

Complete Stories for All and Every Story a Gem.



THE LANCASHIRE LAD'S INVENTION!

A Splendid, New, Long Complete School Tale of TOM MERRY & CO. and BERNARD GLYN, at St. Jim's.

: : By : :
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Study No. 6.

"H!"
"What's the mattah, deah boy?"
"Who did that?" demanded Herries.

"Eh?"
"Who did it?"
And Herries, of the Fourth Form, glared round the table in Study No. 6 in the School House at St. Jim's.

There were six juniors at the table, and the table was laid for tea—quite a generous tea, too. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had lately expended one of his celebrated fivers, and Study No. 6 was in clover. Blake and Herries, and Digby and D'Arcy, the four chums who shared that famous study, were all there, and so were Tom Merry and Monty Lowther of the Shell. Manners would have been there, too, but Manners was developing films in some mysterious recess of the School House.

Tea had been progressing quite cheerfully and amicably in Study No. 6. The heroes of the Fourth forgot that they were at war, more often than not, with the champions of the Shell Form. All, as Byron so happily expresses it in describing a less important feast, went merry as a marriage bell. Then came the trouble. Herries had been raising a cup of tea to his lips, when he suddenly set it down, and snorted. Then he demanded who had done it?

Herries was a big, good-tempered fellow, but he could get excited. He would get excited if anybody criticised his bulldog, Towser. He got very excited when Bernard Glyn, the amateur inventor of the School House, used his cornet to assist in an invention he was making, and nearly ruined it. Herries said that the cornet would never play as it did before, and got only angrier when Glyn suggested that that was a jolly good thing. But just now neither Towser nor the

cornet was in evidence, and it was rather a puzzle what made Herries so excited.

"Who did it?" he repeated.
"That depends," said Jack Blake thoughtfully. "What do you mean by 'it'?" If you mean who made the toast, I did it. If you mean, who fetched the cake, Lowther did it. If you mean, who played the giddy ox, Gussy did it. If—"

"Weally, Blake—"
"If it's a joke, I don't like it!" growled Herries.
"If what's a joke?" demanded Tom Merry.

"It!" said Herries.
Monty Lowther tapped his forehead gently. He meant to indicate that he entertained grave doubts of Herries' sanity. Herries looked angrier.

"If it was you, Lowther—" he began.
"Weally, Hewwies," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, jamming his eyeglass into his eye, and surveying his study mate severely. "I twust you are not goin' to be wude to a guest."

"Well, I don't like such jokes!" said Herries. "It's all very well, but I might have upset the tea into my waist-coat."

"Perhaps you wouldn't mind explaining what you're talking about?" Tom Merry suggested blandly.

Herries grunted.
"Somebody chucked a splash of water in my eye," he said.

"Bai Jove! I wegard that as a wudicrous twick!" said D'Arcy. "If you had explained that at first, Hewwies, I should have undahstood."

"Well, don't do it again, Gussy," said Blake. "Pass the jam, Tom Merry."

"Weally, Blake," said D'Arcy, with dignity, "I twust you do not think that I could be guilty of playing such a wudicrous twick."

"Well, I didn't do it," said Blake. "Did you, Dig?"

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Digby grinned.

"No!"

"And I didn't," said Monty Lowther. "Did you, Tommy?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Must have been imagination," said Lowther; "or perhaps Herries was shedding a tear of sensibility, without noticing it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Herries.

"Skimpole was talking very feelingly to-day about the sufferings of the toil-worn millions," Monty Lowther went on. "Perhaps it weighed on Herries's spirits, and he's started weeping all of a sudden!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Herries. "Some silly ass buzzed a drop of water in my eye, and I don't like it."

"Wathah not! I should not like it myself," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I quite agrwee with my fwiend Hewwies. I should not like it at all."

Herries went on with his tea, looking a little disturbed. The other juniors looked puzzled. Any of them might, certainly, have played that little joke on Herries, but none of them would have told an untruth about it. They had all denied knowing anything of it, and yet it seemed unlikely that Herries was mistaken. It was a very curious thing.

Herries refilled his cup, and milked it and sugared it, and stirred it, and then raised it to his lips.

Then there was a clatter!

His arm jerked, and half the tea swamped out over his wrist, and he dropped the cup into the saucer with a crash, and jumped up.

"You ass!" he roared.

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove!"

Herries shook teardrops from his drenched cuff, and glared round the table at the astonished juniors.

"Who did that?" he roared.

"Eh?"

"Some silly ass buzzed a jet of water on my nose while I was drinking!" yelled Herries. "Look here, I'm not going to stand it!"

"But I say—"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Who was it?" yelled Herries.

Jack Blake looked bewildered.

"It wasn't anybody here," he exclaimed. "There can't be anybody hidden in the study playing tricks on us, surely?"

He stared round the study in amazement.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "It's quite poss."

"Look!" said Tom Merry.

Blake jumped up from the table and looked round the study. He dragged out the screen, and looked behind the bookcase, and even under the table. But there was no one to be found. Study No. 6 contained the four chums of the Fourth, and their two guests from the Shell, and no one else.

The juniors stared at one another blankly. Unless Herries was the victim of a most peculiar hallucination, it was a very strange case. Herries was mopping his drenched cuff and sleeve with his handkerchief, and grunting. He was in a bad temper, and very naturally; and he was not at all disposed to believe that he was the victim of a hallucination. His look at Monty Lowther showed that he suspected the humorist of the Shell of somehow contriving that little joke.

"It is vewy wemarkable," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, at last.

"Jolly queer!" said Tom Merry. "Sure you didn't fancy it, Herries?"

Herries snorted.

"Fancy it, you ass! Could I fancy getting a dot of water in the eye, and another on the nose, you silly ass!"

"Pway wemembah that Tom Mewwy is a guest in this studay, Hewwies, deah boy."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Herries plumped down again at the table into his chair. He cast a glance round the table that was a warning of trouble to come.

"It is weally vewy cuwious—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"What's the mattah, deah boy?"

Tom Merry rubbed his nose in amazement.

"I just got a dot of water on the nose!" he gasped.

"Look here—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Look out!" roared Blake, jumping up.

There was a sudden splashing of water on the table. It came down in a rush, and the tea-things were swamped, and the juniors were splashed right and left, in the twinkling of an eye. Tom Merry gave a roar.

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"Groo! Oh! It's coming through the ceiling! Oh! Groo!"

"Bai Jove!"

Splash! Splash! Splash!

Water came sweeping down upon the study table, and fragments of plaster came with it. And jam and cake, and dough-nuts and meringues, swam in a flood of plasterly water and watery plaster! And the juniors, dodging the showers, gazed upward in dismay and amazement.

CHAPTER 2.

The Schoolboy Inventor at Work!

"GREAT Scott!"

"What the—"

"Who the—"

"Bai Jove!"

Splash! Splash! Splash!

Water was pouring through the ceiling of Study No. 6, and fragments of plaster fell with it upon the unfortunate tea-table.

The juniors gazed upward.

"What on earth can it be?" Blake exclaimed, in amazement.

"That's where the water's coming from," said Tom Merry, rubbing a splash from his face. "Somebody's upsetting water up there, and it's coming through!"

"Blessed if I can understand it!" said Blake. "It's a box-room up there, over this study, and there's a tap and a sink in it. It's been used as a dark-room. But—"

"Bai Jove! Somebody's left the tap wunnin'!"

"Manners!" exclaimed Digby. "He's doing his blessed developing up there!"

"The bounder!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"It's not Manners!" he exclaimed. "He's using Lathom's dark-room downstairs. Some ass has turned the tap on!"

"Let's go and see!" exclaimed Herries.

"Good! Come on!"

"We can't finish tea now, anyway!" ejaculated Tom Merry, with a glance at the table. "Looks to me as if the tea's mucked up!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's wotten!"

The juniors left the study in great wrath. Blake picked up a cricket stump before he started. If he found a practical joker in the box-room over the study, it was likely to go hard with that practical joker.

They ran up the stairs to the upper passage, and Blake kicked at the door of the box-room over Study No. 6.

There was a yell from within.

"Oh!"

Blake tried the door. It was locked. He hammered upon the upper panels with the cricket stump.

"Open this blessed door!" he roared.

"Yaas, wathah! Open it, you ass!"

"You chumps!" came a voice from within, which the juniors recognised as that of Bernard Glyn, the inventive genius of the Shell. "You frabjous fatheads! You've made me muck this thing up now!"

"You've mucked up our tea!" roared Blake. "The water's coming through the ceiling!"

"Phew!"

"Have you left the tap running, you chump?"

"By George! Yes!"

"Turn it off, then, you dangerous ass!"

"All right."

"Now open the door."

"Can't be done!"

"Why not, you ass?"

"I'm busy."

"We're going to bump you!" shouted Tom Merry.

The schoolboy inventor chuckled within the locked box-room.

"You're jolly well not!" he replied. "Buzz off! I'm busy!"

"I insist upon your openin' the beastly door at once, Glyn, you fwiughtful ass!"

"Rats!"

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"More rats!"

"What are you doing in there, you chump?" shouted Tom Merry, through the keyhole.

"Working at my invention," replied Bernard Glyn cheerfully.

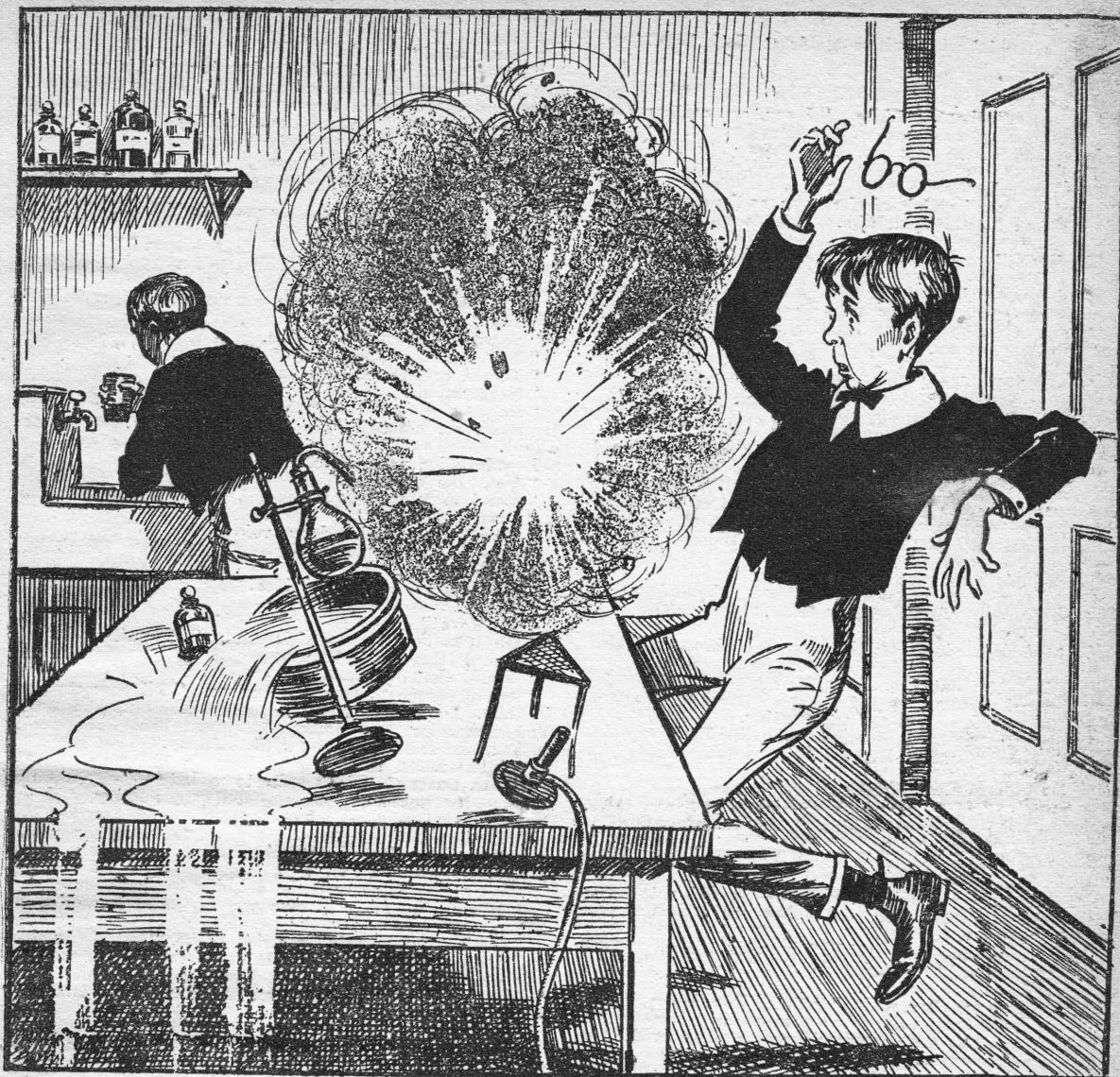
"Oh, he's making another rotten invention!" grunted Monty Lowther. "He won't open the door till he's finished. I know him."

"Let us in to see the invention, Glyn?" shouted Herries.

Glyn chuckled again.

"No fear!"

"What's it about?"



"There was a terrific explosion in the room, and Skimpole staggered back from the table, his spectacles flying off. "Oh—ow! Oh! Oh, dear! Help!" he gasped wildly. (See Chapter 4.)

"You'll know some time."

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

There was evidently no chance of getting in. The excited juniors bestowed a succession of terrific kicks upon the door, and retired. Within the box-room a chuckle was heard again, and the schoolboy inventor went on with his work, whatever it was, as if there had been no interruption. The School House inventor did not allow small things to disturb him when he was at work carrying out his wonderful ideas.

A voice upon the stairs greeted the juniors as they descended to the Fourth Form passage. It was the acid, unpleasant voice of Knox, the prefect.

"What's that row up there?"

"What row?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

Knox scowled.

"You've been hammering and banging up there," he said.

"Take a hundred lines each."

"Weally, Knox—"

"Buzz off, or I'll double it!" said the prefect sharply.

The juniors went down the passage. Knox could impose lines if he liked, and he had a special fancy for imposing them upon Tom Merry & Co.

"The wottah!" muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"The beast!"

"The cad!"

"All Glyn's fault!" growled Monty Lowther. "We'll scrag the bouncer when he comes out of his blessed den!"

"Hallo! What's that about Glyn?"

Kangaroo asked the question. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, of the Shell, were Bernard Glyn's study mates. They were coming along the passage, and had overheard Monty Lowther's remark.

Lowther snorted.

"It's that blessed ass Glyn again!" he growled. "He's got us a hundred lines each!"

Kangaroo chuckled.

"It's that blessed ass Glyn again!" he growled. "He's at it again."

"And he's left the tap turned on over our study, and flooded us out!" growled Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if it seems funny to me!" said Blake, glowering at Kangaroo and Dane, who had burst into a roar of laughter.

"We'll bump him when he comes out! Why couldn't you keep him in your study to work his rotten invention?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling asses!"

"We're fed up with his inventions there," grinned Clifton Dane. "We made him take the blessed machine up into the box-room."

"You ass! He's flooded us out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothin' whatevah to cackle at, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You asses!" shouted Blake. "I say, we can't get at Glyn; let's bump these two silly chumps instead. They're his chums, and it's the next best thing, anyway."

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Kangaroo, as the chums of the School House rushed upon him. "Hands off! I say—Ow!"

"Hands off!" roared Clifton Dane. "Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Bump! Bump!

The exasperated juniors bumped the two Shell fellows, and bumped them hard. It was some compensation for being flooded out of their study, and getting a hundred lines each from Knox, the prefect.

"Ow!"

"Yarooop! Hold on!"

"Give 'em another!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Bump! Bump!

Kangaroo and Dane struggled furiously. They dragged Tom Merry and Blake and Lowther over on the floor, and the juniors rolled in a tangled heap, struggling fiercely. A voice came along the passage from the head of the stairs. It belonged to Kildare, of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's. "Stop that row, you young rascals!" shouted Kildare angrily.

But the juniors were too excited to hear.

"Go it, Tom Mewwy—go it, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bump the wottahs!"

Bump! Bump!

Kildare came striding along the passage, his brows wrinkled in an angry frown.

"Stop it!" he shouted.

"Bai Jove! Kildare."

Tom Merry jumped up, red and panting.

"You young ruffians!" exclaimed the St. Jim's captain.

"Stop that row at once! I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking all round!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Take two hundred lines each, the lot of you, and bring them to me in my study at bed-time!" said the captain of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, Kildare—"

But Kildare was striding away, and he did not listen. The juniors, somewhat dusty and dishevelled, looked at one another in dismay.

"I say, that's too jolly thick!" growled Blake. "That make three hundred lines each for us."

"It's wotten!"

"Wait till we see Glyn again!" growled Tom Merry.

And the other fellows shared his sentiments. There was a warm time awaiting the schoolboy inventor when he showed himself in public again.

CHAPTER 3.

The Great Wheeze.

BERNARD GLYN was not seen again that day until late in the evening. He came down from the box-room at last, after locking the door and carefully placing the key in his pocket. It was evident that he did not mean to run any risk of his invention being disturbed in his absence.

The schoolboy-inventor was looking somewhat fatigued, but very satisfied with himself. When he came into the junior class-room, there was a general exclamation.

"There he is!"

"There's the bounder!"

"Collar him!"

Bernard Glyn looked surprised. The Liverpool lad had already forgotten the accident of the flooding of Study No. 6, in the engrossing interest of his invention.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" he exclaimed, as Tom Merry & Co. crowded towards him.

"Bai Jove!"

"You flooded our study!" roared Blake.

"You've got us a heap of lines each!"

"Oh, I'm sorry about the flood!" said Glyn, with a grin. "It was an accident. I'm really sorry! About the lines; they don't matter!"

"Don't matter!" repeated Tom Merry. "We've got three hundred each!"

"That's all right!"

"Is it all right?" granted Herries. "We haven't written

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School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.:

them, and we shall most likely have them doubled in the morning."

"Never mind."

"Never mind!" howled Monty Lowther. "Listen to him! We'll bump him till he's black and blue! Collar the duffer!" Bernard Glyn backed away.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed hastily. "Hold on a minute!"

"Wats!"

"Never mind about the lines. I'll do them for you."

"What!"

"I'll do every blessed line for you!" said Glyn. "It's all serene—honest Injun!"

"But you can't!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Six of us have got three hundred each, and that's a total of eighteen hundred."

"I can do them. You fellows can do one each, and I'll do the rest."

"To-night?" demanded Blake.

"No; I'm not quite ready yet. To-morrow."

"They'll be doubled by then."

"Never mind."

"Do you mean to say that you can write out three thousand, six hundred lines for us to-morrow?" demanded Digby.

Bernard Glyn nodded coolly.

"Yes," he answered.

"Rats! You can't do it!"

"I can do it easily."

"How?" demanded a dozen voices.

"I've got an invention—"

Tom Merry started.

"An invention for writing lines!"

"Yes."

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh it's all rot!" growled Herries. "It won't work."

Bernard Glyn laughed.

"You'll see," he replied.

"It's all serene!" grinned Kangaroo. "I'll leave my lines for him. Glyn's inventions generally do work, you know. You remember the dummy he made like Skimpole—it walked, and everybody took it for Skimmy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! That's quite twue, but—"

"Suppose we let the lines go on accumulating, and the blessed invention doesn't work?" said Monty Lowther suspiciously.

"Impossible! It will work!"

"Have you finished it?"

"Not quite. I'll give it the finishing touches to-morrow," said Bernard Glyn. "I give you my word it will be all serene."

"That's all very well," growled Blake, "but if the lines are doubled, we sha'n't be able to do them all to-morrow, and that means staying in on Wednesday afternoon to do them. And we've got a footer match with the Grammar School for the half."

"I tell you it's all right."

"We'll give him a chance," said Tom Merry, after a pause. "If the invention works all right, well and good. If it doesn't, we'll give the silly ass the bumping of his life!"

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah! That's all wight!"

And the matter was allowed to rest at that. Upon Bernard Glyn's success as an inventor depended whether he received a record ragging. But the schoolboy-inventor's confidence in his powers was evidently strong. He was not in the least disturbed at the prospect.

Kildare looked into the junior common-room in the School House at bed-time. There was a grim expression on his face.

"Bed-time, you kids," he said.

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"Right-ho, Kildare!"

"I gave lines to six of you," said Kildare. "You were to show them up at bed-time. You have not been to my study, Merry."

"N-no," said Tom Merry.

"Have you done your lines?"

"N-n-no."

"Very well. They are doubled," said Kildare grimly.

"Have you others done your lines?"

"N-n-no."

"They are all doubled, then, and I shall expect them before afternoon school to-morrow," said Kildare. "If they're not done by then you will have them doubled again, and will be detained all Wednesday afternoon to write them."

"Oh!"

"Now go to bed!"

And the juniors went up to bed. Knox met them in the dormitory passage.

"Have you kids done your lines?" he asked.

"Wathah not!"

"They are doubled," said Knox. "If they are not handed in before afternoon school to-morrow, I shall report your names to the Form-master for punishment."

"My dear Knox," said Skimpole, of the Shell, blinking through his big spectacles at the prefect. "I must regard that as somewhat excessive, as Kildare has already doubled the lines he imposed. Consider—"

"Hold your tongue, Skimpole!"

Skimpole shook his head. Skimpole was a youth who had studied many things. He could babble for hours about geology, and evolution, and determinism, but he had never learned to hold his tongue. He blinked at Knox.

"My dear Knox, allow me to point out—"

"Shut up!" shouted the prefect.

"That under the circumstances—"

"Take a hundred lines!"

"Indeed, my dear Knox—"

"Two hundred lines!"

"You cannot be serious. You see—"

"Five hundred lines!"

"My dear—"

"A thousand lines, and show them up before afternoon school to-morrow, or I will cane you!" exclaimed Knox. And he strode away before Skimpole could speak again.

