson Gray's consulting-room. The detective looked him up and down searchingly, but gave no sign of recognition.

"Good-afternoon, Colonel Armytage," said Gray, shaking hands. He had been disturbed in the middle of a most intricate problem, and was, therefore, in no extra good humour. He looked at the colonel with somewhat unwelcome eyes, as the latter proceeded to remove his hat and gloves, and then seat himself before the fire.

"A nice room you've got here, Mr. Gray," exclaimed Kingston, quietly enjoying the detective's obvious annoyance at being disturbed. Kingston knew he was very busy, and that he hated, at all times, beating about the bush. "Ah, I see a box of cigars over yonder! Perhaps you would be good enough to pass me one!"

"Oh, certainly!" exclaimed Gray, nevertheless surprised at the other's presumption. "If you would state your case, however, I should feel much more satisfied."

"My case, Mr. Gray, need scarcely be discussed yet. This chair is extremely comfortable, and it is my intention to remain in it for a considerable time!"

Carson Gray became incensed.

"Without wishing to be rude," he said, "might I mention that my time is valuable, and that I am at present engaged upon a most interesting problem? I am afraid, Colonel Armytage, that unless you can state your business immediately, I shall be forced to ask you to take it elsewhere!"

"Quite right, Gray, quite right!" exclaimed Kingston, in his natural voice, with a chuckle. "You have put up quite long enough with my tomfoolery! Here is your old cigar," he added, tossing it on to the table. "I have not the slightest intention of smoking it, I can assure you!"

Carson Gray stared, and then burst into a laugh.

"Kingston!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, you are a marvel! I had not the remotest suspicion!"

"I thought you would not have, Gray. The professor disguised me as you now see me, and I am sure there is not a single trace of Frank Kingston about my person except the tone of my voice."

"And that, a moment ago, was utterly changed," declared Gray. "Upon my soul, Kingston, I shall never know in future whether it is you yourself or a real client who comes to see me."

"I promise not to do it again, Gray," laughed Kingston; "but somehow I could not resist the temptation. Well, I have had a most satisfactory interview, and feel that I have deserved a good tea, which, by the by, I trust will not be long in making its appearance."

Carson Gray smiled.

"I am glad to hear you are hungry," he exclaimed. "Let me see, the time is just four-thirty. Tea shall be served in a very few minutes now. Do you intend to remain in that present disguise, or let me see your own features once again? I may add I prefer the latter."

"Then I shall certainly seek the aid of my hypodermic syringe," declared Kingston. "I will tell you everything that has occurred while we are discussing tea."

"Good! I am curious to hear everything."

The detective was interested to a great extent when he learnt how Kingston had gained possession of the Brotherhood's secrets. To Gray himself such a thing would have been impossible, clever detective though he was. And it made him realise what a terribly powerful enemy Frank Kingston was.

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"Having left the docks," concluded the latter, "I spent some little time in making inquiries—not secret inquiries, you will understand, but questions regarding the prince's movements for the remainder of to-day."

"And you are satisfied with what you have learnt?"

"Perfectly, my dear fellow. I only wanted to get at one thing. I wish to speak to the Crown Prince privately, and I think I shall succeed in having my wish granted."

"How?"

"He is visiting His Majesty's Theatre to-night, and returns after the show to Richmond, where he means to stay the night. He has rooms at the Metropole, but happily for my purpose intends accepting the hospitality of some friend or other. Now, the significant part is this, he will travel to Richmond by car-taxi—and will be alone."

"Alone?"

"Exactly. His host cannot attend the theatre, so the prince must perforce take the journey to the suburbs without company. At least, his friends will imagine that he is doing so. As a matter of fact, I shall travel with him."

"You!" exclaimed Carson Gray. "How is that possible, when you have never been introduced—when you have never even met?"

"Quite easily. I do not wish anyone to know of our interview, which will take the prince quite by surprise. The chauffeur who drives the car must even be in ignorance of my presence. It will really be a simple matter, Gray."

The remainder of Kingston's evening was an extremely busy one. Besides spending an hour or two at the Cyril with Dolores, with whom he discussed his plans in full, he interviewed Captain Morrison on board the Coronet, then paid his return visit to the professor. By then there was not much time left to spare, so very soon Kingston departed for the West End.

He was still undisguised, attired as usual in immaculate evening-dress, with a light coat thrown over. He strolled down the Haymarket wearing his customary aimless expression, and nobody would have characterised him as other than a weak-minded dandy.

It was nearly time for the performance at His Majesty's to end, and already there were several taxis and private motor-cars in readiness. Being a Balatarian prince was not looked upon as anything great in London, and hardly anybody took any interest in Prince Zavier's movements.

Kingston waited at the top of Haymarket, just in Piccadilly, and murmured an exclamation of satisfaction as he saw the prince's taxi, which was foremost, glide forward. Its progress was slow, for the bulk of the theatres having just disgorged their thousands of playgoers, the streets were not exactly deserted.

It is a sight to witness the theatre traffic late at night in the West End, and Frank Kingston was very pleased that the roadway was so crowded with taxis and motor-buses. At last the object he was interested in drew into Piccadilly, and was there forced to come to a standstill owing to a block in the traffic.

Kingston was standing on one of the numerous street islands in the centre of the roadway, and smiled with satisfaction as the taxi drew up practically by his side, as he had judged it would. Quite calmly he turned the handle, and just as the vehicle started forward again stepped inside.

Although it was as bright as daylight, there were so many people about that his action was absolutely unnoticed, or, even if somebody did perceive it, it was not given a second's thought. This was what Kingston had relied on, and it was the very audacity of his action which rendered it so successful. The chauffeur was too busy to notice what had occurred.

An exclamation in a foreign tongue was the first thing which assailed Kingston as he closed the door behind him. Seated back along the cushions was a well-developed man of about thirty-five. He had a decidedly foreign look about him, and was attired in conventional evening-dress. He was clean-shaven, and wore a pair of eyeglasses.

As he saw the dandified fop before him, his expression became somewhat hostile, and he bent forward, with the evident intention of calling to the chauffeur through the speaking-tube.

"No," said Kingston, in his quiet, even tones. "Please do not touch that, Prince Zavier. I did not enter this car by accident, but with the express intention of interviewing yourself."

"What do you mean, sir?" replied the other, in perfect English. "Your manners do not seem to be of the best. May I inquire the reason for this unauthorised intrusion? You have the advantage of me."

Kingston looked at his companion for a moment, and was very favourably impressed. Prince Zavier of Balataria appeared to be a very determined man, and one quite capable of holding his own against equal odds. He showed no excitement or agitation, and this told Kingston that he could be relied upon to keep his head in an emergency.

"I am sorry, prince, but it was imperative that I should

speak to you privately," said Kingston calmly. "Please do not raise your voice, or the driver might possibly hear. My name is Frank Kingston, and I am interested in your Highness."

The Crown Prince looked at his companion curiously. "I do not understand," he said. "What does this secrecy mean? If you wanted to speak to me, why did you not seek an interview in the customary manner?"

"Because there would have been an uncertainty about that; of this there is none. In addition, it is imperative that I should speak with you alone, unknown to a soul."

"Really, Mr.—er—"

"Kingston."

"Mr. Kingston, I cannot fathom your meaning. I am unused to being treated in this mysterious manner. Pray enlighten me at once."

"It will be sufficient to say, your Highness, that your life is menaced by your own countrymen, and that I am acting in this way to warn you in time—to prepare you for what is to follow."

Zavier paled a little, and looked at Kingston with startled eyes.

"There is a plot—" he began.

"Precisely. The chief mover in it is General Stolzenburg, and he has directed the Balatarian Ambassador, Count von Brezen, to carry out his orders. You are to be kidnapped, and made an exile on a tiny rock in the Pacific Ocean. No, please do not excite yourself; remember the chauffeur."

The prince had half risen in his seat, his eyes suddenly blazing with fury and hatred, but Kingston pressed him back.

"The scoundrel!" muttered Zavier hoarsely. "Stolzenburg is fit only to be thrown to the wolves. But how did you get to know this? Tell me who your informant is. I must verify your statements immediately."

"On the contrary, your Highness, you must do nothing of the sort. My news is absolutely confidential. Please ask no questions—how I came by it, or why I am interested in the matter. It is not a long journey to Richmond, and it will take me all my time to tell you the bare facts."

"Very well," replied the other, looking at Kingston, curious and agitated. "I will curb my impatience, and hear you out. But it makes my blood boil when I hear you say that my own Ministers are plotting my downfall. It is terrible; it is treason of the basest— But continue, sir; I was forgetting myself."