Skimpole blinked round at the chums of the Shell, who were grinning.

"I cannot help regarding that as almost rude of Knox," he exclaimed. "Besides, a thousand lines is a very large imposition, and, deeply engaged as I am in the study of the more important subject of the evolution of the human race, I cannot possibly find the time to do them."

"Then Knox will find the time to lick you," grinned Kangaroo.

"Under the circumstances, my dear fellow—"

"Unless Glyn comes to the rescue with his patent line-writer," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Dear me! That is an excellent idea!" exclaimed Skimpole. "My dear Glyn, I will help you to-morrow to finish your invention."

"That you jolly well won't," said Glyn emphatically. "I don't want the whole blessed thing mucked up."

"My dear Glyn—"

"Br-r-r-r!" said the Lancashire junior. And he went to bed, leaving Skimpole blinking.

When Kildare came back to the Shell dormitory to see lights out, Skimpole received another hundred lines for not being in bed, and an additional hundred for trying to argue with Kildare. Then even Skimpole gave it up and turned in.

CHAPTER 4.

Skimpole Helps.

THE next morning Bernard Glyn did not wait for the rising-bell. He was up before the rest of the Shell, and he made his way to the top box-room. When he was engaged upon any of his wonderful ideas, the Lancashire lad was tireless. He was prepared to put in an hour's work before breakfast upon his patent machine.

Skimpole sat up in bed as he went out. He groped for his spectacles, and jammed them upon his nose, and blinked after the Lancashire junior.

"My dear Glyn," he called out, "if you will wait a few moments while I put on my attire, I will accompany you and render you assistance."

"Rats!" said Glyn cheerily. "Stay where you are! You'll be much more useful if you stay in bed."

"Really, Glyn—"

But Glyn was gone.

Skimpole turned out of bed. He was a very obliging fellow, and he was determined to be useful. Skimpole had rather a turn for mechanics himself, and had a secret belief

that he should really have been the principal, not the assistant. He dressed himself and descended in search of the schoolboy inventor.

Bernard Glyn, at that early hour, when only the early housemaids were up, had not locked the door of his improvised laboratory. Skimpole blinked in through his big spectacles. There was a large table in the middle of the room, and Glyn was at work on a bench at the side. Upon the table there were bottles containing liquids of curious colours, and there were several retorts, and saucers, and basins, and packets of powder. Skimpole blinked curiously round the room. Glyn was very busy, and he had not heard the door open.

"Glyn, my dear fellow—"

Glyn jumped, startled by the sudden sound of a voice. A glass retort dropped from his hand, and was shattered in pieces on the floor.

"You ass!" he roared, turning round.

"Really, Glyn—"

"Buzz off, fathead!"

"But I have come to help you, my dear Glyn," said Skimpole, coming into the study. "It is a Determinist's duty to help other people, Glyn, and you are aware that I am a Determinist."

"You can't help me," growled Glyn. "You haven't sense enough."

"Ahem! Perhaps you would like me to amuse you with cheerful conversation while you work, then?" suggested Skimpole. "I should be glad to explain to you the first principles of the great science of Determinism, as laid down by Professor Balmycrumpet in his famous work, 'Why This Thushness?' In the first place—"

"Shut up!" roared Glyn.

"Ahem! Perhaps I can mix some of these liquids for you?" said Skimpole, blinking at the bottles on the table.

"Let 'em alone, you ass!" said Glyn. "If you mix those powders and the fluids there will be an explosion."

"I hope there is nothing dangerous here, Glyn."

"Yes, there is."

"What is it?"

"A silly ass named Skimpole," growled Glyn.

It took Skimpole some minutes to realise the force of this remark. He stood silent, thinking it out, and Bernard Glyn went on with his work, and was soon so deep in it that he forgot that Skimpole was in the study.

"What are you going to use this stuff for, Glyn?" he asked presently.

"Making ink."

"Ink?"

"Yes, ass! I shall require a special sort of ink for the line-writer, chump; and I'm going to make it myself, ass!"

"Really, Glyn—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"But you are not going to use the explosive powders to make ink, Glyn?" persisted Skimpole.

"No, fathead! They're for something else."

"I should be very pleased to assist you."

"Oh, bosh! Don't talk; you're interrupting the work."

And Bernard Glyn bent over his bench again. Skimpole blinked at him, and then blinked at the articles on the table. Skimpole could see no reason whatever why he should not lend his valuable aid in making the ink. He wanted to be of use; and besides, he wanted to show Glyn that he was not useless. It would be really a triumph to have the ink nicely made when Glyn turned his head again. He did not know which fluids and which powders to use; but, after all, he could settle that by trying them all in turn. Skimpole was a genius, and, as is well known, geniuses are not governed by the same considerations as common persons.

So Skimpole started mixing.

Bernard Glyn gave a sudden yell, and jumped. There was a terrific explosion in the room.

Bang!

"Yow!" roared Skimpole.

"Great Scott! What—"

"Yaroo!"

Skimpole staggered back from the table, his spectacles flying off, his eyebrows singed till hardly a hair was left. He gasped wildly.

"Ow—ow! Oh! Oh, dear! Help!"

"You frightful ass!" roared Glyn. "You've wasted my powder!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"You—you chump!"

"Good heavens!" Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, came striding to the door of the box-room.

"What has happened? What—?"

"You silly fathead!"

"Glyn!"

Bernard Glyn jumped.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir! I—I wasn't speaking to you, sir."

"I should hope not," said Mr. Railton severely.

"I—I was speaking to Skimpole, sir."

"Goodness gracious! What has happened to the boy?" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"He's been meddling with my stuff, sir, and it's gone off," said Bernard Glyn. "He's all right, sir; he's only lost his spectacles and his eyebrows."

"Ow—ow—ow!"

"Glyn, you should not have such dangerous stuff about. I forbid you to purchase any more. And you will take five hundred lines for this offence!" said Mr. Railton sternly.

Bernard Glyn chuckled. He could not help it. Considering the invention upon which he was engaged, the imposition struck him as comical. Mr. Railton looked at him very sternly.

"Glyn, how dare you laugh when I give you lines! Take a thousand lines, instead of five hundred!" he exclaimed.

"I'm sorry, sir!" said Glyn meekly. "Yes, sir. Certainly, sir!"

Mr. Railton strode away. Skimpole recovered his spectacles, and placed them on his nose, and blinked at Glyn through the empty spaces where the lenses had been.

"I refuse to help you any more, Glyn!" he said.

"Hurray!"

"I regard you as a dangerous person."

"Good!" said Glyn. "Now, travel!"

And Skimpole travelled.

CHAPTER 5.

Quite a Success.

FIGGINS, of the New House, tramped in the quadrangle with a moody brow that morning. Kerr and Wynn, who were with him, looked equally moody. The three Fourth-Formers evidently had something on their minds. As a rule, Figgins looked cheerful enough; and as for Fatty Wynn, he was always sunny, unless something had gone wrong with the commissariat. Kerr was a cheerful fellow, too, as a rule. But the faces of the chums of the New House were deeply clouded now, as they tramped in the quadrangle that bright, keen morning.

"It's rotten!" said Figgins, breaking a long silence.

"Beastly!" agreed Kerr.

"It may muck up the footer match to-morrow with the Grammar cads," said Fatty Wynn.

Figgins snorted in an exasperated way.

"Between Monteith and old Ratty life isn't worth living in the New House," he exclaimed. "We shall have to slog every spare minute to-day over those blessed lines, or we shall be done in for the half to-morrow."

"Hallo!" exclaimed a cheery voice, as Jack Blake came by, on the track of an elusive footer. "Wherefore those worried looks, my sons?"

Figgins grunted. He was greatly inclined to bump Blake, as a relief for his feelings. But peace was established between the two Houses of St. Jim's just now. It had been tacitly agreed that the usual rivalry was "off" till after the football match with Gordon Gay & Co., of the Grammar School. On that occasion the juniors of both Houses were to play up for the whole school shoulder to shoulder, as they always did for the school.

"Oh, it's Ratty!" said Kerr. "He's been at it again! We're swamped in lines."

"And Monteith," said Figgins. "He's still in a rotten temper; he's been like it for weeks. He's laddled out lines in chunks."

"Lines?" said Blake.

"Yes. We've got a thousand each altogether," said Figgins dolerously. "What do you think of that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. stared at Blake wrathfully.

"What are you cackling at, you bounder?" exclaimed Figgins angrily. "There's nothing funny in getting a thousand lines each, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you cackling ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Blake.

"Oh, collar him!" exclaimed Kerr.

Blake backed away, holding up his hand.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "It's all right! Pax! Look here, I couldn't help laughing. I know how you can do the bounders in the eye."

"Going to offer to write the lines out for us?" asked Kerr sarcastically.

"Exactly!" said Blake coolly.

"What!"

"It's all serene. Glyn's made an invention," Blake explained.

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"Blow Glyn! What's that got to do with it?" growled Figgins.

"Lots," said Blake cheerfully. "He's invented a dodge for writing out lines by the hundred. It doesn't matter how many; he can do them."

"Seen it at work?" asked Kerr dubiously.

"Not yet. But I'm sure it's all right. You know his wheezes always work," Blake said. "We've promised him a big bumping if it doesn't. But he generally does the things he begins on, you know. You know he's getting money now from a patent bowler he invented. We're going to use some of them here when the cricket begins. I'm feeling pretty certain that it's all right, and we've all got a heap of lines piled up for Glyn to grind off on his machine."

Figgins chuckled.

"My hat, it would be ripping if it worked!" he said.

"What-ho!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Well, I think it will work," said Blake. "We shall all look pretty blue if it doesn't, when the Grammarians come over to-morrow afternoon. Gordon Gay's coming over on his bike to-day to fix up about the match, too."

The breakfast bell rang, and Blake nodded to the New House juniors, and scudded back to the School House. Figgins & Co. returned to their own House for breakfast, looking considerably less clouded. They, too, had great faith in the genius of the Lancashire junior, and they hoped for the best.

Bernard Glyn had just come down from his laboratory when the juniors of the School House came into breakfast. Blake tapped him on the shoulder.

"Finished it?" he asked.

"Yes, it's done! Skimpole's been helping me, but I managed to get it finished, all the same, ink and all. It's ready for bizney immediately after morning school."

"Oh, good!"

"I shall want a specimen line of the handwriting, you know, for each imposition," the Lancashire lad explained, "that's all. Then the machine reproduces it ad lib. It writes Latin up to Cicero's mark."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a jolly wonderful thing, if it works," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, it will work all right," said Glyn confidently. "I simply have to turn the handle, and the lines roll out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins & Co. have a thousand each," said Blake. "I've told them you'll see them through."

Bernard Glyn laughed.

"The more the merrier," he said.

"I suppose it's quick work?" asked Manners.

"Oh, yes; I shall get the whole lot done in half an hour."

"Phew!"

The juniors went into breakfast, feeling very excited and considerably elated. Most of them, by this time, had complete faith in Glyn's invention. And a blissful prospect was opening before them. With such a machine at their command, they would have hitherto undreamt of liberties. The ambition of every junior—the ambition to "cheek the prefects"—could be indulged in almost without limit. For they could easily deal with any impositions that were imposed. Even Knox would have his teeth drawn now, so to speak; he could shower lines upon them, and they would not mind at all.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, glanced severely at Bernard Glyn, as the schoolboy inventor sat down at the breakfast-table.

"Glyn, your hands are not clean!"

Glyn glanced at his hands. He had come down in a hurry from his laboratory, and there were many stains on his hands from his latest labours in the manufacture of a suitable ink for the line-writing machine.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "I've been making ink."

"Go and wash them immediately, Glyn, and take a hundred lines!" rapped out Mr. Linton.

"With pleasure, sir," said Glyn unruffled.

Mr. Linton looked at him angrily.

"Five hundred lines, Glyn."

"Certainly, sir."

And he left the table quite cheerfully. If Mr. Linton had said five thousand lines, it would not have troubled the Lancashire lad very much.

The juniors were in a state of suppressed excitement in morning school. Figgins whispered to Blake in the Fourth Form-room, asking further particulars of Glyn's "latest." Blake whispered back; and both of them received impositions from Mr. Lathom, the Form-master. But they did not mind.

In their present mood, the juniors were likely to reap quite a harvest of lines—and they did! The fellows in the Fourth Form and the Shell were heavily visited with impots, that morning, and they took them with unusual placidity. Neither Mr. Lathom nor Mr. Linton could quite understand it.

After morning school, the "lined" juniors gathered round

Bernard Glyn in the passage. The Lancashire junior was serenely confident.

"Get a line each of your fist, and come up to the lab," he said.

And the juniors responded enthusiastically:

"What-ho!"

Ten minutes later there was a crowd in the lab, and anybody passing outside the door might have heard a faint whirring, grinding sound, punctuated with subdued chuckles.

CHAPTER 6.

Many Lines!

KILDARE was in his study after dinner that day, with a slight frown upon his brow. He was waiting for the juniors to come in with their impositions. As a matter of fact, the St. Jim's captain was feeling that he had been a little too severe, and he did not want to run any risk of spoiling the junior footer match on the morrow afternoon. But, like a celebrated statesman, what he had said he had said, and there was no getting away from it. He hoped that Tom Merry & Co. would show up the lines by the time they had been ordered to do so, and save further trouble.

The lines had to be shown up before afternoon school or it would be too late. It wanted twenty minutes to the hour, when there was a tramp of feet in the passage. Kildare smiled slightly as a knock came at his door.

"Come in!" he called out.

The door opened. Tom Merry and Lowther, Blake and Digby, Herries and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in in a crowd. Each of them had a bundle of papers in his hand.

"Please we've brought the lines, Kildare," said the six juniors together, in a sing-song voice.

"Put them on my table," said Kildare.

The juniors laid them down.

"All here?" asked Kildare suspiciously.

"Yes, you can count 'em if you like," said Monty Lowther blandly.

Kildare smiled slightly. He was not likely to count up eighteen hundred lines. But he knew how many each page should contain, and he counted the pages.

The number was correct. He glanced over the handwriting. It was much neater and cleaner than was usually the case with junior impositions.

"All right?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," said Kildare. "You can go!"

"Oh, good!"

The juniors walked out of the study; and Tom Merry drew the door shut.

In the passage the juniors grinned at one another.

"My hat," said Blake, with a deep breath, "it's worked like a charm!"

"Yaas, wathah."

"Hear us grin!" said Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

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

Kildare's door reopened. The captain of St. Jim's looked out suddenly into the passage. The laughter of the juniors died suddenly away.

"Well," said Kildare grimly, "what's the joke?"

The juniors looked at him very scepishly.

"J-j-joke!" repeated Blake.

"J-joke, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Kildare looked at them very suspiciously.

"Clear off!" he said abruptly.

"Certainly, deah boy."

Kildare went back into his study, and the juniors hurried out of the Sixth Form passage. Kildare picked up the impots. on his table, and looked at them again. He had not been taken in. The lines were all there. All was plain sailing.

There was a knock at his door, and he rapped out "Come in!" Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, of the Shell, entered, with lines in their hands.

"Please here's our lines, Kildare."

Kildare took them.

"Very well," he said shortly.

The two Shell fellows turned to the door.

"I suppose you've bunked up to get these done so as not to be detained to-morrow afternoon?" said the St. Jim's captain.

"Well, we were feeling a bit nervous about the footer match with the Grammar School," said Kangaroo. "You see—"

"I see. Get out."

The chums of the Shell got out.

Five minutes later there was a timid tap at the door, and Skimpole, of the Shell, came in. He had quite a sheaf of papers in his hand.

He blinked at Kildare through his big spectacles, and laid the papers on the table. The St. Jim's captain glanced at them in surprise.

"I gave you only a hundred lines, Skimpole," he said "How on earth many have you got there?"

"Eleven hundred, Kildare. Knox gave me a thousand last night."

"What rot!" muttered Kildare.

"He told me the lines were to be brought to you, as he was going out," Skimpole explained. "You will find one thousand one hundred lines there, Kildare."

"Very well."

"Under the circumstances—"

"You can go!"

"Certainly, Kildare, but I consider—"

"Get out!" rapped the captain of St. Jim's crossly. And Skimpole got out.

Kildare looked very much puzzled. After a little reflection, he picked up some of the manuscripts, and walked along to Mr. Railton's study with them.

The School Housemaster greeted him with a cheery nod.

"What have you got there, Kildare?"

"Lines, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Railton, looking somewhat surprised.

"Yes, sir. The juniors have been getting an extraordinary number of lines lately," said Kildare, "and what is more extraordinary still, they have written them out, and brought them in to time. I suppose they're all right?"

Mr. Railton glanced at the lines.

"Certainly," he said. "They seem to be written even more carefully than usual, too."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in," called out Mr. Railton.

Bernard Glyn entered the study.

"Please, I've done my lines, sir," he said, starting a little at the sight of the captain of St. Jim's.

"Very well. Give them to me," said Mr. Railton.

He glanced at the lines.

"Very good, Glyn," he said. "You may go."

"Thank you, sir," said Glyn demurely, and he quitted the study. Both the Housemaster and the school captain looked curiously at the paper he had brought in.

"My hat!" ejaculated Kildare. "I—I mean, it's jolly surprising, sir. I never knew the juniors turn up with their lines to time like this before."

"I suppose they are afraid of being detained for the holiday to-morrow," said Mr. Railton. "I believe the junior eleven is playing the Grammar School team."

"Yes, I suppose that's it," said Kildare.

"The lines are certainly genuine," said Mr. Railton. "You have only to look at them. I know it is a common practice for the boys to help one another with their lines; but that has certainly not been done in this case. You see, here is Blake's handwriting—it is the same all through—his handwriting exactly. Here is D'Arcy's—a very good and elegant hand—it is the same from beginning to end. Each junior has evidently written out his own lines without assistance."

"Yes; but it seems queer," said Kildare.

And he retired from the study. He paused outside Mr. Lathom's door. Five or six juniors were inside the study, and Kildare recognised Blake and Digby through the half-open doorway. He could not help hearing what they were saying.

"Please we've brought our lines, sir."

"Very well," said little Mr. Lathom, in his kind way.

"Pray lay them on my desk. You may go."

Kildare walked on, feeling very much puzzled. There had been more lines in the Fourth Form, evidently, and they had been faithfully written out, in addition to the many lines he had already seen. Struck by a sudden thought, the captain of St. Jim's turned his steps in the direction of Mr. Linton's study. He was not surprised to see Tom Merry, Manners, Glyn, and two or three more Shell fellows inside the study, with papers in their hands. He heard Monty Lowther's bland tones.

"Please we've brought our lines, sir!"

Kildare almost gasped.

"Well, this beats me!" he muttered.

He walked away very much puzzled. He did not return to his study, but went out into the quadrangle. It was close upon time for afternoon school, and he met Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, as the latter came over for afternoon classes when the bell rang.

"Just a minute, Monteith!" said Kildare.

Monteith nodded, and paused.

"I believe some of the juniors in your House have had rather heavy impots. lately," said Kildare.

Monteith frowned.

"I don't see what that has to do—" he began.

"With me?" said Kildare, with a nod. "Quite so. I was only asking out of curiosity, not because it's my business."

"Oh!" said Monteith. "Yes, Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn had a thousand lines each to-day—half from me and half from Mr. Ratcliff. Why?"

"Have they done them?"

"Yes."

"That's all!" said Kildare. "I wondered, that's all!" And he nodded and walked away, leaving Monteith considerably perplexed. But Monteith was not so perplexed as Kildare himself was. The captain of St. Jim's was amazed. It had been the same in both Houses, then. It was not only Tom Merry & Co. who had been seized with that wonderful fit of industry.

Kildare simply could not understand it!

CHAPTER 7.

Quite Triumphant!

TOM MERRY grinned a cheerful grin as he came out of the Shell Form-room after lessons that afternoon. He had earned a hundred lines during lessons. But they did not weigh upon his mind. With the aid of Glyn's new invention, they would be knocked off in the course of five minutes or so. Monty Lowther and Manners had a hundred each, and Kangaroo had fifty. Never had Mr. Linton known his pupils to succeed impositions with such equanimity, and he was puzzled.

The Fourth Form were out of their class-room, and Blake greeted the Terrible Three in the passage with a cheerful grin.

"Lines?" he asked.

"Yes, rather. A hundred each," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I've got fifty!" said Blake. "Gussy has scored a hundred!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Herries and Dig fifty each, and Reilly a hundred," grinned Blake. "Where's Glyn?"

"Here I am!" said Bernard Glyn cheerfully.

"Good! We've got to show up the lines by eight!"

"Show them up before six if you like," grinned the Lancashire lad.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go up and see 'em ground out!" said Herries.

And all the juniors who had lines—including Figgins & Co., of the New House—flocked up to the Lancashire lad's laboratory over the Fourth Form study.

Bernard Glyn's machine was ready for use.

It was a curious-looking contrivance, and the juniors, though they had already seen it at work, watched it with much interest as the Lancashire lad fed in the paper, and turned the long handle at the side.

It was certainly a marvellous contrivance. It required only a line done by the supposed writer of the lines, and the machine reproduced ad lib.

Arthur Augustus jammed his monocle into his eye, and watched the machine at work, with the steady hand of the inventor on the handle.

"Bai Jove. It's wippin'!" the swell of St. Jim's ejaculated. "I should weally nevah have thought of anythin' of that sort myself, you know."

"Go hon!" grinned Blake.

"Weally Blake—"

"It's splendid!" said Kerr. "It will be a lot of use to us, now that Monteith has taken to lading out lines so liberally. You should have seen his chivvy when we took in our lines this afternoon. He was hoping to have an excuse for detaining us to-morrow afternoon."

"The wottah!" said Arthur Augustus.

"There's your little lot, Gussy!" said Bernard Glyn. "You will notice that I've improved upon the writing with the machine."

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Kidare was looking like a chap in a dream when he got our lines," said Tom Merry, laughing. "He couldn't make it out."

"He never can make out your lines," said Monty Lowther. "Rats! We might get a few hundred lines done, to keep in stock on this blessed machine, in case it busts," said Blake thoughtfully.

"It won't bust!" said Bernard Glyn confidently. "It's all right—all wool and a yard wide! Only we shall have to keep the secret. Mellish or Levison would give the game away to the prefects if they knew."

"Better lock the machine up in the study when we go to bed," said Tom Merry. "It won't be safe up here. Anybody has a right to enter the box-room."

"What-ho!" said Kangaroo.

And when the lines were finished the machine was enclosed in its cover, and the juniors carried it down to Bernard Glyn's study, the end study in the Shell passage. And when it was deposited there, the door was locked on the outside, and Glyn deposited the key safely in his pocket.

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The juniors had been ordered to show up their lines before eight o'clock. Quite early they brought them in to their Form-masters.

Mr. Lathom and Mr. Linton were surprised. But the lines were excellently written, and they could not complain. The juniors departed in triumph, and in the passage they hugged themselves with glee. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther celebrated the triumph of genius with an extra special tea in the study, to which five or six of the other fellows came.

They were in the midst of it when the captain of the Grammar School junior eleven arrived, with a couple of other Grammarians, to settle the final details of the football match fixed for the morrow afternoon.

Gordon Gay, Frank Monk, and Carboy were heartily greeted as they came into Tom Merry's study. The two schools—the junior portions of them at all events—were generally at war. But on the occasions of football matches they sometimes suspended warfare, though a footer match between the two schools had once been known to finish up in a free fight.

But the Lancashire lad's invention had thrown Tom Merry & Co. into such high good humour that they could cheerfully have hugged the Grammarians.

"You fellows seem to be specially jolly just now," Gordon Gay remarked, as he accepted a place at the tea-table, and a cup of tea.

Tom Merry laughed.

"We've got good reason," he replied. "Without being personal, Gay, old man, I think we've got a peg or two ahead of the Grammar School this time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rats!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "What have you done? Got a new dodge to save yourselves from being licked in the match to-morrow?"

"Weally, Gay—"

"Oh, we shall win the match as usual," said Tom Merry airily. "It's not that. But we've got a big score over masters and prefects."

"Knocking them hollow!" said Blake, with a grin.

The Grammarians were interested at once. They could thoroughly sympathise with anybody who scored over the natural enemies of youth—masters and prefects.

"Go ahead!" said Frank Monk. "What's the wheeze?"

"A new invention of Glyn's," said Tom Merry. "A patent line-writer."

"A patent which?" ejaculated Carboy.

"Well, it isn't exactly patent, but it ought to be," said Tom Merry, laughing. "You see, the invention is the sort of thing that requires to be kept secret. But if it could be patented and sold cheap, it would come as a boon and a blessing to thousands of schoolboys. There's nothing like it."

"Nothin', deah boy!"

"Let's have a look at it!" said Monk.

"Come into my study after tea, and I'll show you the thing at work," said Bernard Glyn.

"What-ho!" said Gordon Gay.

The Grammarians were evidently thinking about the invention over tea. They laughed uproariously at Tom Merry's description of the lines taken in to Mr. Railton and Mr. Lathom and Kildare. It was a joke that they could understand and appreciate.

Over tea the details of the footer match were settled. Frank Monk and Gordon Gay promised the Saints the licking of their lives, and Tom Merry promised them a record wallop, and both sides intended to do the best they could to keep their word.

But keen as the Grammarians undoubtedly were over the football match fixed for the morrow afternoon, it was evident that just at present the patent line-writer was occupying most of their thoughts.

As soon as tea was over they accompanied the juniors to Bernard Glyn's study. The Lancashire lad lifted the cover of the line-writing machine with a very impressive air.

"There you are!" he exclaimed.

The chums of the Grammar School looked at the wonderful machine with great interest.

"And does it really write out lines?" asked Carboy, with a slight touch of doubt in his tones.

"Write a line on a sheet, and give it to me, and I'll show you!" said Glyn.

"Good!"

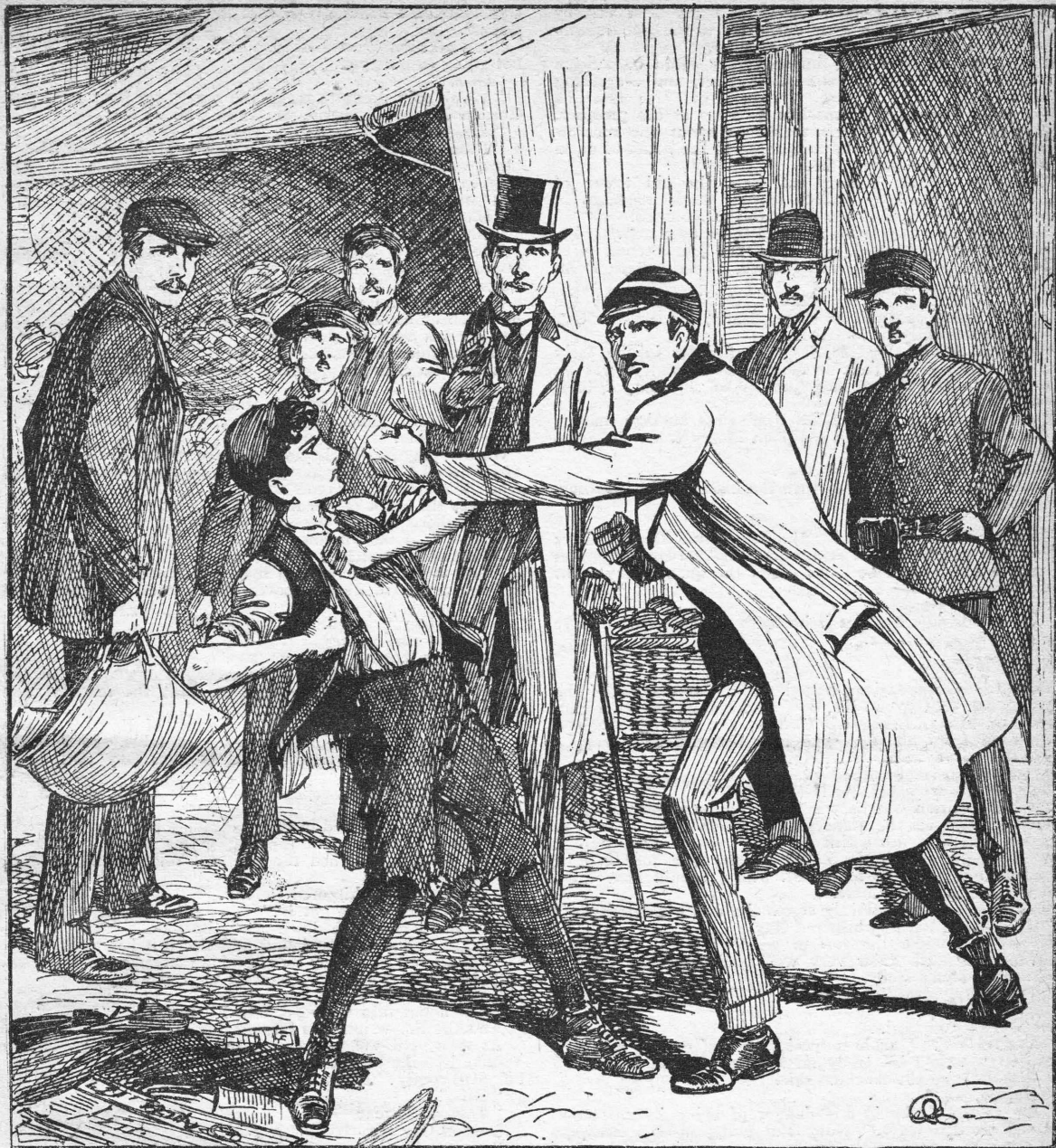
Carboy wrote a line, and handed the sheet to Bernard Glyn.

The Lancashire lad inserted it into the machine, and then manipulated the handle. The Grammarians watched him in amazement.

In a minute Glyn handed Carboy a page neatly written out.

"There you are!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Gordon Gay.



Bolsover hit the little fellow savagely, scattering his papers to the wind. "Percy!" It was a sharp, angry voice, and Bolsover swung his head round with a look of alarm. (For this incident see the grand long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co. entitled "Bolsover's Brother," by Frank Richards, which is contained in this week's issue of our splendid companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.)

"What do you think of it, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard it as amazin' myself."
 "Wonderful!" said Frank Monk.
 "Yes, rather."
 "We've turned in thousands of lines, and we're going to turn in a few thousand more," grinned Blake.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Gordon Gay's eyes twinkled.
 "I guess we should like a machine like that at the Grammar School!" he remarked. "When Hake, our prefect, hands out lines—which he's always doing—it would be ripping to be able to rip them off in a few minutes on a machine. But you've got all the brains at St. Jim's."
 "Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy innocently.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, you fellows—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gordon Gay & Co.

And then the Grammarians took their leave. Gordon Gay's eyes were twinkling as he mounted his bicycle. The sight of the patent line-writer seemed to have put a new idea into the head of the Grammarian.

CHAPTER 8.
The Grammarians' Raid.

THAT night more lines were handed in by Tom Merry & Co. Never had they had so many lines imposed, and never had they handed them in with such promptness. By the time they went to bed the juniors, in spite of the frequency of the impositions, had cleared them all off; and they went to bed, as Blake expressed it, with a clean bill of health.
 They were anticipating fun on the morrow.

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Masters and prefects could impose as many lines as they liked, but it would make little difference to the juniors who were in the secret.

As fast as the lines were imposed they could be written out upon Bernard Glyn's patent line-writer, and everything would be well.

The juniors chuckled themselves to sleep at the prospect. They would not have felt so secure about the morrow if they had known what was happening in the hours of darkness after they had gone to bed.

When ten o'clock chimed out from the old tower of St. Jim's four shadowy cyclists stopped their machines in the road near the wall of St. Jim's and dismounted.

Had there been any light, and had there been a passer-by, that passer-by could have seen that the four cyclists were Gordon Gay, Lane, Monk, and Carboy, of the Fourth Form of Rylcombe Grammar School.

Lights were out—for the juniors, at all events—at the Grammar School, as well as at St. Jim's; but Gordon Gay & Co. had evidently broken bounds.

They had hidden the bicycles out of doors in the early evening, after riding back from St. Jim's; and it was an easy task to the enterprising juniors to slip out of their dormitory after lights out.

But what they wanted at St. Jim's was another matter. It would have been difficult for Tom Merry & Co. to guess that.

"Quiet!" muttered Gordon Gay.

"What are we going to do with the bikes?" asked Carboy.

"Shove them in the hedge."

"Good!"

"I know where to get over the wall," said Gordon Gay; "I've been over it before. Only don't make a row. Taggles is sure to be up; and he looks round the quad. every night before going to bed."

Frank Monk chuckled.

"We can handle Taggles if he turns up," he said. "I've brought a rope with me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet!"

The three Grammarians halted under the shadow of the slanting oak that grew over the school wall. Gordon Gay helped up Monk, Lane, and Carboy, and then was helped up himself from above. The four Grammarians dropped inside the school wall.

"Here we are!" breathed Frank Monk.

Their hearts were beating fast now.

Their expedition was only a raid, such as was continually occurring between the juniors of the two schools; but at such an hour they ran a risk of being treated as burglars if they were discovered. It would be no joke for them if Taggles, the school porter of St. Jim's, should hear them and set his big mastiff loose.

The juniors trod cautiously across the dusky quadrangle.

"Here's the place!" whispered Gay.

He stopped under the row of windows belonging to the Shell passage. He knew very well which was the window of Bernard Glyn's study.

"That's the place," said Lane. "You're sure the thing is there, Gay?"

Gordon Gay nodded.

"Yes, rather! I made a special note of exactly where it was. Glyn locked his study on the outside and took away the key, to keep the machine safe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So we sha'n't be in any danger of being interrupted!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Now, I'm going up the rain-pipe and along the ledge to the window."

"It's jolly risky!" said Monk.

"Oh, that's right enough! I've seen Blake do it; and what Blake can do I can do, I suppose," said Gordon Gay.

Lane gave a sudden start.

"Hark!"

There was a footstep in the gloom, and a grumbling voice was heard:

"Now then! I'll report yer! You're out of your dormitory, I know that! I've 'eard yer speakin', so you may as well show yourselves!"

It was the voice of Taggles, the porter.

"My hat!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Done!" muttered Lane.

"Quiet! He takes us for St. Jim's kids!" whispered Gordon Gay. "Keep in the shadow of the wall, and collar him as he comes up!"

"He'll yell—"

"No, he won't. I'll take care of that."

The portly form of Taggles loomed up dimly in the gloom.

"I'll report yer!" he said, as he caught sight of the dusky forms.

"I'll report yer! I'll— Ow! Oh!"

Taggles broke off suddenly as the four juniors seized him.

He made a wild attempt to yell; but as he did so Gordon

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Gay jammed a handkerchief into his mouth, and he gurgled instead.

"It's all right!" said Gordon Gay, in a whisper. "We're not going to hurt you."

"Groo!"

"We're only going to make you a prisoner for a bit," said Gordon Gay. "I suppose you know who we are."

"Yowp!"

"I am Captain Red Hand, the Terror of the Rocky Mountains, and these are my trusty bravos!" whispered Gordon Gay, in a thrilling voice. "A word, a movement, a struggle, and you are a dead school porter! Catch on?"

"Oh!"

"Bind him, my men!"

The "men" chuckled, and bound Taggles. He was jammed against the nearest tree, and the rope was wound round him, and the handkerchief tied across his mouth.

Taggles's brain was in a whirl. He did not believe that he had been captured by the Terror of the Rocky Mountains, but he was very much alarmed. It was clear to him now that the juniors did not belong to St. Jim's, and he wondered whether they might possibly be some youthful gang of burglars.

Whether they were or not, they were free to do as they liked; and the unfortunate school porter had no power to interfere with them.

Gordon Gay and Carboy climbed the rain-pipe like monkeys, and worked their way along the stone ledge till they could reach the window of Gyn's study.

It was the work of ten minutes.

Then there was a click, and the Grammarian juniors disappeared in at the window.

Gay struck a match in the study.

There was the line-writing machine standing upon a table in the corner, in its zinc cover, just as the Lancashire lad had left it.

Gordon Gay grinned.

He lifted the cover and took the machine out. It did not weigh very much. Then he replaced the cover upon the base-board of the machine and fastened it down. Unless the cover were lifted no one could see that the machine had been removed.

An old box that had contained some of Bernard Glyn's supplies was dragged out from under the table, and the line-writer was jammed into it, and Gordon Gay tied it up securely.

Then he attached a rope to the bundle and lowered it out of the window.

Monk and Lane stood in the quadrangle below to receive it. Taggles, gasping, with the gag in his mouth, unable to give the alarm, watched the youthful raiders with growing uneasiness.

"All serene!" whispered Carboy.

"Right-ho! We've got it!"

Gay tossed the rope down after the bundle, and then the two climbed out of the window and closed it behind them.

Two minutes later they stood beside the juniors in the quad.

"Here we are again!" chuckled Carboy softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get it out into the road, and I'll look after Taggy."

And the line-writer was borne away in triumph.

As soon as it was safely over the school wall Gordon Gay returned to the bound school porter.

"Still comfy?" he asked.

"Groo!"

"Taggy, old man—"

Gordon Gay removed the gag.

"Master Gay!" whispered Taggy, spluttering.

Gay grinned.

"Yes, you've got it!"

"I'll report yer! I'll—"

"Pax, old man!" grinned Gay. "Look here, this is only a jape on Tom Merry & Co.—no harm in it. I'll tip you half-a-crown if you'll say nothing about it—honour bright! If you don't promise I'll leave you tied up."

"Oh! Groo!"

"It's only a jape!"

"What 'ave you took away?" demanded Taggles.

"One of Glyn's inventions, that's all! And we're going to return it later, of course. It's only a jape on them."

"Hall right!" said Taggles. "It's a go, Master Gay. I take your word."

"Good!"

Gordon Gay released the school porter, pressed a half-crown into his hand, and ran after his chums.

Taggles returned, grunting, to his lodge. He knew that he could take Gordon Gay's word, and he was satisfied.

Four triumphant cyclists, bearing the captured machine among them, rode away in high glee towards the Grammar School. There was a surprise awaiting Tom Merry & Co. on the morrow.

CHAPTER 9.

Lines and Lines and Lines!

TOM MERRY opened his eyes and yawned as the clang of the rising-bell sounded through the keen, frosty air of the morning.

Clang! Clang!

It was a bright, winter's morning, but very cold. Red was nice and warm, and early rising did not always appeal to the juniors. Lines for late rising, as a rule, checked any desire on the part of the juniors to indulge in another ten minutes in bed. But just now lines had lost their terror for Tom Merry & Co.

Tom Merry yawned, thought of the line-writing machine, chuckled sleepily, and turned over for another snooze.

Monty Lowther sat up in bed.

"You fellows getting up?" he asked.

Snore!

"I say, Tommy—"

Snore!

Monty Lowther chuckled, and settled down again.

The Terrible Three remained in bed, and so did Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane. The other fellows, who were not in the secret, turned out as usual.

"Aren't you getting up, Tom Merry?" demanded Gore, shaking the hero of the Shell by the shoulder.

Tom Merry opened his eyes and blinked at him.

"No!" he murmured.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing!"

"Why don't you get up, then?"

"Don't want to."

Gore stared.

"You'll have Knox up here!" he exclaimed.

"All serene!"

"You'll get a hundred lines, you ass!"

Tom Merry chuckled.

"I don't mind."

"Well, I think you're a silly jay!" said Gore.

"Thanks!"

And Tom Merry closed his eyes again.

Gore, very much puzzled, went on with his dressing. The Shell dressed and went down, leaving six juniors still in bed.

Tom Merry sat up as the door closed.

"Hang it!" he said. "This isn't very much fun, after all! I don't like slacking!"

"Oh, lie down!" said Kangaroo. "Don't spoil the jape!"

"Yes, but—"

"Shut up! Here's a prefect!"

Tom Merry hastily replaced his head upon the pillow.

The door of the Shell dormitory opened, and Knox, the prefect, came in. He stared at the six slackers in amazement.

"Get up, you lazy young bounders!" he shouted.

Snore!

"Tom Merry!"

"Hallo!" yawned Tom Merry.

"Take a hundred lines for staying in bed!" shouted Knox.

"All serene!"

"And if you're not down in five minutes, it's doubled!"

"Good!"

Knox stamped out of the dormitory. Bernard Glyn burst into a chuckle.

"Knox thinks he'll fill up the afternoon for us, and muck up the Grammar School match," he remarked. "Don't move, any of you—see what he says in five minutes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The door of the Shell dormitory opened, and an eyeglass gleamed there. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked in.

"Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "What's the little game? What do you fellows mean by slackin' like this? What are you up to?"

"Getting lines!" said Kangaroo.

"Bai Jove!"

"Knox will be seeing red soon," remarked Manners. "It will be funny to see him ramp!"

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy retired, laughing. The five minutes had barely elapsed when Knox, the prefect, returned to the Shell dormitory. He hoped, as a matter of fact, to find that the slackers had neglected his warning. It gave him a peculiar pleasure to pile up lines for them when they specially wanted to be free in the afternoon. That was one of Knox's amiable little ways.

He stared in angry amazement at the recumbent juniors.

"Not up yet!" he said grimly.

"No, not yet!" yawned Monty Lowther.

"Your lines are doubled!"

"Thanks!"

"And they are all to be written out, and handed in by tea-time to-day!" said Knox, with relish.

"Certainly!"

"If that mucks up your half-holiday, you will only have yourselves to thank!" said Knox, with a grin.

"Oh, that will be all right, Knoxe!" said Tom Merry.

"Don't you worry about that!"

"Get up now, or I'll make it five hundred each!"

"Too sleepy!" yawned Lowther.

Knox stared blankly. He could not understand the chums of the Shell at all that morning.

"What do you mean?" he roared. "Do you want impositions?"

"Yes; we're making a collection!" Monty Lowther explained blandly. "Have you got any more to ladle out, Knoxe, old man?"

"You—you cheeky imp—"

"Go it!"

"You lazy, slacking, impertinent young rascal—"

"Pile it on!"

Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, came into the dormitory. He gave the slackers of the Shell a stern glance.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed.

"It means that these juniors are defying me, sir," said Knox savagely. "I have told them again and again to get up, and doubled their impositions each time, and they refuse to move!"

"Indeed!"

"I have just told them that they shall have five hundred lines each if they do not get up, and they will not stir!"

"What does that mean?" demanded Mr. Railton, looking at the juniors. "That is a very heavy imposition, but not too much under the circumstances."

"You see, sir—" began Lowther.

"Have you defied your prefect's orders, Lowther?"

"Yes, sir."

"What! And why, Lowther?"

"It's so funny to hear him rave, sir!" said Lowther blandly. "I like to see Knox in a tantrum, sir! It's as good as a Punch and Judy show!"

Knox turned crimson.

"Lowther," said Mr. Railton sternly, "you are impertinent!"

"Not to you, sir," said Lowther. "Only to Knox, sir. It's so comic to see him ramp, sir!"

"Take a thousand lines each for staying in bed and being impertinent to a prefect!" said Mr. Railton. "I shall expect the lines before tea! Now get up, or it will be the worse for you!"

And Mr. Railton left the dormitory, followed by Knox. Tom Merry & Co. turned out at once. They had no desire to disobey Mr. Railton. They chuckled as they dressed.

"Thousand lines each!" grinned Kangaroo. "That mucks up the footer match—if Glyn's machine should bust!"

"It won't bust!" said the Liverpool lad.