Zavier lay back among the cushions, breathing hard. The taxi was well on its way to Richmond now, and Kingston wasted no time in letting his companion know what was in the wind. The Crown Prince was absolutely amazed.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "I can see what their dastardly object is. They mean to get me out of the way, so that when my father dies Stolzenburg may become regent. In that position he can introduce his revolutionary ideas, and finally succeed in converting my country into a Republic."

"That is what they are aiming at, assuredly," agreed Kingston gravely.

"And they mean to kidnap me to-morrow night, on the way to Ipswich?" muttered the prince. "It shall never be. I will remain indoors the whole day sooner. These scoundrels must be foiled, and Von Brezen thrown into prison. And you, sir; how can I thank you for warning me in this manner? How can I show my gratitude?"

"By listening to a suggestion I have to make, your Highness," replied Kingston quickly. "If you will think a moment you will realise that it will never do to show your hand—that Stolzenburg must know nothing of what you have discovered. You are in England now, and sooner than let you get back to Balataria in safety the general would have you murdered. From what I understand he is a man with a strong will—a man who will not stick at trifles."

"You are right," muttered the other—"you are right!"

"Then it would be suicide to take any steps at this juncture. What you must do is to pretend to be in ignorance of everything, and allow yourself to be kidnapped—go to the Pacific, so that Von Brezen will wire to his superior that everything has passed off satisfactorily."

"Allow myself to be kidnapped? Your suggestion is—"

"Pray listen a moment!" urged Kingston; and he proceeded to lay his plans before the Crown Prince. In the end his Royal Highness was convinced that this mysterious stranger was right—that his best policy would be to follow Kingston's instructions.

"Then you want me to meet you to-morrow at this old gentleman's house in St. John's Wood, is it? You want me to—"

"Yes," said Kingston. "I want you to see me at the professor's house at three o'clock exactly. There we shall be quite private, and may discuss our plans at leisure. There is scarcely any time left at present, and everything is by no means settled."

As he spoke Kingston glanced out of the window.

"We are nearing your destination," he exclaimed quickly.

"You must decide now or never, Prince Zavier. Will you trust in me, and do as I suggest?"

The other remained silent for a moment, tapping his foot impatiently on the mat below. Then he looked up with a sudden light of resolution in his eyes. He extended his hand towards Frank Kingston.

"Yes," he said fervently, "I will do as you say, Mr. Kingston. I do not know who you are, or why you are doing this for me, but somehow I feel that I can trust you. I will be at the house in St. John's Wood at three o'clock exactly."

In silence the two wrung hands.

"I believe you, your Highness," exclaimed Kingston. "I go now, and before we again meet I hope to have accomplished many objects. There is a lot to be done, and scarcely any time at my disposal. Good-bye until to-morrow!"

"Au revoir, and a thousand thanks— Ah, but what—"

The prince broke off in alarm as his companion suddenly opened the side-door. A cold draught of air struck him in the face, and he started forward in his seat. The next second he was gazing out of the window. But not a sign could he see.

Frank Kingston had gone as mysteriously as he had appeared.

The Abduction of the Prince.

Frank Kingston found plenty of work to occupy his attention the following morning. As he had said, there was a vast amount to do, and very little time in which to do it. By mid-day the *Coronet* was all ready for sailing, and Captain Morrison had received his orders. Everything had been bustle that morning, for Kingston had decided to travel right to the Pacific.

Tim and Fraser had been delighted when they learned definitely that they were to go, especially the former. Kingston spent some little time at his club, for the express purpose of passing round the news that he was going off on a sudden trip; he did not state his destination, but gave the impression that it was to be the Mediterranean.

"Well, I think everything is prepared now," he told himself, as he proceeded on his way to the professor's about half-past two. "Prince Zavier will be here presently, and before night the whole batch of us will be clear of England. It's a sudden change, but not exactly unwelcome."

As he walked along the road in which Professor Polgrave's house was situated his thoughts turned back to the episode just completed concerning Dr. Zeetman, and the news he had read that morning in the paper. The whole thing was out, though, of course, no suspicion of the Brotherhood of Iron was attached to it. Several of the released patients had written long letters describing their escape, and everybody was conjecturing who the mysterious "old gentleman" could be.

Kingston smiled as he realised that that individual's identity would never be fathomed. As far as he was concerned the whole affair was over, and there was certainly something more important now to occupy his attention.

He found the old hermit attired in a slightly different manner to that which he usually affected. He was hugely pleased to see Kingston, and was quite in readiness to depart.

"You have come early," he cried, as he opened the door and admitted the visitor. "Your friend the prince is not expected till three o'clock—at least, so I understood from your words this morning."

Kingston had already paid the professor a visit that day to prepare him for what was to occur during the afternoon. He descended now to the laboratory, and noticed that in place of its usual state of untidiness it was now clean and orderly. The long benches were practically bare, and the bottles on their shelves were arranged in neat, unbroken rows.

"Ah, you notice a difference," cried Polgrave. "I have been busy this morning, and am now quite ready to take up my new quarters on board the *Coronet*. She sails to-night, eh, Kingston?"

"To-night, professor. I thought it best to arrange this house as a meeting-place for myself and the prince, as it is quiet and out of the way. He will be able to come and see me with nobody being the wiser."

"Of course, of course; I quite realise that," replied the old gentleman, looking somewhat strange in his frock-coat and broad, baggy trousers. It was not the suit he usually wore, but one, if anything, rather more ancient. It was in splendid condition, however, and had evidently only been in use on a very few occasions.

Almost on the stroke of the hour the bell of the outer door sounded. Kingston and Polgrave were conversing together when the interruption occurred, and the latter rose from his chair.

"I will go," said Kingston, waving him back, and striding towards the door. He rapidly made his way up the well-

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lighted staircase, unfastened the massive protecting door, and a moment later was face to face with Prince Xavier of Balataria.

"Ah!" exclaimed his Highness. "I was not quite sure whether this was the house. I have come, Mr. Kingston, although I had considerable difficulty in getting away without making my destination known. I am pleased to see you, sir."

He shook Kingston's hand heartily, and the latter was perfectly sure that he was sincere. Somehow these two men had taken a mutual liking to one another immediately. Kingston was quite convinced that Xavier was an upright, honourable gentleman—a man who would make a fine king.

"I can scarcely contain my anger," he exclaimed, as they proceeded to walk down to the laboratory. "I have met Count von Brezen this morning on several occasions, and my hands can scarcely control their desire to grasp his throat. He is a scoundrel, Mr. Kingston—a scoundrel practically as ruthless and revolutionary as General Stolzenburg himself!"

"Have no fear whatever, your Highness," said Kingston. "Your Ministers think everything is on their side—they think they have got the country in their hands, and that you are almost as good as dead."

"When they think that, my friend," declared the prince, with conviction, "they are reckoning without you. I have met many men in my time, but I do not think anyone has impressed me so much as you have. At first sight I took you to be an inane fop, but a little experience has shown me what your real character is."

Kingston merely smiled, as further conversation was impossible. They had entered the laboratory, and Professor Polgrave was advancing towards them, smiling and genial.

"Welcome, your Highness!" he cried. "I have heard all about you from my wonderful friend, Mr. Kingston, to whom I owe a lifelong debt. He saved my life, sir, in a most singular manner, and you will be amazed when you learn half of his accomplishments."

"I have already gained a slight insight into Mr. Kingston's character," smiled the prince. His worried expression vanished for a moment, and his face looked altogether more handsome than previously. Kingston had told him nothing concerning the Brotherhood of Iron, and had no intention of doing so. He knew that he could trust the prince, but

there was really no necessity to take him into his confidence over that particular matter.

"And now," exclaimed the Avenger briskly, "to complete our arrangements."

For the next half-hour the three held a close confabulation, and then the prince rose to depart. He did not waste much time in farewells, for they would all meet again after a very short interval.

"A fine fellow," the prince murmured as he walked away. "I am convinced I can trust him—trust him implicitly to do as he states."

As soon as he arrived in a busy thoroughfare he chartered a taxi, and was driven with moderate speed to the Hotel Metropole. There he retired to his rooms, and, in accordance with arrangements made previously, interviewed one or two important personages from the Embassy, including Von Brezen himself. The latter had come to make sure that Xavier would be ready to depart at six o'clock for Ipswich.