"It will be funny to see Railton's face when we take them in," grinned Monty Lowther. "If Knox sees us playing footer, he'll make sure that the lines aren't done."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Shell, very much pleased with themselves, and the successful ragging of the unpopular prefect, descended to breakfast.

CHAPTER 10.

A Surprise for Tom Merry & Co.

JACK BLAKE greeted the chums of the Shell with a cheerful grin as they came down.

"You're just in time for breakfast," he remarked.

"How many lines have you got?"

"Thousand each!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all right! We'll collect as many as we can!" grinned Digby. "It will be ripping fun to work them all in."

Knox is going about like a bear with a sore head! He can't catch on to it at all."

"Bai Jove! No."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. came across to see the Terrible Three before breakfast. They were in high spirits.

"We dropped a cushion on Monteith over the banisters," Figgins explained. "It was an accident, of course—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But he was very ratty!" grinned Kerr. "He's given us a thousand lines. Pretty thick, but Ratcliff always backs him up in that kind of thing, so it's no good saying anything. But it really doesn't matter, does it?"

"Not a bit!" grinned Glyn. "I'll grind 'em out for you!"

"Monteith says they're to be shown up by three-o'clock."

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said Kerr. "That's specially to muck up the Grammar match, of course!"

"Nice fellow!" murmured Monty Lowther. "How pleased he will be when you take the lines in prompt to time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The breakfast bell rang, and the juniors went into their own Houses to breakfast. Jack Blake bumped into Knox in the doorway of the School House dining-room, and made a wild grab at the prefect to save himself. Whether by accident or design, he caught the senior by the ears, and dragged him over, Knox, in his surprise, going down on the floor with a heavy bump.

Blake gazed at him with an expression of astonishment.

"I'm sorry!" he ejaculated.

Knox jumped up in a rage.

"You clumsy young cad," he roared, "I'll—"

"Calm yourself, Knox!" said Mr. Lathom, coming into the room. "That is not the way for a prefect to speak!"

"Did you see what he did, sir?" roared Knox.

"Yes. Take a hundred lines for your carelessness, Blake!"

"Yes, sir."

Blake did not mind at all.

He grinned as he sat down at the Fourth Form table.

As a rule, the juniors were considerably circumspect at table. But this morning they allowed themselves unusual freedoms.

Blake rolled up pellets of bread, and jerked them across to the Shell table, catching Skimpole behind his large ears.

Skimpole, in a state of great surprise, looked round so often that Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, rapped out at him at last:

"Skimpole!"

The genius of the Shell blinked at his Form-master through his big spectacles.

"Yes, sir."

"Cannot you keep still?"

"Certainly, sir! But—Ow!"

Another pellet caught Skimpole behind the right ear as he spoke, and he clapped his hand to the auricular appendage.

"Skimpole!" thundered Mr. Linton angrily.

"Yes, sir."

"Take a hundred lines, and be quiet!"

"Certainly, sir! But I felt a sudden pain, sir, as if I had been stung by a bee, sir!"

"A bee!" thundered Mr. Linton. "A bee—at this time of the year, Skimpole! Take two hundred lines for impertinence, Skimpole!"

"Oh, sir—Ow!"

"Skimpole!"

"There it was again, sir—a sudden, sharp concussion, sir. This is most remarkable!" said Skimpole, blinking round with a very astonished expression.

Mr. Linton thought it very remarkable, too. He looked round with his sharp, keen eyes, and discovered Blake in the act of jerking another pellet.

"Blake!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" said Blake meekly.

"You were throwing something at Skimpole!"

"Was I, sir?"

"Do you deny it?"

"No, sir."

"Mr. Lathom, I appeal to you—"

"Quite right, sir!" said Mr. Lathom. "Blake, you will take a thousand lines for your conduct, and I shall expect them before tea!"

"Yes, sir," said Blake.

"Ow!" ejaculated Skimpole.

He rubbed his ear again. Mr. Linton swung round with a furious face.

"Was that you again, Blake?"

"No, sir," said Blake.

"It was Digby," said Mr. Lathom; "I saw him. I am very sorry for this, Mr. Linton. I cannot understand the behaviour of my boys this morning. Digby, you will take a thousand lines, and stay in this afternoon until they are written!"

"Yes, sir," said Digby meekly.

"And if there is any more of this, the next offender will be caned!" said Mr. Lathom.

There was no next offender. The juniors did not want to be caned. Bernard Glyn had not, so far, made any invention to deal with a punishment of that sort.

The juniors grinned as they trooped out after breakfast.

Things were going well. Half an hour's grind on the line-writing machine after dinner, and the impositions would be disposed of, and everything in the garden, as Blake put it, would be lovely.

During morning lessons, we are sorry to say, Tom Merry & Co. were remiss.

Like the savage in the story who went to war with another savage, not because there was any quarrel, but because he had a new club, the juniors raked in impositions, not because they had any cause to worry the powers that were, but because they had a line-writing machine at their disposal.

They were out for lines—and juniors who were out for lines were not likely to suffer from any shortage of them.

Both Mr. Lathom and Mr. Linton handed out lines that morning at a great rate, and both the Form-masters were greatly puzzled by the calmness with which the impositions were received.

After morning school the young scamps compared notes in the passage.

Of the dozen or so juniors who were in the secret there was not one who had a total of less than two thousand lines in all.

"Something like a shipping order for you, Glyn!" grinned Figgins.

The Lancashire junior laughed.

"Oh, I don't mind!" he replied. "I don't mind putting in a bit of extra work for the fun of the thing! Besides, as I'm not one in the eleven this afternoon, I can grind 'em out while you're playing footer, if necessary."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha! There never was such a rag!" said Tom Merry hilariously. "It will be ripping to see Knox's chivvy when the lines are handed in!"

And the juniors roared.

"Better go and grind 'em out before dinner," Tom Merry suggested. "Nothing like getting 'em done in good time!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on, then!" said Bernard Glyn. "You'll have to write a line each, as usual."

"That won't take long!" grinned Fatty Wynn.

And the hilarious juniors trooped up to Bernard Glyn's study. They crowded into the room, and Glyn locked the door carefully. He did not want to run any risk of being surprised by a prefect while the line-writing machine was in operation.

Then he unfastened the cover of the wonderful invention.

The next moment he gave a yell.

He had lifted the zinc cover, and revealed—nothing!

The line-writing machine was gone!

CHAPTER 11.

The Missing Machine.

"GREAT Scott!"

Bernard Glyn dropped the zinc cover of the machine upon the floor of the study, in his startled amazement, and there was a clang.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and regarded the empty base-board of the line-writer in astonishment.

"Where's the machine, Glyn, deah boy?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"Where's the machine?" asked Tom Merry uneasily.

"Blessed if I know!"

"What?" roared Blake.

"You don't know?" shrieked Kerr.

"You've lost it!" gasped Kangaroo.

"Bai Jove!"

"It's gone!" said Glyn, staring at the empty board, in a helpless sort of way. "You fellows saw me put it here last night. It hasn't been touched since, so far as I know. The study door has been locked all the time. I wouldn't even let the maid in this morning. I tipped her not to dust my study. But it's gone!"

"My hat!"

"Bai Jove, that's wotten!"

"I can't understand it!" said Glyn, rubbing his forehead in amazement.

Blake snorted.

"You've put it somewhere else, and forgotten all about it," he said.

"Rats! How could I? I tell you it hasn't been touched!" "You've been walking in your sleep, then, and you've put it away somewhere," Clifton Dane suggested.

"Oh, rot!"

"Well, what's become of it, then?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"If it isn't here—and it certainly isn't—where is it?"

"Goodness knows!"

"Well, we're pipped, and no mistake, if the machine doesn't turn up!" groaned Manners. "What about the footer match this afternoon? What giddy asses we've been!"

ANSWERS

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"Oh, Great Scott!"

"Wuined, bai Jove!"

"Clean done!"

The juniors gazed at one another blankly.

They had had, at first, some slight fears that the machine would go wrong, or break down, as Bernard Glyn's inventions sometimes did. But that it would disappear bodily they had had no suspicion. It seemed impossible that it was gone—and yet it was not in its place. How it had disappeared was a mystery.

"Well, it's gone!" said Tom Merry at last, breaking a painful silence.

"And we've got over two thousand lines each to do!" said Manners.

"Oh, my hat!"

"No footer this afternoon!" grunted Herries.

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Reilly. "I think we'd better bump Glyn for taking us in in this way entirely."

"It isn't my fault," said Glyn, still amazed. "I haven't the faintest idea what's become of the machine. It's a giddy mystery! I suppose one of you fellows hasn't hidden it for a joke?"

"Of course we haven't, ass!" said Figgins.

"Monteith will chortle over us, and no mistake!" said Kerr.

"We're done in!"

"Faith, and I think we'd better bump Glyn intirely—"

"We'd bump him right through into the study underneath if it would do any good!" growled Digby. "But it won't! We want the machine!"

"Somebody's raided it for a rotten joke!" said Bernard Glyn. "Some silly ass has got on to the wheeze and collared the machine!"

"But how?" exclaimed Kangaroo.

Bernard Glyn wrinkled his brows in thought. He went towards the study window and examined it carefully.

"The door couldn't have been tampered with," he said.

"The lock is a Yale, and nobody could have a key to fit it. This catch looks as if it has been forced; and I am sure I fastened it last night. Somebody came in at the window!"

"But who?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Might have been Mellish or Levison or Croke," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "They would be cads enough to put us in a hole like this—if they knew."

"But they didn't know about the machine," said Blake.

"They have a gift for spying and listening," said Blake. "They might have found out. Let's go and see them."

"They'll deny knowing anything about it."

"I've got an ideah, deah boys," said D'Arcy sagely. "We won't ask them if they know anythin' about it; we'll just start bumpin' them, and tell them we won't leave off till they give up the machine."

"But suppose they haven't got it?"

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, it's a good idea!" said Monty Lowther. "They're rotten cads, and a bumping will do them good!"

"Yaas wathah! I quite agwee with Lowthah!"

"It's the only thing we can do," said Tom Merry desperately. "And if they haven't got it, I don't know what we can do. We can't write out two thousand lines each before the footer match."

"Let's go and see them, anyway!" grunted Blake.

Bernard Glyn unlocked the door, and the juniors hurried away in search of the cads of the Fourth.

They looked in Levison's study first. Lumley-Lumley was there; but there was no sign of Mellish or Levison.

"Where's Levison?" asked Tom Merry.

"I guess he's in the gym," said Lumley-Lumley.

"Thanks!"

The crowd of juniors hurried away to the gym. There, sure enough, were Mellish and Levison. They were chatting together, evidently without a suspicion of mischief. The juniors did not waste time in words. They rushed upon the cads of the Fourth Form, and seized them.

"Hallo!" roared Levison. "What are you up to?"

"Yow!" yelled Mellish. "Leggo! What's the matter?"

"Bump them!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Give them a feahful bumpin'!"

Bump! Bump!

"Yow—ow!"

"Yarooooop!"

"Are you going to hand it over?" roared Blake.

The two prisoners stared at him dazedly.

"Hand what over?" gasped Levison. "Have you gone mad?"

"The machine!"

"What machine?"

"You know jolly well what machine! Glyn's invention!"

"I didn't know the silly ass had made any silly invention;

and I don't know anything about it, anyway!" yelled Levison.

"Let me go!"

"That's not good enough!" said Tom Merry determinedly.

"Where is it?"

"Where's what, you idiot?"

"The invention!"

"I don't know. I've never even heard of it!" snorted Levison.

"I think you're dotty!" said Mellish, gasping. "I don't know anything about it. Let me go, or I'll yell for help, you dangerous idiots!"

"Bump them!"

"Yaas, wathah! Go it, deah boys!"

Bump! Bump!

"Now, then, where's the machine?"

"Yow!"

"Ow!"

"Will you hand it over, you cads?"

"We haven't got it!" shrieked Levison. "Honour bright, you maniacs! We don't know anything about it!"

Tom Merry looked at them dubiously.

"I think they're telling the truth," he said at last. "It isn't these rotters! Who on earth can it have been?"

"Yow!" groaned Mellish. "Ow!"

"Oup! You asses—"

The juniors streamed out of the gym., leaving the cads of the Fourth rubbing themselves ruefully, and muttering threats of vengeance.

Tom Merry & Co. were satisfied that Levison and Mellish knew nothing of the missing machine.

But where was it? That was a question to which they could find no answer.

And they were still debating the matter in their minds when the bell rang for dinner.

The juniors went in to dinner in a mood of suppressed alarm and fury. If the machine did not turn up, what were they to do for the lines? And what was to become of the footer match with the Grammarians?

The juniors ate their dinner in a gloomy mood.

When Tom Merry & Co. came out of the dining-room Trotter, the School House page, handed the hero of the Shell a postcard.

"Just come, Master Merry," he said.

"Thanks, Trotter!"

Tom Merry glanced carelessly at the postcard. Then he gave a shout.

The postcard bore the local postmark of Rylcombe. And on the back was a simple line:

"Many thanks! Works beautifully!—GORDON GAY."

"What is it?" asked Blake.

"Look!" yelled Tom Merry.

He held up the card. The juniors read the message, and they understood. There was a shout of wrath.

"The Grammarians!"

CHAPTER 12. A Thunderbolt!

"THIS is where we score!"

It was Gordon Gay who made the remark.

And the Grammarian juniors, gathered in Gordon Gay's study in the Grammar School, chuckled in chorus:

"What-ho!"

Gordon Gay stood at his table. Morning school was over at the Grammar School, but Gordon Gay & Co. were not out of doors. They were gathered in the Cornstalk junior's study, and upon the table stood the line-writing machine. Gordon Gay had been testing it, and it worked well. The Australian junior had soon fallen into the way of working it with success and despatch.

And Monk and Lane and Carboy and Wootton major and Tadpole stood round watching him with great admiration.

Hake, the prefect, had given them a hundred lines each that morning, and Gordon Gay was turning the lines off in fine style. He had already written out several impositions long overdue to Mr. Adams, their Form-master, and Mr. Adams had received them without a suspicion.

"Shows what it is to have an inventive genius," grinned Frank Monk. "Tom Merry has got our postcard by this time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wonder what they'll do when they miss the machine," Lane remarked meditatively. "I shouldn't wonder if we see them over here before the match."

And the Grammarians laughed loud and long.

"If they've got lines to do, we may lend them the machine, if they're good boys," Gordon Gay remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, they will have to promise to take care of it and to bring it back."

The Grammar juniors roared.

"Hark!" exclaimed Wootton major suddenly. "That rounds like Hake."

There was a heavy step in the passage.

"Cover the machine up—quick!" gasped Carboy.

Gordon Gay threw a footer jersey over the line-writing machine. It was all he could do in the hurry of the moment, but the machine was by no means wholly hidden from view. The Grammarians grouped themselves round the table to hide it as much as possible, as the door opened.

Hake, the prefect, came into the study.

Hake was looking very suspicious. He fixed his eyes upon the juniors in a very searching way.

"What are you young beggars up to?" he demanded.

"Snuff!" said Gordon Gay.

And the juniors grinned.

Hake scowled.

"What have you got there?" he demanded. "Mind, no footer this afternoon till you've written out your lines."

"That's all right, Hakey."

"What have you got there? What's the machine?"

"Private property," said Gordon Gay. "Let it alone."

"Let me see it."

"Look here, Hake—"

But Hake pushed his way to the table, and dragged the jersey off the line-writing machine. He was very suspicious; but he might not even then have guessed what it was, but for the fact that Gordon Gay was half-through a page of Latin prose. The prefect stared at the machine and at the unfinished impot. in amazement.

"Well, my hat!" he ejaculated.

The juniors were silent with dismay.

"So that's how you were going to get your lines done, is it?" said Hake, with a unpleasant smile. "That's how you did the lines you handed in to Mr. Adams this morning, I suppose?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Gordon Gay.

"I shall confiscate this machine," said Hake. "It's a jolly ingenious thing, I must say. But you won't get any more lines done on it, I imagine."

"Look here, Hake, it isn't ours," said Gay desperately.

"It belongs to Bernard Glyn, at St. Jim's."

Hake sneered.

"I suppose he made it for you?" he said sarcastically. "It must have cost pounds, I should think."

"We raided it."

"Well, it's going to be confiscated, all the same," said Hake. "I shouldn't wonder if it could be made use of for other things besides writing out impots. I'll see. Of course, I don't believe a word you've said. You made this thing here."

"We didn't. We—"

"Oh, rot!" said Hake.

He picked up the line-writing machine, and carried it out of the study. The juniors watched him in utter dismay. They could not resist a prefect. Hake had only to call upon their Form-master, if they did.

The prefect tramped out of the study with the machine.

There was a long and painful silence in Gordon Gay's study.

"Well, my only hat," ejaculated Monk, at last, "this beats everything!"

"The beast will never let us have it back again," said Gay. "Poor old Glyn! He won't see his giddy invention any more."

"Of course, we couldn't foresee this," said Lane. "I—"

"I wonder if we could get it back from Hake, if we appealed to the Head."

"No fear. We can't go to the doctor and tell him that we've been writing out impots on a giddy machine."

"And we can't own up to raiding the Saints after lights out," said Monk gloomily.

"By Jove, no!"

"It's rotten!"

"All these blessed impositions to write out by hand now!" groaned Gordon Gay.

"No good taking in the machine-done lines now."

"Oh, blow!"

The triumph of the Grammarian juniors was over. They settled down with gloomy faces to write out their lines. They had plenty to do, if they were to be

finished in time to play the footer match with St. Jim's.

Gordon Gay glanced out of the window when he had finished, and uttered an exclamation.

"Tom Merry!"

"He's come in answer to the postcard!" grinned Frank Monk.

"I wonder what he'll say when he knows that the machine is gone?"

"Well, it can't be helped."

Gordon Gay watched the junior in the quad. Tom Merry had just ridden in on his bicycle, and his looks showed that he had scorched all the way from St. Jim's. He was evidently in a very great hurry.

The Grammarians were feeling considerably "rotten" as they waited for Tom Merry to come in. They had raided the line-writing machine for a jape, but they had not, of course, intended to keep permanent possession of it. But now it was extremely doubtful if the St. Jim's juniors would ever see it again.

Gordon Gay was looking miserable enough as Tom Merry's footstep was heard in the passage.

CHAPTER 13.

Hake Means Business!

TOM MERRY came breathlessly into Gordon Gay's study.

He had ridden hard from St. Jim's, after receiving the postcard from the Grammar School. The other fellows had deputed him to cycle over and explain how matters stood to Gordon Gay & Co., and ask for the restitution of the machine in time to get the lines done before the football match.

"You bounders!" gasped Tom Merry, as he came in.

"Hallo!" said Gay.

"You blessed burglars!"

Tom Merry had expected to find the Grammarians in high feather. He was surprised by the gloomy looks with which he was greeted. He glanced round the study, and the Grammarian juniors knew that he was looking for the line-writing machine. It was not, of course, to be seen.

"Where is it?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Where is what?" said Gordon Gay.

"You know what I mean. The line-writer—Glyn's invention?" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "I never guessed what had become of it till I had your card. Where is it?"

The Grammarians were silent.

"You raided it last night from Glyn's study?" demanded Tom Merry.

Gordon Gay nodded.

"Well, that's all right," said Tom Merry, "a jape's a jape, and we're willing to admit that you've done us. But we want the machine."

"You see—" began Gordon Gay hesitatingly.

"We give you best, so far as the raid's concerned," said Tom Merry. "We'll take it out of you at footer this afternoon. But we simply must have the machine. We've been ragging this morning, and we've got over two thousand lines each to do."

"Phew!"

"Now, let's have the machine, like a good fellow," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to miss the match, and stay in all the afternoon, and most of the evening, too, grinding out lines by hand; if you don't give it up."

"I'm sorry."

"That's all right. Just hand it over, and all's serene."

The Grammarians were still silent. Tom Merry looked at them in a puzzled way. He could not understand the silence.

"You're going to give it up?" he said.

"You see—"

"You see—"

"A jape's a jape," said Tom Merry warmly, "but I suppose you don't want to land us in a beastly hole, do you?"

"Not at all, but—"

"Well, hand over the machine, then."

"We can't!" said Gordon Gay.

"Can't?"

"No!"