As he bowed himself out the count was smiling in a half-sneering manner. He could see that everything was running on oiled wheels, but there was much below the surface which his eyesight could not fathom.

Precisely at the time arranged the count's large car drew up at the main entrance of the Metropole in Northumberland Avenue. Von Brezen and the Duke of Loamshire himself were seated in the open tonneau, the front seat being occupied by the chauffeur only. The prince would take his place by the latter's side.

The duke, of course, was under the impression that the count was a perfectly honourable gentleman, and had not the remotest suspicion that any political or State treachery was about to be perpetrated. The Inner Councillor himself was congratulating himself warmly, for it was a perfect spring evening.

It was, of course, still daylight, and the air was warm and balmy, with scarcely a breath of wind. Overhead the sky was cloudless, and there was every prospect of a brilliant, starlit night.

"We shall have a fine ride, prince," declared the Duke of Loamshire when the former had taken his seat. "This is a far better method of travelling than by rail."

"Far better," agreed the prince, over his shoulder, producing his magnificent cigar-case and passing it round. The next moment Count von Brezen leant forward and uttered a few words in the Balatarian language.

Xavier looked round sharply.

"You will pardon me, count," he exclaimed, "but while we are in our host's presence I would much prefer you to speak in English."

"Certainly, your Highness," said the count, fuming inwardly at the reproof. "I was merely going to ask you some question connected with the Embassy."

"Then it will do when we return to London," said the Crown Prince lightly. "I have no intention of spoiling a holiday by talking business or any affairs of State. How long do you think we shall be getting there, chauffeur?"

"Well, sir, I can't exactly say," replied the man, who was a common-member of the Brotherhood of Iron. "My engine don't seem to be pullin' as she ought to, but I hope it won't give us any trouble."

"I hope not," replied the prince. But his hopes were not to be realised, for as soon as they reached Chelmsford the chauffeur found it necessary to call a short halt and seek the assistance of a motor engineer.

It was, of course, merely bluff, the chauffeur having already loosened something just before entering the town. After half an hour the party was enabled to proceed. They could have started sooner, only they had been taking a stroll round.

"This is the one disadvantage of motoring," smiled the duke, who was a slightly culpulent person, as he lay back among the cushions. "I think we are all right now, however."

So it proved. The car now made good headway, for there was nothing to stop them. It was now nearly dark, and the chauffeur knew that he had ample time to arrive at the common by a quarter to eight. Had he not caused the slight delay it would have been necessary to travel at a very slow pace, and that would have been irksome.

At last the common was reached, and Count von Brezen felt himself trembling a little at the prospect of what was to come. The night was now decidedly dark, for there was no moon. The glare of the motor-car's lamps cut across the common brilliantly, and both the chauffeur and his superior kept a sharp eye open for Sir Reginald Newman. At the moment the duke was having a slight doze, Prince Xavier and the Balatarian Ambassador talking animatedly of British sport in general.

Suddenly the driver drew his breath in sharply, but gave no other sign. Clearly overhead, outlined against the sky, about a mile to the left, could be seen the distinct impression

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of a large military-type biplane, built on Farman lines. It was approaching with great rapidity, and the count suddenly caught sight of it. He gave no sign whatever, but looked somewhat anxiously ahead.

Not a soul of any description was in sight, and the buzz of the seventy horse-power rotary motor crackled sharply overhead, plainly audible above the hum of the motor-car.

"What is that?" inquired the Duke of Loamshire, suddenly sitting upright and gazing about him. "To my mind it sounds uncommonly like an aeroplane. Do you think—Upon my soul!"

The duke pointed overhead in some excitement, and the three men gazed into the atmosphere at the aerial newcomer. It could be seen that there were two men aboard, and the pilot was evidently manoeuvring his machine round so that it would fly immediately over the car. The latter, however, was not travelling at sufficient speed to keep up with the aeroplane.

"Let her go!" cried the prince, in some excitement. "By Jove, we'll see if we can race the fellow!"

The count smiled in the darkness, for, quite unconsciously, Prince Zavier was playing into the enemy's hands. The car shot forward, and at the same moment the biplane overhead, appearing a very substantial object against the sky, swooped downwards.

"By George," cried the Duke of Loamshire, "the fellow will be on us if he isn't careful!"

For a second the car shot ahead, and then, knowing that things were very favourable, the chauffeur slowed his machine a trifle. What happened next occurred with startling abruptness.

All those in the car were gazing overhead at the aeroplane, and suddenly, with skilful precision, a thin rope came whirling down beside the car—the side in which the count was sitting. Nobody else noticed it, for they were not expecting such a thing, whereas Von Brezen, being on the look-out, spotted it immediately. He grasped it in his hand, felt the blunt hook, and slipped it under the massive belt of the Crown Prince, who was attired in full uniform.

It was an exciting moment. The two machines were speeding along at close on forty miles an hour, almost parallel, and it clearly showed that Sir Reginald Newman was an extremely skilful aviator. His biplane was barely fifty feet from the ground, and flew along with hardly an undulation of any description.

Count von Brezen pulled the rope with a jerk, and felt it grow taut in his hand. He gave three sharp tugs, and knew that the passenger who was attending to the "business" above him understood.

"Just see the way his propeller is whirling round!" cried the Inner Councillor, for the express purpose of keeping his companions' attention fixed on the airman above. "These aeroplanes are marvellous—Why, your Highness, what—Good heavens!"

There was good cause for his startled exclamation, for, with a cry of alarm, Prince Zavier of Balataria felt himself being lifted into the air. Overhead the aeroplane could be seen to be making a swoop upwards.

And, utterly helpless and impotent, Zavier was whirled from his seat and carried into the atmosphere. Those in the car heard him utter a cry almost of terror, and gazed dazedly at the sight before them. It was too absurd to seem true. The happening had been so startlingly abrupt that it had left the duke gasping with amazement.

But it was real enough. Darting across the common, rising higher and higher every second, the aeroplane could be seen against the starlit sky. And below, dangling apparently on nothing, was a dark blotch—the Crown Prince.

The abduction had been successful in spite of all.

What did it mean?

On Board the S.Y. Unicorn.

"Good gracious me! I am bewildered! I—I—"

The Duke of Loamshire lay back in the motor-car and mopped his brow. He was gazing intently at the sky to his left, where, a second before, the large biplane had been visible. The chauffeur, acting on instructions, had brought the car to a standstill immediately the abduction had occurred.

He affected to be frightened and scared, while Count von Brezen, although inwardly he was chuckling with triumph, leapt from the car, and fumed up and down as though at his very wits' end.

"What shall we do?" he cried aloud. "This is amazing—unprecedented! I never dreamed when the aeroplane was hovering over us that any harm was intended. What does it mean, your grace? His Highness has been kidnapped!"

The duke scrambled from the car and gave another fleeting glance at the sky, as though there were a possibility that the aviator would reappear. He was somewhat dazed at this very singular incident.

"The prince has been kidnapped!" he repeated excitedly. "Upon my soul, count, it is the most amazing piece of audacity I ever heard of! Who was the man in the aeroplane, and where is the prince being taken to?"

"That is more than I can say, your grace," returned Von Brezen, apparently as worried and agitated as the other.

"The whole thing has left me in a state of bewilderment. I can hardly realise what it means. Something must be done, and that immediately."

"But what?" exclaimed the duke. "What can we do? We do not even know where the aeroplane came from, who was in it, or where it is bound for. Do you think—are you convinced that it was a put-up affair?"

"There can be no doubt about it," declared the Balatarian ambassador. "There were two men in the aeroplane, and by some extraordinary means a rope must have been lowered without our knowledge."

"But what man could lower the rope with such precision, especially when it is realised that we were travelling at about forty miles an hour?"

"That is a question I cannot answer, your grace. The task was made easy for him by the car travelling at the same pace as the aeroplane, and it is quite possible for an expert lasso-thrower to perform such a feat. But we are wasting time—valuable time. No good can come of our talking here."

"What do you mean to do, then?" asked the Duke of Loamshire, who was not what could be called a man of brisk action.

"There is nothing to do but drive to the nearest police-station and inform the authorities. They, if anybody, can find out what has become of the aeroplane. Surely it cannot have passed on its way without being noticed by somebody? Aeroplanes are not so common as all that."

Yet, although the count said this, he knew very well that Sir Reginald Newman would not allow himself to be traced. The Crown Prince was, by now, well on his way to the Unicorn, which lay in readiness a mile or two from the shore.