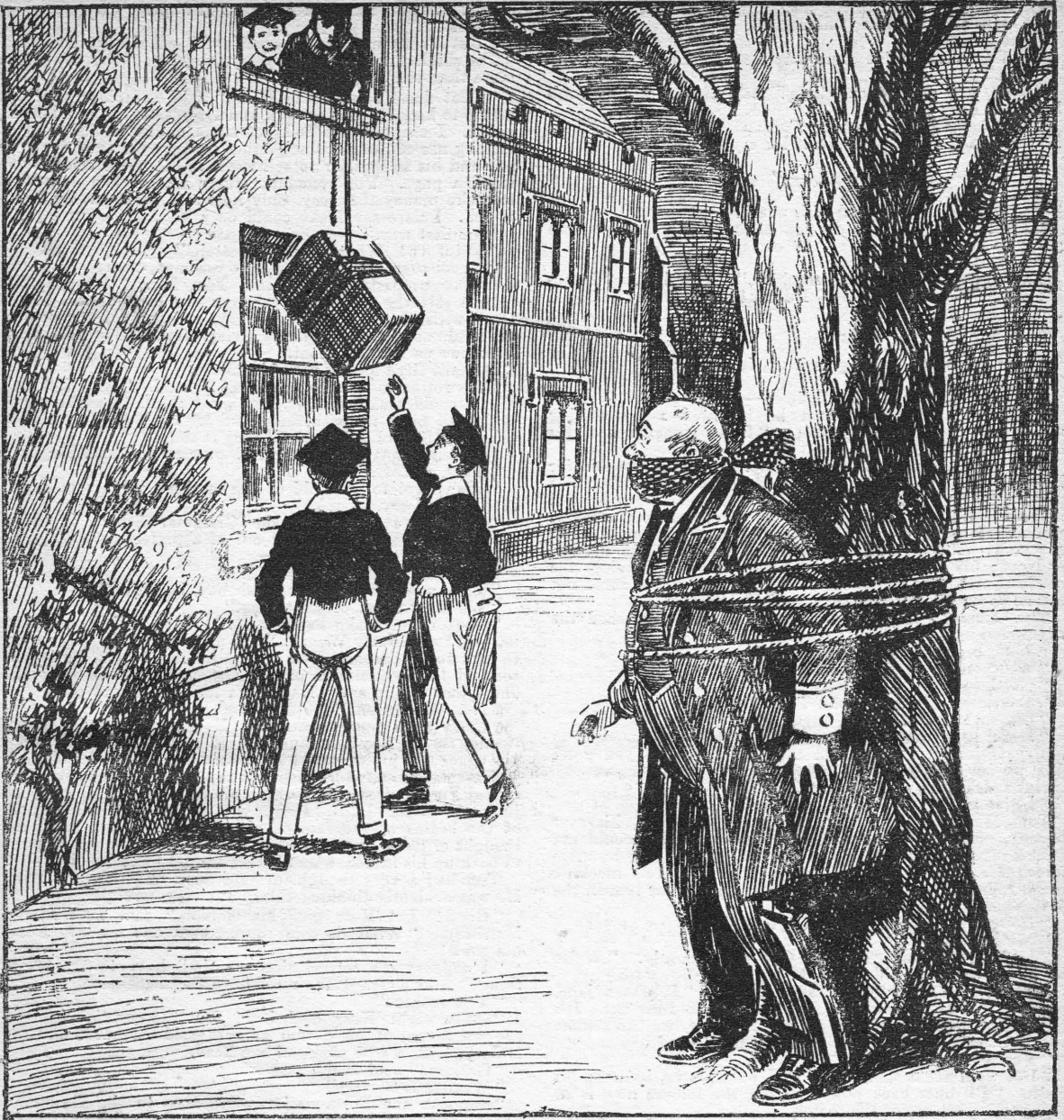
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"THEIR DISHONOURABLE CHUM!"

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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Gordon Gay attached a rope to the bundle and lowered it out of the window. Monk and Lane stood ready in the quad, to receive it, while Taggles, gasping, with the gag in his mouth, watched the youthful raiders with growing uneasiness. (See Chapter 3.)

"Why not?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Because it's impossible," said Gordon Gay desperately.

Tom Merry stared at him.

"It's been confiscated," said Gordon Gay, miserably enough. "Hake, the prefect, found us writing lines with it, and he's taken it away."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry sank into a chair in utter dismay.

"We're frightfully sorry," said Frank Monk. "Of course, we didn't mean to keep the machine; it was only a jape. But now Hake's got it!"

"But—but if you explain to him that it wasn't yours!" gasped Tom Merry.

"We've done so, but it doesn't make any difference. He doesn't believe us, or he doesn't choose to. You know what a cad he is!"

"By Jove, what are we going to do, then?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Perhaps if Tom Merry explained to Hake himself," suggested Lane.

"I will!" exclaimed Tom Merry, starting up. "We simply must have the machine. Hake has no right to keep it when it belongs to Glyn, of ours."

"He's a thorough rotter!" said Gordon Gay. "I know he'll keep it. But you may as well try. Come on, and I'll show you his study."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry followed Gay to the Sixth Form quarters. There was a sound of clicking from Hake's study as they approached the door.

"The beast is testing it," said Gay.

Tom Merry nodded.

He knocked at the door, and opened it before Hake had time to call out. He suspected that the prefect might lock the door if he knew who his visitor was.

Hake looked round with a snarl as the door opened. He was standing at the study table, with his hand upon the machine, and he had evidently been testing it.

"What on earth do you want here?" he asked, in surprise, as he stared at the Shell fellow from St. Jim's.

Tom Merry pointed to the line-writing machine. "I want that machine," he replied.

Hake laughed. "Is that what you've come here for?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, you can get out, then!" said Hake. "You won't have it! Buzz off!"

"It belongs to Glyn, of my Form at St. Jim's," said Tom Merry. "Gordon Gay raided it for a joke—"

"Rats!"

"Look here, I can prove it—"

"Rot! Get out!"

Tom Merry's eyes blazed with wrath.

"Look here, you cad, do you mean to say that you are going to keep our machine?" he exclaimed.

The prefect laughed again.

"I'm going to keep this machine," he replied. "I confiscated it from Gordon Gay. I don't believe it ever belonged to anybody at St. Jim's."

"Glyn can prove it is his."

"Oh, rot!"

"You mean you won't give it up, in any case?"

"Exactly!"

"Glyn will appeal to Dr. Holmes—"

"And explain to him that he invented a line-writing machine!" grinned the prefect. "I can imagine how his headmaster would answer him. Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry was silent with dismay. It was impossible for Bernard Glyn to appeal to the Head of St. Jim's. The mystery of those thousands of lines which had been handed in so promptly would come out at once, and the machine would certainly be confiscated and destroyed. It would mean a severe caning for every junior concerned in the matter, and probably a flogging for Glyn himself, and certainly the confiscation of the machine. The St. Jim's juniors dared not appeal to the Head to interfere, and Hake knew it.

The Grammar School prefect grinned as he watched the expression on Tom Merry's dismayed face.

"Well, are you done?" he asked.

"Will you give us the machine?"

"No, I won't!"

"You know it's ours," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, rot! I don't know anything of the sort!"

"Look here, we're going to have it!" exclaimed Tom Merry furiously. "You're a cad and a thief if you don't give up our property!"

Hake picked up a cricket-stump.

"I give you two seconds to get out!" he said.

Tom Merry looked at him, his hands clenched, his eyes blazing. But there was nothing to be done. He could not fight a Sixth-Form prefect, and carry off the machine by main force. He stepped out of the study, and Hake's mocking laugh followed him. Gordon Gay was waiting for him in the passage.

"He won't give it up?" said Gay.

"No, the cad!"

"I knew he wouldn't," said Gay despondently. "We're awfully sorry about this, Tom Merry!"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Tom Merry. "It was a jape, and you couldn't know how it was going to turn out. It's beastly for us. If we don't get the machine, we can't come over for the footer match this afternoon."

"Yes, I know it's rotten."

"But we'll get it somehow!" said Tom Merry, between his teeth. "I'll buzz back now, and tell the fellows how it is. You can expect us for the match."

Gordon Gay nodded. In two minutes more Tom Merry was on his bicycle, riding back to St. Jim's at a scorching rate, with very bad news for his chums.

CHAPTER 14.

Kerr Has an Idea.

THE St. Jim's juniors, in a state of great anxiety, were waiting for Tom Merry at the gates of the old school. They watched the road for the Shell fellow, and Arthur Augustus, who was the first to sight the figure of a scorching cyclist, uttered an exclamation at last.

"Here he is!"

Tom Merry dashed up to the school gates and dismounted.

"Have you got it, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"You ass!" hooted Blake. "Can't you see that he hasn't got it? Do you think he'd have it in his waistcoat-pocket?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Won't they give it up?" asked Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry gasped for breath.

"They can't!" he replied.

"Why not?"

"It's been confiscated by a prefect. Hake found them working it, and he's taken it away."

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There was a general exclamation of dismay.

"Rotten!"

"But it's my machine!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn excitedly. "The cad has no right to keep my property! Why, it's worth more than ten pounds!"

"That doesn't matter to Hake," said Tom Merry. "He means to keep it. He's a cad, and I don't believe he's honest, either. I suspect that he's got some dodge in his mind of making use of the machine—either to write out lines for himself and his friends, or to sell them to the other chaps at so much a page. You remember there was a chap here used to make money that way, only he wrote them out by hand, to sell. I dare say Hake could do a good trade among the juniors that way."

"Bai Jove! What an uttah wottah!"

"At all events, he's keeping the machine, though he knows it's your property, Glyn," said Tom Merry, wheeling his bicycle into the quad. "He knows you can't appeal to the Head without giving yourself away, and you can't appeal to his headmaster either without giving Gordon Gay away, and he knows we won't do that."

Bernard Glyn looked very gloomy.

"It's rotten to lose the machine," he said. "And that isn't all. I could make another, but what about this afternoon? We're all piled up with lines, and we can't go over to the Grammar School to play until they're done."

"Which means that we can't go over at all," said Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We've got to get hold of the machine again somehow," said Tom Merry.

"How? We can't raid the Grammar School in broad daylight, and yank the thing out of a prefect's study."

Tom Merry laughed.

"No; we could hardly do that."

"Then what's to be done, deah boy, bai Jove?"

"We must think of something."

"That rotter Hake has got his back specially up against us, too," said Fatty Wynn. "It's no good making an appeal to him to be decent. You remember the time Kerr impersonated the headmaster of the Grammar School—he made Hake look a silly ass? Hake isn't likely to forget that."

"No. It's rotten!"

"Can't you think of something, Kerr?" exclaimed Figgins, turning to his Scottish chum. Kerr was an extremely keen and sagacious junior, and Figgins had a touching faith in his judgment. Most fellows believed that Kerr could easily have ousted Figgins from the position of leader of the New House juniors if he had liked. It was well known that he had most of the brains of the famous Co. Not that Kerr had ever thought of doing anything of the sort. He was quite content to back up his leader, which he always did most loyally.

Kerr had a very thoughtful expression upon his face now. He was evidently thinking things out very carefully.

"Good! Let Kerr give his opinion," said Tom Merry hopefully. "What do you think about the matter, Kerr, old son?"

"I suppose it's settled that we shall have to try something," said Kerr. "We must have the machine back."

"Yes, rather!"

"Quite wight, Kerr, deah boy! But the question is, how are we to get it back, you know?" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a wise shake of the head.

"Go hon!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"Suppose our Form-master went over to the Grammar School and saw Hake, and demanded the machine?" said Kerr. "He would have to give it up then."

The juniors stared blankly at Kerr.

"You ass!" said Blake. "If we say a word to Lathom on the subject he will know all about how we did the lines we've handed in. It would give the whole show away, and we should be detained for the afternoon for a dead cert., and most likely licked into the bargain. If you can't suggest anything more sensible than that—"

"Why don't you suggest sending the Head?" asked Kangaroo sarcastically. "That would be even better."

"The Head's too tall."

"Too what?"

"Too tall," said Kerr calmly.

"Oh, he's off his rocker!" said Blake, in exasperation. "Right off his silly rocker, that's what's the matter with him! What's tallness and shortness got to do with it, you frabjous ass?"

"Lots!" said Kerr cheerfully. "The question is, would Lathom be able to do it if we could send him over?"

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"But we can't!" howled Blake.

"I know that!"

"Then what are you talking out of your silly hat for?"

"It's all right!" said Kerr, laughing. "I'm not talking

out of my hat. You remember that I once got myself up as Lathom, and it was a great success—”

“My word!”

“Bai Jove!”

“I could do it again, and I’m willing to try if you fellows think it would be any good,” said Kerr modestly.

“I don’t know. Hake knows Lathom, you know,” said Herries.

But Blake gave a shout of glee.

“Ripping! But there’s no time to lose! Let’s get to it at once!”

“Hurrah!” exclaimed Tom Merry.

“Yaas, wathah, deah boys! Huwvah!”

Kerr’s suggestion came like a ray of sunshine in a dark place. The juniors jumped at the idea at once. And no time was lost in carrying it out.

CHAPTER 15.

Mr. Lathom the Second.

FIGGINS’S study, in the New House, was crowded. Tom Merry & Co. had all come in to help Kerr assume the disguise. As a matter of fact, so many hands were more of a hindrance than a help; but Kerr was very patient. Kerr was a shining light of the Junior Dramatic Society of St. Jim’s, and he had frequently impersonated more difficult characters than that of Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth. Little Mr. Lathom was not much taller than the Scottish junior, and the slight difference could be made up by high-heeled boots. Kerr had everything that he needed for the disguise with the exception of Mr. Lathom’s clothes. But any suit of clothes was good enough so long as it looked middle-aged and respectable, and Kerr had ample supplies of such attire among his theatrical “props.”

Little Mr. Lathom’s face, with its whiskers and spectacles, lent itself, as it were, to the task of the impersonator.

The chief trouble was that the lines had to be shown up early in the afternoon, or Tom Merry & Co. would be detained.

“Once we get the machine it will be all right,” said Tom Merry hopefully. “Glyn can grind out the lines in next to no time.”

“That’s all right, if I get the line-writer,” said Glyn; “but there’s getting it back here from the Grammar School—”

“I’ve got a better idea than that,” said Figgins. “The lines can be written there. Kerr can take Glyn in with him to identify the machine.”

“Good!”

“Then it can be whipped into Gordon Gay’s study as soon as we’ve got it away from Hake, and the lines ground out at once. One of the chaps who isn’t playing this afternoon can bike here, and give up the lines for the lot of us. He can say that the others asked him to hand them in, as they were in a hurry to get to the footer.”

“Quite true, too!”

“Yaas, wathah! We must be careful to stick to the twuth, deah boys.”

“Get into those bags, Kerr, old man!”

Kerr had finished making up his face before the glass.

It was almost an exact representation of that of Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim’s.

If the two had been seen together, doubtless some differences would have been detected. But Kerr, of course, would take excellent care that they should not be seen together.

Kerr dressed himself in the selected clothes, padding them out here and there, and donned a pair of spectacles like Mr. Lathom’s, with plain glass in them, of course, instead of the lenses used by the Form-master. As Kerr’s eyes needed no artificial assistance, he would have found it as difficult to see with Mr. Lathom’s glasses, as the Form-master would have found it to see without them. The spectacles gave the finishing touch to the face. It was Mr. Lathom to the life who stood before the delighted juniors.

“Ripping!” pronounced Figgins.

“Bai Jove, it’s splendid!” said D’Arcy enthusiastically.

“You know, I couldn’t possibly do that, deah boys!”

“Go hon!”

“Weally, Tom Mewwy—”

“Here’s your umbrella, sir,” said Fatty Wynn, grinning.

“Thank you, Wynn!” said Kerr, in the somewhat dry and wheezy voice of Mr. Lathom. “I trust you will have your lines done in time, Wynn, and not spend all your leisure hours in the tuck-shop, my good boy. Enough is as good as a feast, Wynn!”

Fatty Wynn turned red, and the other fellows roared.

“Oh, good!” ejaculated Tom Merry.

“I’m ready to start now, I think,” said Kerr, laughing.

“You fellows had better lie low till I’ve gone. If you come out with me it may excite suspicion.”

“Yaas, wathah!”

“Let all the team get over to the Grammar School in time,” said Kerr. “By the time you’re ready to begin the match, we shall be right on the lines. You can come, Glyn. I shall want you to identify the machine.”

“What-ho!” grinned the Liverpool lad. “I’ll cut off now, and wait for you outside the gates.”

“Good!”

Bernard Glyn left the study. Kerr put on an overcoat and a silk hat, and blinked at the juniors through his spectacles. “How shall I do?” he asked.

And the juniors answered with one voice.

“Ripping!”

“Then I’m off!”

Kerr opened the study door, and stepped out quickly into the passage. He did not want to be seen leaving Figgins’s study in the character of Mr. Lathom. There might be curiosity as to what the Form-master had come there for! He descended the stairs, and met Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, face to face in the hall.

The New House prefect glanced at him in some surprise.

“Er—can you tell me the exact time, Monteith?” wheezed Mr. Lathom the Second.

“Half-past two, sir!”

“Thank you, Monteith!”

And Mr. Lathom Number II. walked on, leaving the prefect without a suspicion in his mind. The disguised junior went out into the quadrangle, and crossed to the gates as quickly as he could, without hurrying too openly. As ill-luck would have it, Mr. Linton came upon him in the quad, and called to him.

“Mr. Lathom, you are going out?”

“Yes, Mr. Linton.”

“Dear me!” said the master of the Shell, who had his hat and coat on. “You have changed your mind very suddenly, Mr. Lathom.”

Kerr was silent. He realised that he was upon dangerous ground.

“You told me less than ten minutes ago that you intended to spend the afternoon looking over the examination papers,” said Mr. Linton crossly.

“Ahem! It is such a beautiful afternoon,” murmured Kerr.

“If you are going down to the village I will walk with you,” said Mr. Linton.

Kerr groaned inwardly.

“I—I am not going to the village,” he said.

“No! However, I am going for a stroll only, and I do not mind in which direction I go,” said the master of the Shell.

And he walked down to the gates with the supposed master of the Fourth.

Kerr was in a state of mental agony.

If Mr. Linton persisted in walking with him, it would be impossible for him to go to the Grammar School, and the whole scheme would be knocked on the head.

From the window of Figgins’s study Tom Merry & Co. had watched the meeting, and they looked grave as they saw the Shell master walking down to the school gates with the supposed master of the Fourth.

“My hat!” said Figgins. “Look at that! Linton’s going out on the prowl, and he’s fastened himself on to our Mr. Lathom.”

“Bai Jove!”

“Somebody will have to sacrifice himself for the general good,” said Tom Merry desperately. “Dane, you’re not playing this afternoon. Go and sacrifice yourself!”

“What the dickens—”

“Linton has got to be drawn. Go and draw him!”

Clifton Dane grinned.

“Right-ho!” he said. “It will mean a licking for me, I suppose, but I can stand it.”

“That’s the wight spiwit, Dane. If I were not so anxious about St. Jim’s winnin’ the match, I’d do it myself,” said D’Arcy.

Dane chuckled, and left the study. The juniors watched anxiously from the window. Clifton Dane sprinted down to the gates after the two masters. He rushed out of the gateway blindly, as if he did not see them, and ran forcibly into Mr. Linton, bowling him over like a ninepin.

“Oh!” gasped the master of the Shell, as he sat down in the road.

His hat fell off, and Dane, with great presence of mind, fell upon it, squashing it out of all resemblance to a hat.

“Dear me!” ejaculated Mr. Lathom II.

He understood at once.

“Dane!” roared Mr. Linton, struggling to his feet. “Dane, how dare you! You clumsy boy! How dare you run into a master in that way! How dare you!”

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"I—I'm sorry, sir!" gasped Dane.
 "You have ruined my hat!" shouted the master of the Shell.

"I—I—I—"
 "Go into the School House at once, Dane!" rapped the Form-master. "Mr. Lathom, I must go in and brush down my clothes, and get another hat. Pray excuse me!"
 "I will walk on slowly," said Mr. Lathom II.
 "Very well!"

And Mr. Linton, snorting with annoyance, followed Clifton Dane into the School House. He marched the junior into his study, and there selected his strongest cane. Clifton Dane knew what was coming, and prepared himself for it. When Mr. Linton was angry, he had a peculiar gift for laying on the cane in the most painful possible way. Clifton Dane received four cuts upon each hand, and each of the cuts was what the juniors described as a regular "twister."

"You will be detained all the afternoon, Dane," said Mr. Linton sulphurously. "Go into the Form-room, and stay there until five o'clock."

"Yes, sir," said Dane meekly.
 And he went. Mr. Linton selected a new hat, and walked out once more. But Mr. Lathom was no longer in sight when he reached the road. Mr. Lathom the Second was well out of sight, on his way to the Grammar School of Rylcombe, in company with Bernard Glyn of the Shell.

CHAPTER 16. Hake Has To Give In!

HAKE, of the Sixth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, was in high feather. Hake was a cool and unscrupulous fellow, and the juniors' suspicions as to what he intended to do with the line-writer were only too well founded. Hake had tested the machine very carefully, and he was delighted with it. He had not the slightest idea of handing it back to the owner. He had called his chum—Finn of the Sixth—into his study, to show him his prize, and Finn was equally delighted.

"It's ripping!" Finn remarked, when Hake had turned out a dozen specimens on the line-writer. "I shouldn't wonder if that machine's worth money, you know, in the market."

Hake nodded.
 "I'm going to look into that part of it, of course," he said. "The machine's mine now, to do as I like with. I shouldn't wonder if I'm able to sell it for a good sum. But at present I can make a good deal out of it. I shall have to do it through my fag, you know—selling lines to chaps who get impositions. You're a prefect, and we can work the game between us. You can keep on imposing lines, and making the juniors bring them in promptly. My fag will supply them with lines at threepence a sheet."

Finn roared.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Of course, we shall have to be careful not to be bowled out, that's all!" said Hake. "But it will work easily enough. I don't see why we shouldn't net quite a neat little income that way."

"Good egg!" said Finn. "Some of the kids have plenty of cash, and would rather be boiled than write out impositions. It will work like a charm."

"You can make up a list of the kids with most cash to spare, and always hand out lines, too, just after they get their pocket-money," said Hake thoughtfully. "There ought to be a lot in it."

Tap!
 Hake hastily threw a cloth over the line-writing machine on the table.

"Come in!" he called out.
 The door opened, and a little gentleman in whiskers and glasses presented himself. Behind him came Bernard Glyn, of the Shell at St. Jim's.

Hake stared at his visitors in astonishment.
 "Mr. Lathom!" he exclaimed.
 The little gentleman bowed.

"Ah! You are Hake, of the Sixth Form here, I think?" he said. "This lad has told me that this is Hake's study."

And he nodded towards Carboy, who stood in the passage. Carboy had shown the visitors to the study, without having the least suspicion of the real identity of the little gentleman, who looked so much like a St. Jim's Form-master.

"Yes, this is my study, sir," said Hake, somewhat surlily.
 "I'm Hake."

"Very good! Thank you, my lad!"
 "Not at all, sir," said Carboy.

And he walked away. He was looking perplexed. He hurried up to Gordon Gay's study with the news that Bernard Glyn had come over with a St. Jim's Form-master, news which Gordon Gay & Co. received with amazement.

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"I have called to see you, Hake," said Mr. Lathom II., "at the request of this youth—Glyn."

Hake frowned.
 "Oh!" he said. He did not ask either of his visitors to sit down.