"Can you tell me the nearest village or town?" inquired the Inner Councillor suddenly. "There is not a second to be lost. This occurrence is terrible in its significance, and if his Highness cannot be found—"

Count von Brezen shrugged his shoulders as though he were at his very wits' end. His face wore a look of the gravest anxiety, and the duke could not be blamed for imagining him to be really earnest in his statements. The count acted in such a manner that it was impossible to guess the true state of affairs.

"The nearest village is the one we have just passed through," said Loamshire, turning quickly to the chauffeur.

"Jenkins, turn the car round, and drive there like mad."

"Very good, your grace."

The large car was very swiftly turned, and presently was racing back along its tracks, the two agitated occupants every now and again glancing up at the dark sky, as though in search of the mysterious biplane.

But it had gone, and with it was the Crown Prince of Balataria. The abduction had been entirely successful, and Sir Reginald felt mighty pleased with himself. His companion on the biplane was one of his own mechanics, a common-member of the Brotherhood. It had been a very skilful action of the latter's to drop the thin rope into the count's hands.

Sir Reginald had some difficulty in controlling his machine as it flew away from the common with the prince dangling beneath, for it caused the aeroplane to sway considerably.

"Can you haul him up?" bawled Newman above the crackling roar of the engine.

"Yes, sir," replied the common-member, rather nervously, "only up at this height don't you think it'll be rather risky? A sudden dive would—"

"Nonsense!" shouted the other calmly, lifting his elevator still more. "On a calm night like this it's as safe as eggs. Fire ahead with it!"

The biplane was rising higher every minute, and was already over a thousand feet above ground—a truly terrifying height for a man in a position such as the prince enjoyed. Not that Zavier was frightened. On the contrary, knowing that he was comparatively safe, he did not worry himself.

It was gratifying to know that his belt was of exceptional thickness, and of quite sufficient strength to support his weight. And if the aeroplane itself fell, well, he was quite as safe as his abductors. After a while he felt himself being hauled upwards, until at last his head was on a level with the massive wooden struts which formed the landing-chassis.

"Don't struggle," he heard a voice say above the motor's roar. "If you do it will only mean death. We don't want to hurt you in the least, so catch hold of the framework below there, and make yourself comfortable."

Zavier did not answer, but hauled himself up till he was sitting astride two of the wooden bars. His position now was not in the least uncomfortable, and he was able to enjoy a splendid view of the country beneath.

The experience was quite a novel one, and the Crown Prince realised that he was probably the first man to take a ride on the landing chassis of an aeroplane. For, of course, under ordinary circumstances such a position would have been impossible. Even as it was he realised that if the machine was forced to make a sudden landing, he would probably be killed if he retained his present position.

But the prince was in no way disconcerted, for he knew that it was ten to one that anything untoward would happen. He gazed below him interestedly, and reckoned that they must be an enormous height from the ground.

Newman himself was feeling very pleased. He had carried the thing out in a masterful fashion, and now it looked as though he were to break his own record for height.

"Gad!" he exclaimed to his mechanic. "We're getting up fine! How high now?"

The man who was sitting by his side flashed a little electric torch on to the dial of the indicator.

"Seven thousand feet, sir," he exclaimed. "By gosh, another thousand, an' we'll be higher than we've ever been before, sir!"

"With two passengers into the bargain," exclaimed Sir Reginald, with satisfaction. "The worst of it is, this flight is a secret one, and cannot be talked about. Ah!" he added suddenly, more to himself than to his mechanic. "The sea!"

Yes, the sea was sighted at last. In the semi-darkness the line of the shore could be plainly distinguished, lying below them several miles ahead. The twinkling lights of a town lay directly in front; it was probably Felixstowe. Out to sea the masts and sidelights of numerous ships clearly showed themselves.

"The Unicorn's further out," shouted the Inner Councillor. "It's a risky flight, but I think there's not much danger. The engine's running fine, and I've got heaps of petrol in the tank. I've taken risks before and I'm not the man to funk it, especially when the case is urgent. If you see the red light, sing out and let me know. All my attention is centred on the controls."

The wind, what little there was of it, was in the aeroplane's favour, and it sailed along at close upon fifty-five miles an hour. She was still rising a little, and was now over the sea. At that height it would be practically impossible for a person on earth to distinguish her, and the noise of the engine would be completely out of earshot.