"It appears, Hake," said Mr. Lathom, resting his hand upon the table, and regarding the prefect through his spectacles, "that you are in possession of a machine which belongs to this lad."

Hake looked astonished.
 "What an idea!" he exclaimed. "I don't know who can have told you such a yarn as that sir."

"Is it not the fact?"
 "Certainly not, sir!"

"I am very much surprised," said Mr. Lathom. "You still adhere to your statement, Glyn?"

"Yes, sir," said Glyn.
 "Do you see the machine in this study?"

Glyn jerked the cloth off the line-writer.
 "That is it, sir," he said.
 Hake gritted his teeth.

"Let my property alone, you young hound!" he exclaimed furiously.

Glyn looked at him with a flash in his eyes.
 "It's not your property," he replied. "It's my property, and you know it perfectly well. If you try to keep it, you are no better than a thief."

Hake clenched his fist, and made a step towards the Lancashire lad. Mr. Lathom interposed, raising his hand deprecatingly.

"I trust there is going to be no violence, Hake," he said mildly.

"Make that young cad hold his tongue, then!" growled the prefect.

"You should—er—moderate your expressions in speaking to an elder boy, Glyn," said the little Form-master. "I am sure that Hake does not mean to act dishonestly. Besides, he will not be allowed to keep the machine if it doesn't belong to him."

"It does belong to me!" growled Hake.
 "Will you explain where you obtained it?" asked Mr. Lathom.

"That's my business!"
 "You did not make it yourself?"

"I decline to be questioned," said Hake loftily. "Let this young rascal prove that it is his. In the first place, he can explain what sort of a machine his one was, if he's lost one. What was it used for?"

"I'd rather not explain that, sir," said Glyn, with well-acted confusion, as the Form-master looked at him.

Mr. Lathom coughed.
 "Ahem! I am afraid it will be necessary for you to explain, Glyn," he said. "I must have all the facts."

"Well, sir, it was a—a line-writing machine. And, besides, it has got my name on it."

"There are more Glyn's than one in the world, you—" began Hake.

"Ah, I see! A machine to enable you to write out lines, so as to fix the conjugations of verbs upon your memory," interrupted the little gentleman.

Hake laughed.
 "More likely a machine to write out lines for impts.," he said.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "Is it possible, Glyn, that you have invented a machine for doing anything of that sort?"

Glyn was silent.
 "That is very—er—wrong, and I shall, of course, confiscate the machine if it is taken back to the school," said Mr. Lathom. "You surely could not expect anything else, Glyn, when you called me into the matter."

"Anyhow, sir, I don't think Hake ought to have it," said Glyn. "It's my property."

"Yes, certainly—certainly!"
 Hake bit his lip.

He had not thought that the St. Jim's junior would dare to own up to a master that he was in possession of a line-writing machine.

But it was evident that Glyn was prepared to go even that length to get the line-writer out of the hands of the Grammar School senior.

"Well, this machine doesn't belong to Glyn, Mr. Lathom!" said Hake angrily. "Let him explain how it came over here."

"It was raided last night from my study," said Glyn.
 "By whom?" sneered Hake.

"You, I suppose, as I find it in your study!" said Glyn cheerfully.

Hake started.
 "You young rascal—"

"Ahem! Calm yourself, I beg," said Mr. Lathom mildly. "I confiscated this machine, which was made by some juniors belonging to this school," said Hake. "I refuse to give it to any St. Jim's boy. The matter is now ended. I wish you a very good afternoon, Mr. Lathom."

"Ahem—"

"I have no more to say, sir."

"You can prove that the machine is yours, Glyn?" said the little gentleman.

"Yes, sir."

"It's a lie!" said Hake.

"I can show receipts from the people I bought the parts of, sir," said Bernard Glyn. "And my name is engraved on the lever there, sir."

Mr. Lathom II. stepped towards the machine. Hake, his face flushing savagely, interposed.

"I forbid you to touch my property!" he exclaimed.

"Really, Hake—"

"You will oblige me, sir, by leaving my study, and taking this impudent young rascal with you!" exclaimed Blake.

The little gentleman looked at him steadily through his spectacles.

"It appears to me that you are acting dishonestly, Hake," he said.

"Mr. Lathom!" roared Hake.

"I have used the right word, Hake. You are acting dishonestly in attempting to detain a machine which can be proved to belong to this lad. I shall now proceed at once to your headmaster, Dr. Monk, and appeal to him for the restoration of the machine."

Hake started.

"To Dr. Monk?" he ejaculated.

"Certainly!"

"But—but—I—I say—"

"Well?" said Mr. Lathom sternly.

"I—I—I—"

Hake broke off in dismay. He dared not have Dr. Monk brought into the matter. Glyn's name was on the machine, and it would be easy for the Liverpool lad to prove his ownership of it. Hake's whole case had rested upon his belief that the St. Jim's juniors would never dare to bring a master into the matter, and thus convict themselves of owning a line-writing machine. As a matter of fact, they had not done so, but Hake could not know that. If he had guessed for an instant the real identity of the little gentleman in glasses, all would have been different. But he did not guess.

"Well, Hake," said Mr. Lathom sternly, "are you going to give Glyn his property, or shall I proceed to ask Dr. Monk's assistance in the matter?"

Hake ground his teeth savagely.

"The young cad can have it!" he snarled.

"Take it, Glyn."

"Yes, sir."

"And take it, first, to Gordon Gay's study," said Mr. Lathom. "In order to make all sure, I will question him as to whether this machine is actually the one which you tell me he raided from your study at the school."

"Very well, sir."

Glyn picked up the patent line-writer, and bore it in triumph out of the study. Hake watched him with savage eyes. Mr. Lathom, shaking his head over the depravity of the prefect, followed Glyn from the study. Hake closed the door after him with a slam that rang from one end of the corridor to the other.

"Phew!" ejaculated Finn, who had been a silent spectator of the scene. "It looks to me as if your little scheme has gone up in smoke, Hake, old man!"

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

CHAPTER 17.

A Little Surprise for the Grammarians!

GORDON GAY & CO. were waiting in their study. They had no doubt that Bernard Glyn had brought the Form-master over from St. Jim's, to help him regain possession of his invention, but they could not understand. They expected to hear something from Glyn before he left the Grammar School, however, and they waited for him to come. There was a tap at the door at last, and Bernard Glyn looked into the study with a grin.

"Can I come in?" he asked.

"Yes, you ass!" said Gordon Gay. "Have you got the machine?"

"Yes, rather. Here it is!"

"What on earth did you bring old Lathom over for?" demanded Monk. "It was giving the whole show away. Old Lathom will— Oh! I—I beg your pardon, sir!"

Frank Monk broke off in great confusion as the little gentleman followed Bernard Glyn into the study.

"Ahem!" Mr. Lathom blinked at Monk through his

glasses. "Were you alluding to me in those disrespectful terms, Monk?"

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" gasped Monk, his cheeks scarlet.

"I cannot approve of alluding to Form-masters in this way, Monk, even if you do not know they can hear you."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Glyn.

The Grammarians stared at him.

"Shut up, you ass!" whispered Gordon Gay. "Lathom's got his rag out already."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This unseemly mirth is quite out of place, Glyn," said Mr. Lathom severely. "Pray be grave. I understand that you can write out impositions in a very quick way with that machine?"

"Yes, sir," grinned Glyn.

"Very well; let me see you do so."

"Certainly, sir."

Bernard Glyn had come provided with the necessary specimen lines for the impositions. He borrowed Gordon Gay's impot. paper, and started.

The Grammarians stood looking on in wonder.

Glyn turned out a page in Tom Merry's hand, and Mr. Lathom blinked at it through his glasses.

"My hat!" he said. "That will take in old Linton a treat!"

The Grammarian juniors almost fell down.

To hear the grave, quiet, middle-aged little Form-master speak in that way was a most amazing experience.

They stared at Mr. Lathom, doubting their ears.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir!" gasped Gordon Gay.

"W-w-what did you say, sir?"

"I said that would take old Linton in a treat."

"Oh!"

"Great Scott!" murmured Gordon Gay. "What does it mean? Is he tipsy?"

"Must be, I should think," muttered Carboy. "I'm blessed if I've ever heard a Form-master talk like that before."

"Hallo!" said Gordon Gay, glancing from the window.

"Here comes the St. Jim's team."

Two minutes later Tom Merry opened the study door. The passage behind him was crowded with St. Jim's juniors.

Tom Merry burst excitedly into the study.

"Is it all right?" he gasped.

"All serene!" said Mr. Lathom.

Gordon Gay gasped.

"What the—what—"

Figgins gave Mr. Lathom a sounding slap on the shoulder.

"Bravo, old boy!" he shouted.

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove!"

Gordon Gay staggered back.

Mr. Lathom, instead of being angered by the familiarity of the juniors, grinned.

"Yes; I think I've worked it pretty well, old son!" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ripping!" said Tom Merry. "How many lines have you turned out, Glyn?"

"Nearly a thousand already."

"Good! Skimmy's come over with us, and he's going to take the lines back," said Tom Merry. "He will show them up to the masters and prefects while we're playing footer, and everything in the garden will be lovely."

"Oh, ripping!" said Mr. Lathom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is this a—a dream?" gasped Gordon Gay. "Have I gone dotty, or have you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I can't understand it," said Frank Monk dazedly. "This—this is really Mr. Lathom, I suppose, and not his ghost?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does it mean?" roared Gordon Gay.

Mr. Lathom took off his spectacles. The Grammarians watched him curiously. Then he took off his whiskers, and the Grammarians gasped.

"Oh, hold me, somebody!" murmured Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Lathom's wig came off next, revealing the closely-cropped brown hair of a junior. Then Gordon Gay & Co. understood.

"Kerr!"

"Kerr!"

"Oh, you bounder!"

"You fraud!"

"You impostor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kerr chuckled. He wetted a handkerchief, and wiped the wrinkles off his face. The Grammar juniors slapped him on the back, and roared with laughter and relief.

"I began to think I was dreaming!" Gordon Gay gasped. "So it was Kerr all the time! And—and you really bounced the machine out of Hake?"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's get down to the footer, and Glyn can write out the lines," said Tom Merry. "Join us when you've finished, Glyn. Skimpole's going to take the lines back to St. Jim's."

"Certainly," said Skimpole. "I shall be very pleased. You will not forget to do my five hundred lines, will you, Glyn? In the time thus saved, I shall be able to devote some extra time to the study of Professor Balmcramper's wonderful book, the——"

"Oh, come on!" said Gordon Gay.

"My dear Gay, you are interrupting me," said Skimpole.

"I was saying——"

"Well, you can go on saying, you know," said Gay affably. "You don't mind if we play footer at the same time, do you?"

"Really, Gay——"

"Come on!" said Blake.

And the juniors trooped out of the study. Bernard Glyn and Skimpole remained alone there. Glyn locked the door in case of interruption; though Hake was not likely to interfere any further, with the fear of a visit from Mr. Lathom to Dr. Monk in his mind. Skimpole sat down with his book, and Glyn ground out the lines. Down in the playing-fields the St. Jim's Grammar School match was commencing.

Bernard Glyn worked industriously. The lines ran off the machine at great speed, and Glyn had them done in a wonderfully short space of time.

When they were finished, he put them into a packet and tied it up with string.

"Here you are, Skimpole!"

"Eh?"

"Here's the lines!" said Glyn. "Chuck that idiotic book away!"

"It is not an idiotic book, Glyn," said Skimpole reprovingly. "It is a book on the great and important subject of Determinism. It is quite a mistake to suppose that a Determinist and an idiot are one and the same thing. I——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Glyn. "Take the lines. Don't let on that you've brought them from here, you know. Just walk into Mr. Railton's study in the ordinary way. Say that you've brought in the whole lot because the other fellows are playing footer; but they're all done. See!"

"Certainly, Glyn."

And Skimpole left the study, with the bundle of papers under one arm, and the famous volume of Professor Balmcramper under the other. Bernard Glyn saw him safely out of the gates of the Grammar School, and then hurried to the footer field. The Lancashire lad had stood out of the match in order to help Tom Merry & Co.; but he did not mean to miss seeing it.

CHAPTER 18.

An Unexpected Finish.

"GOAL!" "Hurray for St. Jim's!"

It was a loud shout, ringing over the Grammar School football ground.

The first half of the match was at its end. The half had been vigorously contested, and just on the whistle Tom Merry had scored.

Quite a crowd of St. Jim's fellows had come over to see the match, most of them marvelling at the appearance of Tom Merry & Co. on the football field at all, for they knew of the number of lines that had been handed out to the chums of St. Jim's. But there they were, and they were playing up well for the school.

The first half ended with the visitors one up. Tom Merry & Co. were in fine form. The recovery of the line-writing machine had taken that anxiety off their minds, and they trusted all to Bernard Glyn. And they were determined to make the Grammarians pay for the trouble they had given them. There could be no better way than by giving Gordon Gay & Co. a thorough licking on the footer field, and that was what the Saints were determined to do.

"One up!" grinned Blake, giving Bernard Glyn a slap on the shoulder as the Lancashire lad came up to the field. "We're beating them!"

And Arthur Augustus chimed in:

"Yaas, wathah! The fellows are backin' me up like anythin', Glyn; and I weally think we shall beat them hollow."

Tom Merry laughed.

"You've done the lines, Glyn?" he asked.

"Yes, rather; and Skimpole's gone off with them," said Glyn cheerily.

"Thanks for taking so much trouble."

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"Not at all. It's all right, so long as I see you lick the Grammarians."

"Oh, you'll see that!" said Figgins confidently.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Time!" said Kerr.

And the teams lined up for the second half.

Gordon Gay & Co. were in good form; and, as a rule, they could keep their end up pretty well on the footer field. But undoubtedly they were outclassed by St. Jim's that day. Tom Merry & Co. seemed to carry all before them. Kerr showed that he could play footer as well as he could impersonate; and a loud cheer greeted the Scottish junior as he streaked through the enemy, and, with a masterly centre, gave Tom Merry an easy score.

"Goal!"

The Saints shouted themselves hoarse.

Gordon Gay & Co. were looking grim by this time. They were two behind, and it looked as if they were remaining so, unless indeed matters went from bad to worse.

"Play up, my sons!" said Tom Merry. "Wipe up the field with them! We'll teach them to raid our blessed line-writing machines."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

Down the field went the St. Jim's forwards once more at the blast of the whistle.

They seemed to carry all before them. The defence was nowhere; and Figgins, bringing the ball along the touch-line, sent it in to Blake, who centred to Tom Merry, who again dropped it neatly into the net.

"Three up!" roared Bernard Glyn, tossing his cap into the air, careless of where it came down. "Hurray for St. Jim's!"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

And now Gordon Gay and his merry men made a terrific effort, and the Saints were hard pressed for a time. The Grammarian attack came sweeping up to the Saints' goal, and Fatty Wynn was called upon to save, and to save again and again. But Fatty Wynn was "all there." The plump junior had never been so masterly. No matter what kind of a shot was sent in, he sent it whizzing back—hands and feet and head were always ready, and nothing seemed able to pass him. He dropped the ball at last to Herries, who cleared with a long kick to midfield, and then the game swayed again towards the home goal.

Time was getting close now, and the Grammarians fought hard.

But they fought in vain.

Harder and harder the Saints pressed them, harder and harder, and once more the ball went in, this time from the foot of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. And when the crowd cheered, the swell of St. Jim's removed his cap, and bowed with easy grace, not in the least excited or flustered. Even in the midst of a tough-footer scrimmage, his manners never lacked that repose which the poet assures us stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

The Grammarians knew that they were beaten now. There were ten minutes to go, and the visitors were four up. But Gordon Gay & Co. died hard. Right up to the finish they fought manfully; and St. Jim's were not able to score again.

But neither were the Grammarians. And when the final whistle blew, the score was four for the Saints, and nil for the Grammarians. A handsome enough margin to justify the wild exhilaration of the visiting team and their friends.

"Hurrah!" roared Bernard Glyn. "Hip-pip-hurray!"

"Bravo, us!" yelled Jack Blake.

"Ha ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay looked a little grim, but he took it as cheerfully as he could.

"Well, you've beaten us," he said. "Never mind, we'll bump you next time."

To which Arthur Augustus D'Arcy replied:

"Wats!"

And after having tea with the vanquished Grammarians, the St. Jim's team took the homeward route, Bernard Glyn carrying his precious invention in a big bag.

The juniors discussed the footer victory on the way home through the evening dusk, and chuckled as they laid plans for new japes at the expense of masters and prefects, with the line-writing machine.

But a change came o'er the spirit of their dreams when they reached St. Jim's. Skimpole met them at the gates, and his look was dolorous.

"I'm so sorry——" he began.

Tom Merry felt a sudden alarm.

"You handed in the lines, you ass?" he exclaimed.

"I'm sincerely sorry——"

"Have you handed in the lines?" exclaimed Figgins.

"You see——"

"The lines, ass!" shrieked Blake. "The lines!"

"Really, Blake——"

The footballers laid violent hands upon Skimpole and shook him. Skimpole's spectacles slid down his nose, and he blinked helplessly at the excited juniors.

"I'm really sorry!" he gasped. "You see, I—I stopped for a little while on the road to read Professor Balm-crumpet's book. I had just got to the part about the descent of man from a floating speck of jelly in a primeval sea—"

"The lines!" roared Tom Merry, shaking him. "I'm coming to that. I met Mr. Linton on the road, unfortunately—"

"Bai Jove!"

"He asked me if I had done my lines," said Skimpole. "Of course, I told him I had the lines ready, and that you fellows wanted me to hand in yours, as you were playing cricket."

"Cricket!" yelled the juniors.

"I mean football," said the absent-minded genius of the Shell.

"Oh, you frabjous ass! Go on!"

"Really, Merry—"

"Get on with the washing, you cuckoo!"

"Certainly. Mr. Linton seemed somehow suspicious. I'm sure I don't know why. And he seemed to think it odd that the lines should have been written out at the Grammar School."

"How queer!" snorted Blake. "You gave the whole game away, you ass!"

"I am sure I did not," said Skimpole. "But Mr. Linton is very sharp. When he found that I had all the impositions in my bundle, it seemed to make him very suspicious."

"Go hon!"

"It did really. And he made me go in to Mr. Railton; and then somehow it all came out. I'm sure I didn't mean—"

"You haven't mentioned the line-writing machine?" yelled Glyn.

"Oh, no! In fact, I did not explain at all. I simply said that the lines were done, and—and I think perhaps Mr. Railton has guessed something. I gather that, you know, from the fact that he wants to see you immediately you come in. You are all to go to his study—all excepting Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn. I took their lines to Mr. Ratcliff, and he was quite satisfied, as Mr. Linton had said nothing to him."

"Well, that's one good thing," said Figgins. "I'm sorry for you chaps. I should advise you to suffocate Skimpole."

"Indeed, it was not my fault," said Skimpole. "Under the circumstances, I—Oh! ow!"

Bump!

The School House juniors marched on wrathfully, leaving Skimpole a wrecked heap in the quadrangle. It was quite five minutes before Skimpole recovered from the shock. By that time Tom Merry & Co. had presented themselves in Mr. Railton's study, with many inward misgivings.

Mr. Railton was there, and so were the impositions—in a heap on the Housemaster's table. The School Housemaster looked very severely at the meek juniors.

"I have all your impositions here," he said. "Will you kindly explain to me how you came to do them at Rylcombe Grammar School?"

The juniors were silent for a moment.

"We've been over there playing footer, sir," Tom Merry ventured to explain.

Mr. Railton's lips twitched slightly.

"Will you give me your word, boys, that you wrote these impositions out yourselves, and that there is no trick in the matter?" he asked.

Dead silence.

A jape was a jape, but there was not one of the chums who would have told a deliberate untruth to save himself from a flogging.

Mr. Railton waited for an answer. But none came. The silence grew painful.

"Well?" said the Housemaster grimly.

"You—you see, sir—" stammered Tom Merry.

"Well?"

"A-a-ahem!"

"Did you write these impositions out yourselves?" said Mr. Railton. "Yes or no?"

"No!" said Tom Merry desperately.

"Ah, now we are getting at the facts!" said Mr. Railton. "It is a very serious matter—though you do not appear to understand it—to hand in impositions which you have not written out yourselves. I admit that in the writing there is nothing to convict you, and as it would be scarcely fair to make you answer questions for your own condemnation, I shall pardon you this time if you explain frankly what you have done."

"Bai Jove, sir!" said D'Arcy. "I must say that I regarded you as a weal sportsman, sir!"

Mr. Railton could not help smiling.

"Thank you, D'Arcy. Now kindly explain."

There was no help for it. It had to come out, and it came out. Mr. Railton listened with considerable astonishment.

"I should be glad to see that machine, Glyn," he said. "I'll fetch it, sir."

And he did. Mr. Railton, with a grim face, watched him work it. Whether he was angry or not, the juniors could not tell from his expression.

"Very ingenious!" said the Housemaster, at last. "Very ingenious indeed, Glyn. I have told you that you shall not be punished, and I shall keep my word. But I expect you all to promise me, upon your honour, not to use this machine again, or anything of the sort. I shall not confiscate it, because I know Glyn could easily make another, and because I know I can take your word."

"That you can, sir," said Tom Merry. "We promise."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Very well, you may go."

And the juniors went, glad to escape so easily.

"Well," said Blake, in the passage. "It was a jolly good thing while it lasted; but I suppose it was bound to end some time. And Railton is a real sport."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Tom Merry & Co., upon the whole, were pleased with themselves and with their Housemaster. But from that day, forth impositions were written out, in the old-fashioned way, by hand; and no more was heard in the School House of the Lancashire Lad's Invention.

(Next week's issue of "The Gem" Library will contain "Their Dishonourable Chum," a splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co.; "The Green Envelope," a short complete tale of Frank Kingston, Detective; and a long instalment of our thrilling new serial, "Wings of Gold." Order now—price 1d.)