The motor was running beautifully, and the sensation was delightful. The Crown Prince almost enjoyed his journey. Above him was the under-side of the lower plane, and the only portion of Newman visible to him were the latter's feet, as they rested on the foot-levers.

Presently the land was left completely behind, and the dark expanse of the North Sea stretched below them. Up at that height it was possible to see miles round, and suddenly the mechanic cried out and pointed to the left.

"There she is!" he exclaimed, in a shout. "See, sir, there, right out past that other ship!"

Sir Reginald looked intently.

"By gad, yes!" he said. "There's no mistaking her. We sha'n't be long now, my dear prince."

As he had said, there was no mistaking the Unicorn. Right at the top of her mainmast a guiding light had been rigged—a red lamp, with its rays directed straight up to the sky. In this way the aviator could distinguish her in a second, while other ships which happened to pass would see nothing of it.

"She's quite alone," said the sporting Inner Councillor, after another long look. "Formby said he would take care to be clear of all other shipping, and he's kept his word like a man. There will be no difficulty whatever in handing over our charge, and getting away without being seen."

The biplane was now very nearly at the end of its journey. Without any warning Newman switched off his engine, and

after the nerve-wracking noise it had been creating the silence seemed almost peculiar. The only sound was that of the propeller, and the soft creaking of the woodwork and canvas as it whizzed through the air.

"Now for a steady glide," said Sir Reginald coolly. "We're a good height up, and shall just about reach the Unicorn when we near the water. By Jove, I'm enjoying this flight!"

A moment later the aeroplane was diving swiftly downwards in a glorious volplane. Prince Xavier guessed that the ship below was the Unicorn, and did not entirely relish the idea of being dropped into the sea like a bag of sand. There was no help for it, however; he was powerless to resist.

The large machine swooped downwards at amazing speed, and the shouts of those aboard the yacht could be plainly heard. About a hundred yards from her side could be seen the shape of a small boat, and Newman steered for this. He turned his head suddenly to the mechanic and nodded. The man bent down as much as he dare.

"Your Highness!" he called.

"Well?" replied Xavier, in a sullen tone.

"You are to be taken aboard this ship; so if you'll slip off your seat, I'll lower you until you're nearly touchin' the water. Then if you drop you'll be rescued by the boat in a minute."

"Very well," replied the prince, deciding to comply with no fuss.

"You understand what you have to do, your Highness?"

"Of course!"

"Then please wait until I give the shout."

The machine flashed past the Unicorn, and Sir Reginald Newman started up his engine once again. He brought the aeroplane round in a wide sweep, and headed straight for the little boat, now travelling at about twenty feet above the level of the water.

"Now, your Highness!" cried the mechanic.

Prince Xavier slipped from the wooden struts upon which he had been sitting, and then felt himself being lowered swiftly. He could see the boat about fifty yards ahead. A moment later he hit the water with a terrific splash, and disappeared below the surface. The impact, although great, had not been one to cause any bodily injury.

The aeroplane, lightened as it was, seemed to lift a trifle, and sway at the unaccustomed commotion. Sir Reginald had his work cut out to steady it, yet he managed to hear a hail from the yacht. It was Captain Formby, talking through a megaphone. Newman waved his hand, and the next moment had disappeared into the darkness, the crackle of his engine growing fainter and fainter.

Prince Xavier of Balataria, meanwhile, was not having a very comfortable time of it. After that sudden dive, he floundered to the surface and gasped for breath. It was evident that he could not swim. But before he was inconvenienced strong hands grasped him and drew him into the boat.

"Please do not struggle, your Highness," said the officer in charge respectfully. "You will come to no harm whatever if you remain quiet."

"Silence!" cried the prince angrily. "I want to know the meaning of this gross outrage. I want to know why I have been treated in this extraordinary fashion. Somebody shall pay for it and pay dearly!"

The officer did not answer, but gave his men a curt order. The next moment the boat began cutting through the water on its way to the yacht's side. The hundred yards were soon covered, and the prince walked sullenly up the accommodation-ladder to the deck.

Two stalwart sailors had hold of his arms, so resistance was useless. He was marched swiftly to the companion, hustled below, and placed in a fairly roomy cabin. Without a word the door was locked, and Xavier found himself alone.

(Another thrilling instalment of this grand serial next Thursday.)

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The Editor.