GOOD TALES TO TELL!

THE FAILURE EXPLAINED.

A woman looked in at the photographer's the other afternoon.

"I have no fault to find with myself and children in the family group you took of us," she began, "but my husband is a complete failure. He looks more like a chimpanzee than anything else, and after all the instructions I gave him as to the correct pose and expression. Why, none of his friends recognised him!"

"Madam," replied the knight of the camera bluntly, "I scented trouble with your husband from the first. You know how I begged and entreated—nay, even pleaded with him to look natural."

"That's just it," retorted the partially dissatisfied one; "that's what caused the mischief."

"Haw, a comfortable little room this," said the pompous and corpulent man who was standing with his back to the fireplace in the commercial-room of a country hotel, thus obscuring the fire from the view of everyone else.

"Quite comfortable," agreed one of the company present. "It would be pleasanter, though, if it hadn't such an ugly fire-screen!"

ONE TO PAT.

A man with a dog entered an inn, and an Irishman asked what breed it was. The owner looked the questioner insolently up and down, and then replied, with a drawl:

"It is a cross between an ape and an Irishman."

"Faith, thin, we're both related to it," was the ready retort.

First Sweet Thing: "Oh, he's awfully gone upon her, dear, I assure you—thinks she's the most beautiful creature in existence, I should imagine. He's been praising her beauty to me for the last ten minutes, enlarging upon her eyes, her complexion, her mouth—"

Second Sweet Thing: "Oh, I don't think he could possibly do that, darling!"

He: "I've brought you a pet monkey to amuse you, darling."

She: "Oh, how kind of you! Now I sha'n't miss you whilst you're away."

Mistress: "Jane, I saw the milkman kiss you this morning. In the future I will take the milk in."

Jane: "'Twouldn't be no use, mum; he promised never to kiss anybody but me."

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OUR NEW SERIAL STORY.

WINGS OF GOLD!

The Story of the Most Terrible and Amazing Journey Ever Made By Man.

Edited from the Notes of Maurice Fordham, Esq.

: : By : :

SIDNEY DREW.

CHARACTERS IN THIS GRAND STORY.

MAURICE FORDHAM and LANCE MORTON—
Two healthy and wealthy young Britons, owners of the yacht Foamwitch.

PROFESSOR LUDWIG VON HAAGEL—
The famous German scientist, also noted for his clumsiness.

MATTHEW REDLAND—
The talented inventor of a wonderful airship.

JOSEPH JACKSON or SHOREDITCH JOSE—
A Cockney member of the crew, whose constant companion is a game bantam named the Smacker.

TEDDY MORGAN—
Ship's engineer.

WILLIAM TOOTER—
The hairy first mate.

The Foamwitch is on an expedition with the object of exploring the strange land which is believed to lie beyond the barrier of eternal ice near the South Pole. The capture of a curious creature, with golden wings—half bird, half reptile, inside which is found the shell of the extinct ammonite—works those on board the Foamwitch up to a pitch of highest enthusiasm, which is only damped by the death of the inventor, Matthew Redland, just as the entrance to the ice barrier is reached. Redland, however, bequeaths the secret of the aeronef to Lance Morton, and as soon as the first land is reached, the construction of the aeronef, Wings of Gold—which has been carried in pieces on the Foamwitch—is proceeded with. While watching the work, the clumsy professor has a terrific fall over a wire stay, and picks himself up, puffing and groaning.

(Now go on with the story.)

Building the Aeronef.

"I believe he is the original indiarubber man, Maurice," said Lance. "He gets worse as he gets older. We really ought to tell off somebody to watch him. When he's not trying to break himself, he's breaking something else. Couldn't we get Morgan to build a portable padded room for him, or to make him a pneumatic suit?"

"If you did make him a pneumatic suit he'd have it full of punctures in a few seconds," said Fordham. "The dear old chap's past reform. Gently there! Steady! Steady! Lower away!"

A wave of his hand to the man in the crane steered a heavy beam into position, and it sank into its place to the very breadth of a hair.

"Bravo, sir!" cried Morgan, as he saw the bolts pushed in. "That was neat."

"And you'd never do it again in ten lifetimes, sonny!" laughed Lance. "At least, not first try. Here comes the tea, and I'm quite ready to welcome it."

They were all ready to welcome it. The steaming cans were passed round with cakes all a-steaming, too, straight from the galley fires. They worked until the stars blazed out, and as they passed up the gangway, weary but merry, Fordham and Morton had a cheery word for them all. They had done their duty magnificently, and the scaffolding was complete. The three derricks were also in position.

"You'll dine with us to-night, Teddy," said Lance, "when you've got some of that grime off. I want you to have a look at the plans. You'll tumble to the thing at a glance, I'm sure, though it's Dutch to us in places. We're not going to make it any secret with you. You know what we're going to try and do."

"Fly across the Pole—eh?"

"Exactly, Teddy."

"Gad!" said the engineer. "I'd give something to go with you!"

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to push the work on, and none more so than the engineer. It was almost as bright as day.

"I'm game to start again," said Ted Morgan. "We've got seven men who have had a lazy day."

"You're a brick, Teddy," said Morton, "and I'm with you!"

Fordham had brought some of his most skilled mechanics with him. They had taken no part in the erecting of the scaffolding and platform. They obeyed the summons cheerfully, and a promise of double pay brought several volunteers. The lights were turned on, and arc-lights hissed and blazed. Two of Will's lights, burning petroleum vapour, roared as they burned and threw their blue-white glare over the snow. Again the tireless cranes clattered. Shouts rose from the vessel's hull, from the deck, from the platform. Oddly-shaped masses of iron swung up from the depths and swung over the platform where Morgan stood. A few violent gestures and yells from the engineer and they settled into their places.

The realms of the Southern snow had never known such a scene as this. Little by little the monster on the platform began to take shape. It resembled an iron pipe of huge dimensions. With almost incredible swiftness two jacks were erected. The segments were telescoped together with their aid, and were ready for rivets. Dawn was breaking when the monster's conical ends were in position. There was a ringing, rousing cheer.

"Well done, Teddy! Well done, lads!" shouted Fordham. "Hoch, hoch, hoch!" roared the professor, giving the German "hurrah!" "Ach, mine brave lads, dot is glorious, dot is suplime! Hoch! To bed, to bed, and more work in the morning!"

They were up in good time. Nothing had been neglected, nor forgotten, nor overlooked. Over three thousand rivets were needed to bind the segments together, and the task by the old-fashioned method would have taken a long time. Morgan did his riveting by steam. He would have washed, dressed, and eaten by machinery if contrivances had been invented for such purposes. They had put the aeronef together three times before leaving England, and every detail of its construction was familiar to them. The eight masts of hollow steel were stepped and bolted home. Each carried a screw with seven footed flukes, and when in motion the broad blades possessed tremendous lifting power.

At twenty minutes past five, by Lance's watch, the aeronef was complete, except for the stores, furniture, and motive power.

"A record!" cried Maurice. "What do you say, old man—fizz all round?"

"That's just what I do say."

"No, no, dear lads!" puffed the professor. "We will give the champagne when done is everything!"

"I think he is right," said Lance. "We'll save it up for another day, and feed 'em instead."

Orders were passed to the cook to do his best, and he did it. The hen-coops looked desolate when the men swarmed aboard, and a delicious aroma that made them smile and smack their lips steamed out of the galley. They slept well, in spite of the thunderous reports from the shore, where the tireless engineer was loading the cylinders with compressed air. Von Haegel was with him, for the professor's energy just now seemed invincible. It was freezing, and the professor's nose glowed like a small red light. He slid down the gangway like a human toboggan as they returned, and almost bit off the end of his tongue. For all that, he was not damaged.

The cold stars and the brilliant moon looked down on the silent vessel, and on the queer monster to which the dead man's brain had given birth. Then the colourless sun rose again on a day of toil.

It was toil, but was child's play to what had gone before. In spite of Morgan's warning, a man touched one of the naked cylinders with his hand. Its awful coldness made him shriek aloud, and the skin of his hand adhered to the metal.

"Every genius has his limitations!" growled the engineer. "The engine-room is worse than an ice-house. You can see your very breath freeze. I reckon liquid air is about the coldest stuff between this and Mars. He never seems to have given the heating of the ship a single thought. We shall be frozen stiff!"

"Himmel!" gasped the professor. "Can dot be so, Morgan?"

"That's the size of it, sir!" growled Morgan.

"Then what are you going to do, Teddy?" asked Lance.

Morgan scratched his head.

Lance and Maurice, with the professor panting in the rear, scrambled on deck and hurried below. Morgan had not exaggerated. The deathly chill of the place made them catch their breath.

"Ugh!" grunted Von Haegel, with a shudder. "Dot was not warm!"

"Hanged if it wouldn't freeze the hair off old Tooter!" said Maurice. "This won't do a little bit!"

"Still, the engines are worked from the deck, Maurice."

"And, all the same, we want someone below, old chap."

Matthew Redland had made one grave blunder. The intense cold, radiated by the cylinders, made the place impossible, except for a Polar bear. They were compelled to retreat.

"We might try wrapping the thing in blankets," said Lance.

The experiment was carried out, and the mercury, which had vanished into the bulb of the thermometer, rose nine degrees. In spite of this, the atmosphere was unbearable. A bucket of salt water froze into a solid mass in fourteen minutes.

"Ach, it is awful!" said the professor, aghast. "And when we rise the cold will double and treble."

"If we could carry plenty of coal," hazarded Fordham doubtfully.

Morgan shook his head with emphasis.

"We've got no room for coal, sir," he answered. "If we had, we couldn't carry enough to rely on. We don't know where we're going, or how long we'll be absent. We want something we can make as we go along, and there's only one thing—electricity. We've lots of power and plenty of tackle. The stuff I'm short of is iron for the stoves. If I had that I'd soon make the place as snug as a hothouse."

Von Haegel pounced upon him, and seized his collar.

"Come mit me!" he roared. "Come mit me! Come mit me, I dell you!"

The engineer looked quite startled as the stout professor danced and dragged at his neck, almost strangling him.

"Come mit me—come mit me!"

"I guess you'd better go," laughed Fordham. "He'll strain your jugular if you don't."

"Yes: I—I—I'll g-g-g!" panted Morgan. "I—I—I'll g-g-go!"

Von Haegel floundered through the snow, and fell twice. He got up without assistance, and hurried on. Then they saw him down on his knees, scraping frantically. He uttered a triumphant cry, and waved something in his hand.

"Look," he shouted, "at dot! Look!"

"Iron ore, by Jove!" said Lance.

"Dons und dons of id, mine poys!" snorted the professor.

"Und der pest quality. Und der was dons und dons of coal vor der picking up. You shall make der stoves, Morgan. Ach, you shall make der stoves!"

"By thunder, that's a fact, sir!" said the engineer.

The professor had discovered the outcrop of rich ore on the previous expedition. Some volcanic disturbance had laid it bare, and heaved up a seam of good coal at the same time.

Morgan had only to build a make-shift smelting furnace, and make his stoves, which were merely radiators. For the moulds he needed sand; for the furnaces, clay. There was sand in plenty, but where was the clay?

Von Haegel was not to be beaten. He forgot nothing, except to look where he was going.

"Lance, dear lad," he puffed, "bring me der book, 'Der Voyage of der Foamwitch.'"

Lance went to procure the volume in which the professor had written down every detail. He dashed off his gloves, and turned over the pages with feverish haste.

"Himmel! It is here! 'Excellent fireclay in great abundance.' Dot is in Maurice Island."

"Only four knots, isn't it?" asked Lance.

"No, no! You mistake. It is only four miles."

"If it was five hundred miles, I'm going, sir!" said the engineer. "Hi, Will!"

"Ahoj, my bonnie blackbird!" called back the hairy Mr. Tooter.

"I'm going to take the old tank to Maurice Island."

Mr. Tooter stopped his pipe with his fireproof little finger, and nodded his willingness. Shortly the vessel steamed out of the bay, and her smoke slowly vanished. The work went on steadily as the rivets were driven home and clenched. The vessel returned in the late afternoon with sufficient clay to build a large furnace.

It was still freezing, and, therefore, impossible to knead the clay in the open. Morgan laughed at such trifles. The warm stokehold was at his command. He called every man he could spare, and, probably for the first time in history, the stokehold of a ship was converted into a brickyard.

The bricks were dried off gently, and then put in batches into two of the furnaces. The result surprised everybody except Morgan himself. The bricks proved of splendid quality, and would have defied the heat of a volcano.

But the work took time. On the evening of the ninth—four days later—the glow of the furnace was crimsoning the sky. Lance, who could use his pencil brilliantly, had designed the

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radiators that were to heat the aeroplane, and the designs had been faithfully copied in the moulds.

They were all ashore, gathered round in a wide circle, the glare on their eager faces.

"Ready!" shouted Maurice.

Morgan gave a slash at a rope with his knife, releasing a good ton of iron. The weight slid over the pulleys, lifting the massive door of the furnace. Out dashed the gleaming, dazzling molten metal. The stream split into a dozen narrow trickles, and rippled into the moulds.

A deafening cheer swelled through the frosty night.

"Teddy, Teddy! Bravo, Teddy!"

Morgan had succeeded. With his dynamos at work, they had no longer any need to dread the cold. As the fiery patterns died into crimson, there was a warning cry. The men darted away. The next instant the air was filled with clouds of steam and a deafening hiss.

"Ach!" crowed Von Haegel. "Dot Bessemer was a great man. He found out how to make iron into steel mit steam, and dot was a grand discovery. Himmel, he was great! But there are others, and one of them is Teddy Morgan."

"He's a big chunk of the best, dad," said Lance. "Bravo, Teddy!"

When the radiators were fixed and tested, the interior atmosphere registered a comfortable temperature of sixty-three degrees Fahrenheit. Lance was sitting in a sling over the bows. He was painting in the name in letters of gold. The Union Jack flew proudly in the breeze, and every man held a glass of creaming wine. Lance tossed away the brush.

"Wings of Gold! Good luck to you, Wings of Gold!" cried the professor.

A bottle of champagne crashed to shivers on the aluminium plates, hats went up, and glasses were drained.

"Hold tight!" said Teddy Morgan.

F-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

The mighty screws whirred at the touch of a lever. She was afloat. She rose higher and higher, until the men below looked like dolls, and their lusty yells sounded faint and dim.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo-o-o!" crowed the little bantam.

Lance and Maurice broke into screams of laughter, and the professor began to shake hands deliriously with everybody.

"Bust me!" said Mr. Tooter. "Blackbirds aren't spots on this for flying!"

Morgan Sets to Work to Rectify a Weakness in the Flying Vessel—The Professor as a Footballer.

The aeroplane descended in forty minutes, but not more than eight minutes had passed before Morgan succeeded in bringing her to rest on the platform. The aerial vessel refused to answer to her wheel with the delicacy and nicety they had hoped for. The absolute perfection of the model, on which the inventor had spent years of toil and wealth of ingenuity, was wanting in the full-sized ship. There were many moments of anxiety. Morgan—his lips compressed, his eyes alert, and his nerves as steady as a rock—handled her as a skilled driver might handle a bad-tempered horse or an unbroken colt, ready for every fierce trick or vice.

"Dot will not do, dear lads—dot will not do!" said Professor Von Haegel. "Ach! She is so self-willed!"

They were in the saloon. Teddy Morgan stroked his moustache.

"I don't know," he said; "but, by thunder, she's got to do it! I could teach a fellow to steer a straight course in an open sea in five minutes, but I couldn't teach him to bring the boat in a tricky harbour, and lay her upside along the quay, in five months. That's what I think about our flying craft. You want to know her. It's my belief that her helm's too low and too much under her keel. It answers all right when she has a pace on her, but not when she's going slow."

"It's not such a serious fault, after all," said Lance. "The vessel can fly, and she's steerable. There's not much danger of colliding with anyone."

"All the same, it's a fault, sir," said Morgan. "It makes me sick to see any machinery with a fault in it. It touches me up like seeing a cripple. I look upon an engine as something alive. By thunder, if you let me stick another helm on her, I believe I could steer her through a forest without shaking a leaf!"

"Try it by all means, Teddy," said Maurice. "We can't spoil the boat for a pint of tar."

This meant more delay. There was still a quantity of molten metal. A couple of portable forges were put ashore, and Morgan and his expert metal-workers commenced the construction of a second rudder. It was composed of thirty plates of thin steel in the shape of a fan, and worked from

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an upright on two wheels set in a raised groove. Its size cramped the stern deck considerably.

As only experienced craftsmen were of any use to the engineer, a football match took place in the snow. Herr Ludwig Von Haegel nobly undertook to defend Mr. William Tooter's goal. The fat and learned professor was innocent of any knowledge of the game, but he was enthusiastic and energetic to a degree.

Every time the ball came his way he kicked at it violently and missed it and sat down. Each time he sat down he left a great circular impression. Lance counted these impressions at half-time and found that they totalled up to fifty-three.

"Good man!" he said. "By Jove, keep on and you'll knock up a century yet! You're a wonder for falling about on the crust of the earth. Isn't he, Maurice?"

"He is a great player," Fordham answered. "But his gentle heart spoils him. He doesn't want to hurt the ball, and that's why he won't kick it."

"But I cannot kick it, dear lads!" puffed the beaming professor. "I kick, but id is not dere. Ach, it is so nimble! I kick, but der ball joomp up and strike my chest and my nose. Himmel! We have won, is id nod?"

"Won?" growled Mr. Tooter. "Blessed blackbirds! He's let sixteen shots through that a one-legged pigeon could have stopped!"

"Oh, go and chase yerself, Bill!" remarked Jackson. "Tell yer wot! Let the bantam keep goal, and stick the professor centre-forward. I'll lend yer the Smacker—straight I will!"

Tooter smiled at the Cockney, and the Cockney winked at Tooter. Everybody grinned when they saw the professor take Tooter's place in the centre of the field. Even the bantam, perched on the top of Jackson's goal, crowed with delight.

Crooks blew the whistle.

"What is dot I shall do?" asked the professor.

"Kick it off, sir—kick the ball."

The smiling professor swung one fat leg three or four times, and kicked the ball.

It travelled quite four yards. Little Jackson was a deadly shot. He drove back the shell like a shot, and aimed at the professor. The impact bowled Von Haegel over into the powdery snow. When he sat up to rub himself the players were far up the field.

"Ach! Dot was sudden and painful. Poooh! Himmel! Dot was sudden. I have not breath left to think. Phoo! I cannot blay mit dese lads; but dey must blay und be habby. They are goot lads. Ja, ja, they are goot lads! Where is mine Shagesbeare?"

Professor von Haegel, the greatest scientist of the age, scooped up a mound of snow for a seat and took out a little leather-bound volume.

And there the great man sat, beneath the chill Antarctic sky, reading "A Midsummer Night's Dream," while the shouting players whirled round him, and the ball skimmed here and there. He gave Lance a cheery smile when Lance came up and wrapped a couple of fur-lined coats round him.

"Keep clear of him, boys," said Fordham, "and don't disturb him."

It was record scoring. Mr. Tooter's team did better without Von Haegel's valuable help; but the professor's skill as a goalkeeper had placed them in a hopeless position.

Jackson's side won with a score of eighteen goals to six.

Merry and hungry, the men streamed back to the ship. Lance and Maurice climbed the ladder to the platform.

Hammers clanged loudly. Morgan dashed the perspiration from his forehead, and worked the bellows with one arm.

"When, Teddy, my boy?"

"When, you black manipulator of scrap-iron?" asked Lance.

"To-morrow night, gentlemen," answered the engineer.

"If it's a failure we can easily get rid of it. Mind, sir!"

He dragged a glowing bar out of the roaring furnace and placed it on the anvil. The sledgehammer beat down with the regularity of a machine and bent it into shape.

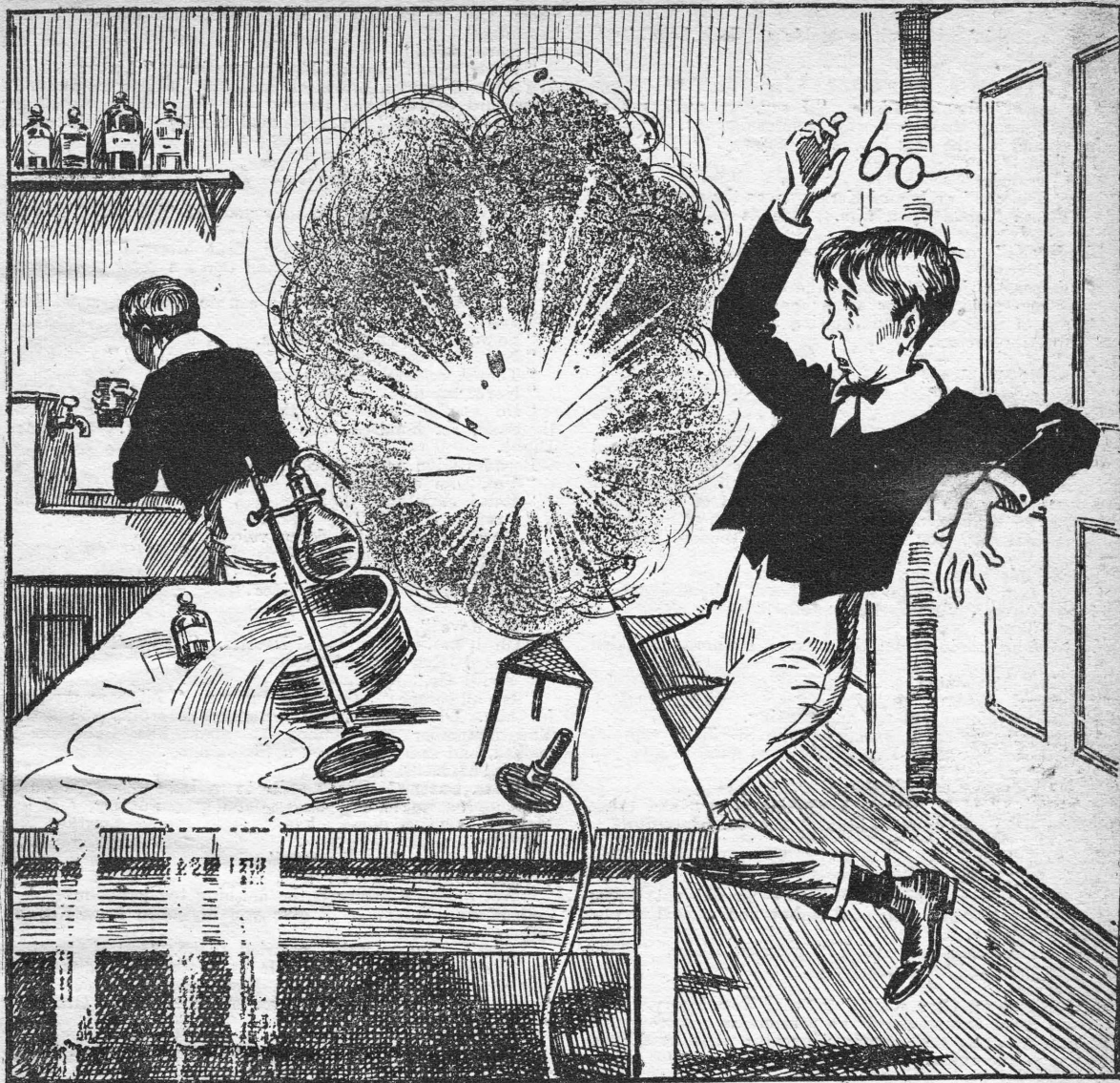
"Don't tire yourself, Teddy," said Maurice. "You're a demon for work, but one can easily overdo it."

"It is only the want of work that tires me," said the engineer; "not work. I must be tinkering with something, by thunder, or I get the dry rot! Been below? I've got the radiators into trim, and it's as warm as a galley."

Morgan's radiators were a triumph. Except in the engine-room, which registered 46degs., there was a pleasant temperature of 63degs. Fahr. throughout the aeroplane. The dynamos were running smoothly, and the lighting apparatus was in splendid order.

Professor von Haegel joined them in the long saloon of the Wings of Gold.

(This thrilling adventure serial story will be continued in next week's issue of "The Gem" Library. To avoid disappointment order your copy well in advance.)



"There was a terrific explosion in the room, and Skimpole staggered back from the table, his spectacles flying off. "Oh—ow! Oh! Oh, dear! Help!" he gasped wildly. (See Chapter 4.)

"You'll know some time."

"Open the door!"

"Rats!"

There was evidently no chance of getting in. The excited juniors bestowed a succession of terrific kicks upon the door, and retired. Within the box-room a chuckle was heard again, and the schoolboy inventor went on with his work, whatever it was, as if there had been no interruption. The School House inventor did not allow small things to disturb him when he was at work carrying out his wonderful ideas.

A voice upon the stairs greeted the juniors as they descended to the Fourth Form passage. It was the acid, unpleasant voice of Knox, the prefect.

"What's that row up there?"

"What row?" asked Tom Merry innocently.

Knox scowled.

"You've been hammering and banging up there," he said.

"Take a hundred lines each."

"Weally, Knox—"

"Buzz off, or I'll double it!" said the prefect sharply.

The juniors went down the passage. Knox could impose lines if he liked, and he had a special fancy for imposing them upon Tom Merry & Co.

"The wottah!" muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"The beast!"

"The cad!"

"All Glyn's fault!" growled Monty Lowther. "We'll scrag the bounder when he comes out of his blessed den!"

"Hallo! What's that about Glyn?"

Kangaroo asked the question. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane, of the Shell, were Bernard Glyn's study mates. They were coming along the passage, and had overheard Monty Lowther's remark.

Lowther snorted.

"It's that blessed ass Glyn again!" he growled. "He's got us a hundred lines each!"

Kangaroo chuckled.

"It's that blessed ass Glyn again!" he growled. "He's at it again."

"And he's left the tap turned on over our study, and flooded us out!" growled Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if it seems funny to me!" said Blake, glowering at Kangaroo and Dane, who had burst into a roar of laughter.

"We'll bump him when he comes out! Why couldn't you keep him in your study to work his rotten invention?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling asses!"

"We're fed up with his inventions there," grinned Clifton Dane. "We made him take the blessed machine up into the box-room."

"You ass! He's flooded us out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothin' whatevah to cackle at, deah boys!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You asses!" shouted Blake. "I say, we can't get at Glyn; let's bump these two silly chumps instead. They're his chums, and it's the next best thing, anyway."

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Kangaroo, as the chums of the School House rushed upon him. "Hands off! I say—Ow!"

"Hands off!" roared Clifton Dane. "Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Bump! Bump!

The exasperated juniors bumped the two Shell fellows, and bumped them hard. It was some compensation for being flooded out of their study, and getting a hundred lines each from Knox, the prefect.

"Ow!"

"Yarooop! Hold on!"

"Give 'em another!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Bump! Bump!

Kangaroo and Dane struggled furiously. They dragged Tom Merry and Blake and Lowther over on the floor, and the juniors rolled in a tangled heap, struggling fiercely. A voice came along the passage from the head of the stairs. It belonged to Kildare, of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's. "Stop that row, you young rascals!" shouted Kildare angrily.

But the juniors were too excited to hear.

"Go it, Tom Mewwy—go it, deah boys!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bump the wottahs!"

Bump! Bump!

Kildare came striding along the passage, his brows wrinkled in an angry frown.

"Stop it!" he shouted.

"Bai Jove! Kildare."

Tom Merry jumped up, red and panting.

"You young ruffians!" exclaimed the St. Jim's captain. "Stop that row at once! I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking all round!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Take two hundred lines each, the lot of you, and bring them to me in my study at bed-time!" said the captain of St. Jim's.

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, Kildare—"

But Kildare was striding away, and he did not listen. The juniors, somewhat dusty and dishevelled, looked at one another in dismay.

"I say, that's too jolly thick!" growled Blake. "That make three hundred lines each for us."

"It's wotten!"

"Wait till we see Glyn again!" growled Tom Merry.

And the other fellows shared his sentiments. There was a warm time awaiting the schoolboy inventor when he showed himself in public again.

CHAPTER 3.

The Great Wheeze.

BERNARD GLYN was not seen again that day until late in the evening. He came down from the box-room at last, after locking the door and carefully placing the key in his pocket. It was evident that he did not mean to run any risk of his invention being disturbed in his absence.

The schoolboy-inventor was looking somewhat fatigued, but very satisfied with himself. When he came into the junior class-room, there was a general exclamation.

"There he is!"

"There's the bounder!"

"Collar him!"

Bernard Glyn looked surprised. The Liverpool lad had already forgotten the accident of the flooding of Study No. 6, in the engrossing interest of his invention.

"Hallo! What's the matter?" he exclaimed, as Tom Merry & Co. crowded towards him.

"Bai Jove!"

"You flooded our study!" roared Blake.

"You've got us a heap of lines each!"

"Oh, I'm sorry about the flood!" said Glyn, with a grin. "It was an accident. I'm really sorry! About the lines; they don't matter!"

"Don't matter!" repeated Tom Merry. "We've got three hundred each!"

"That's all right!"

"Is it all right?" granted Herries. "We haven't written THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 206.

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them, and we shall most likely have them doubled in the morning."

"Never mind."

"Never mind!" howled Monty Lowther. "Listen to him! We'll bump him till he's black and blue! Collar the duffer!"

Bernard Glyn backed away.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed hastily. "Hold on a minute!"

"Wats!"

"Never mind about the lines. I'll do them for you."

"What!"

"I'll do every blessed line for you!" said Glyn. "It's all serene—honest Injun!"

"But you can't!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Six of us have got three hundred each, and that's a total of eighteen hundred."

"I can do them. You fellows can do one each, and I'll do the rest."

"To-night?" demanded Blake.

"No; I'm not quite ready yet. To-morrow."

"They'll be doubled by then."

"Never mind."

"Do you mean to say that you can write out three thousand, six hundred lines for us to-morrow?" demanded Digby.

Bernard Glyn nodded coolly.

"Yes," he answered.

"Rats! You can't do it!"

"I can do it easily."

"How?" demanded a dozen voices.

"I've got an invention—"

Tom Merry started.

"An invention for writing lines!"

"Yes."

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh it's all rot!" growled Herries. "It won't work."

Bernard Glyn laughed.

"You'll see," he replied.

"It's all serene!" grinned Kangaroo. "I'll leave my lines for him. Glyn's inventions generally do work, you know. You remember the dummy he made like Skimpole—it walked, and everybody took it for Skimmy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! That's quite twue, but—"

"Suppose we let the lines go on accumulating, and the blessed invention doesn't work?" said Monty Lowther suspiciously.

"Impossible! It will work!"

"Have you finished it?"

"Not quite. I'll give it the finishing touches to-morrow," said Bernard Glyn. "I give you my word it will be all serene."

"That's all very well," growled Blake, "but if the lines are doubled, we sha'n't be able to do them all to-morrow, and that means staying in on Wednesday afternoon to do them. And we've got a footer match with the Grammar School for the half."

"I tell you it's all right."

"We'll give him a chance," said Tom Merry, after a pause. "If the invention works all right, well and good. If it doesn't, we'll give the silly ass the bumping of his life!"

"Good egg!"

"Yaas, wathah! That's all wight!"

And the matter was allowed to rest at that. Upon Bernard Glyn's success as an inventor depended whether he received a record ragging. But the schoolboy-inventor's confidence in his powers was evidently strong. He was not in the least disturbed at the prospect.

Kildare looked into the junior common-room in the School House at bed-time. There was a grim expression on his face. "Bed-time, you kids," he said.

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at the moment Dolores entered he was in the act of taking the papers from Gaspero.

"I want those despatches!" exclaimed the brave girl firmly. "Ah, I thought you would be surprised, but I want you—"

"Caramba!" snarled Gaspero. "What is this, Hemming?"

"There is nothing to hide from me," went on Dolores quickly. "I know that those papers were taken from Mr. Fortescue, and you must give them to me at once!"

"At once, eh?" repeated Hemming, recovering himself, and taking a step forward. "Suppose I—"

"If you come near me I will shoot!" declared Dolores, whipping out her tiny, silver-plated Derringer. "Give—"

And then a startling thing happened. Suddenly the room was plunged into pitch darkness, and before Dolores could move, she felt herself pushed violently backwards. She tripped on her skirt, her revolver flew from her hand, and fell to the floor.

Instantly the lights went up at a touch from Hemming's finger. He was smiling now with a grim, fiendish delight.

But Dolores was only in a large recess of the room with her back to the wall. She saw Hemming's gloating face before her, and was about to step forward when, without the slightest warning, a loud click sounded.

Simultaneously a long slit appeared in the flooring, and before Dolores could realise it a huge wall of solid oak shot upwards, and enclosed her, a helpless prisoner!

"That is the way I trap my enemies," snarled Hemming, pointing to the false wall, which was papered similarly to the other part of the room. "By heavens, Gaspero, that woman shall pay dearly for her interference!"

He strode across the room, his back to his companion, and in that moment a fierce light blazed forth in Gaspero's eyes.

"Dolores trapped!" he told himself with set teeth. "By heavens, Hemming shall never harm her—he shall never touch a hair of her head while I am in the house."

The supposed spy was Frank Kingston himself.

CHAPTER 3. The Chained Death.

"YOU signed your own death warrant when you entered this house! For years I have been in ignorance as to your real personality, and now that I have found you at last there will be no escape."

It was Oscar Hemming who spoke. Before him, tightly bound to a rough chair, sat Dolores, pale, inwardly terror-stricken, but outwardly calm and defiant. They were in a dismal cellar, and the light of three guttering candles cast flickering shadows around.

"But you have made a mistake," declared Dolores. "I am not the woman you think I am. I—"

"Enough!" snarled Hemming. "You would not have come for those despatches were you anyone else. For the last three years a mysterious woman has foiled my plans time and again, and I have never been able to track her. Now you have placed yourself in my hands."

Dolores sat there breathing fast.

Twenty minutes had elapsed since Dolores had been captured. To Kingston's dismay Hemming had ordered him from the room and then locked the door. Had the detective resisted he would have been forced to show his hand, and that would, perhaps, have been fatal.

Hemming had lost no time in opening a sliding panel in his library, and descending to the cellar he was now in. Having lit the three candles he again ascended, lowered the false wall, and carried Dolores' unconscious form below. For simultaneously with the trapping of the victim, the air in the recess had been charged with a potent Oriental drug, which caused Dolores to lose consciousness immediately.

But now she had recovered, and although she knew that death was very near, she showed no sign of fear.

"I can waste no more time," went on Hemming, with amazing callousness. "My guests are waiting above."

"You're going to leave me here—like this?"

"No, not like that," said the other fiercely. "I've prepared a death for you months back, knowing full well that I should have you in my power some day. You will now see what you have brought upon yourself. Ah, but I had better take precautions!"

He whipped up a rag and tightly bound it over Dolores' mouth. Then, with swift strides, he crossed the cellar. For three minutes he was busy, Dolores looking on meanwhile with growing horror.

"Now," mocked the spy, "how does this strike you?"

He slid back the side of a box he had placed on the rough table, and from it darted a huge, repulsive-looking snake, with a long, poisonous fang. Its eyes could be plainly seen glittering in the candlelight.

Dolores uttered a muffled scream. Her bravery was undeniable, but even the strongest would have shuddered at the sight of that awful monster. Hemming held it from escaping by a fine steel chain, which was fastened to its

neck. A minute later he had tied this chain to a long, thick, rope-like substance, which was, in turn, fastened to a large nail in the centre of the table. The chain being secured but one inch from this nail, the snake's movements were very limited—for the length of the chain was barely twelve inches.

"This line here is a fuse," whispered Hemming, his eyes alight with an almost mad ferocity. "I am now going to light it, and in ten minutes it will have slowly burnt upwards until it gets to within one inch of the nail—the spot to which the chain is tied. At that second the snake will be set free. Do you understand?"

He gloated in his victim's obvious horror.

"That snake is one of the largest in the world," he went on relentlessly, "and its bite is death. Yes, that is it—the chained death! The snake immediately on being released, will dash at you and—"

The fiend shrugged his shoulders expressively, then, taking a box of matches from his pocket, he ignited one and set light to the fuse. Dolores' head swam dizzily, and she prayed that consciousness would leave her.

Hemming sprang up the ladder, and a moment later was standing in his library, chucking to himself.

Suddenly the door opened with a crash, and Kingston, with fiercely burning eyes, entered the room. All this time he had been fruitlessly searching the house, and the cellars beneath. But now, having grown desperate he threw all caution to the winds, and meant to find out what Hemming had done with the girl he loved more than all the world.

"You scoundrel!" he cried to Hemming's amazement. "Where is she? By heavens, I'll choke the life out of you—"

"Gaspero! What on earth—"

"Answer my question!" blazed Kingston, his eyes alight with that awful fire which so many criminals had learned to dread. By sheer force of will he compelled Hemming to speak. With quaking finger the man pointed out the secret door. Much as he tried to control himself he found it an impossibility to do so. Kingston's superior will absolutely forced him to act as he did. There was no getting out of it.

With revolver clenched in his right hand, Kingston dashed down the rickety stairs to the secret cellar beneath, caring not one jot whether Hemming escaped or no. All his thoughts were for Dolores. His electric lantern shot out a beam of brilliant light, and a cry of horror escaped his lips as he beheld Dolores' terrible predicament.

The fuse was burning fiercely—faster than Hemming had anticipated, for it was even now but three inches from the chain which held the terrible snake.

Crack!

Kingston's revolver shot forth a spurt of fire, and the bullet sped straight and true into the centre of the loathsome reptile's head. At the same second the fuse set it free, and with a thud it writhed from the table to the floor, dead!

"By Jove, Dolores, it was a terrifying experience, and no mistake," murmured Frank Kingston languidly two hours later in the seclusion of his own rooms at No. 100, Charing Cross. "The only wonder is that you're not half mad with terror!"

"Something told me that you would come to the rescue," replied Dolores thankfully. "Oh, Frank, I'm sure Hemming would never have done that had he known the real facts. He took me for some awful woman spy!"

"Yes, I understand that," replied the detective. "The galling thing is that the whole of your brave work was unnecessary. I visited the scoundrelly Gaspero early in the evening, caught him napping, and secured the despatches. Then, disguising myself as the spy, I hurried to Richmond, taking with me a bundle of dummy papers, knowing full well that Hemming would not have time to examine them. Of course, I hoped to gain some incriminating information from Hemming, and have him arrested."

"It was a marvellous disguise!" cried Dolores admiringly.

"One of old Professor Polgraves," murmured Kingston, "so don't praise me for it. I tried to get a word with you before you went with the other ladies to the drawing-room, but found it absolutely impossible. Had I been able to, you would have been saved that awful experience."

"But you did not know," put in Dolores gently. "You had no idea when the case first came to you that you would be able to hoodwink Gaspero so easily. So he is free while Hemming was captured? What a sensation it will cause!"

"Yes," he agreed, "the public will certainly be surprised when the morning papers come out. The only thing that now remains is to return the despatches to Mr. Arthur Fortescue. It is just eleven-thirty, and that is the time I mentioned to him in my wire. He ought to be here by now."

A tap sounded on the door, and Tim appeared.

"Taxi just drove up, sir," he announced. "Mr. Arthur Fortescue!"

THE END.
THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 206.

Next Thursday's Grand, Long, Complete "THEIR DISHONOURABLE CHUM!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD. School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. : Please order your copy early.



"Their Dishonourable Chum."

I am convinced my friends will thoroughly enjoy reading about their old favourites—the Terrible Three—next Thursday, for Martin Clifford gives us quite the best school tale he has yet written, under the above title.

Figgins—the lean and lanky, but big-hearted junior—takes a prominent part in the story, as also does Cousin Ethel.

"THEIR DISHONOURABLE CHUM"

should be read by everybody, and I want my staunch readers to do all they can in increasing the circle of "Gemites." The best way of doing this is by passing your copy of THE GEM LIBRARY on to a non-reader. Other attractions next Thursday will be another instalment of Sidney Drew's grand serial story, "Wings of Gold." Another short, complete story of Frank Kingston and his pretty assistant, Dolores, under the title of "The Green Envelope," and also our Grand "Present" Competition, which has already proved a gigantic success.

Therefore, please order your copy in advance.

Replies in Brief.

L. D. M., Hastings.—The "stitch" in running or walking is generally a matter of condition. If you are out of training you are likely to get it. When it attacks you, ease up a bit, and it will probably disappear after you have been going more steadily for a short time—that is, if your condition is not too bad.

L. Lovelock.—The average length of a dog's life is twelve to fourteen years, but this term is sometimes lengthened to sixteen or even twenty years, though the latter is a very old age indeed. It is not always advisable to allow dogs to become too old, as they are apt to become a burden both to themselves and their owners.

Our Correspondence Exchange.

Would any reader of THE GEM care to correspond with Miss F. Newton, 448, Mosely Road, Birmingham?

Thomas Johnstone, of 96, Church Road, Stanley, Liverpool, England, wishes to correspond with a South African boy, who is a British subject, and about 14 years of age.

Abe Shulman, 23, Hanan Street, Jeppetown, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a boy reader of THE GEM, age about 14.

Back Numbers Offered and Wanted.

Will any reader who wishes to dispose of old copies of "The Boys' Friend" 2d. Complete Library kindly write to Master F. A. Simpson, 91, Liere Street, Melton Road, Leicester?

Will any reader oblige Charles G., of Fossendene, Mount Pleasant, Cambridge, with the issue of "The Magnet" Library entitled "The School on Strike"?

Can any reader oblige Master D. Casswell, of 114, Pershore Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, with any of the following back numbers: Nos. 104, "The Cad of the Sixth"; 170, "Harry Wharton's Downfall"; and 174, "A Schoolboy's Honour," of "The Magnet" Library; and Nos. 151 "Tom Merry's Resolve"; 165, "Joe's Champion"; 175, "The Schoolboy Castaways"; 178, "The Stowaway of St. Jim's"; and 107, "The Swell of the Circus," of THE GEM Library.

Miss Nelly Kinsmur, of 14, Tulketh Brow, Ashton, Preston, has back numbers from No. 116, which she will be very pleased to distribute to any who may want them.

H. E. Sleight, of 13, Etherington Street, Gainsborough, England, has Nos. 1 to 30 of the halfpenny GEM, and Nos. 2, 4, 6, 7 to 39 of the new series for sale.

Miss E. Maude, of 33, Alice Street, Sale, Manchester, wishes to obtain all the back numbers of THE GEM. Particulars from above address.

Our Grand New Feature.

The insistent request I have received from many thousands of readers for another series of stories dealing with the adventures of that amazing and popular character, Frank Kingston, and Dolores, his charming assistant, have had their result in "The Chained Death," contained in this issue, the first of a series of thrilling short stories which I think are unique for the power and vividness with which the breathless incidents contained in them are portrayed. Most of you, no doubt, have already read "The Chained Death," before having turned to this page, so that the die is already cast, and your opinion on our new feature already formed. What that opinion is, I trust I am able to foretell. Such a story as "The Chained Death," containing as it does the very essence of a good and exciting story in a nutshell, as it were, cannot fail to be popular; and the Frank Kingston tale for next week, entitled "The Green Envelope," will, if possible, win even more golden opinions. I am already satisfied that the thought, care, and trouble expended on these grand short stories will not be in vain; but I make a personal appeal to one and all of my readers to send me a line—just a postcard—to let me know their honest opinions.

Lantern Slides.

Although the brightest hours of the winter days can be profitably employed by the amateur photographer in adding to his negatives, the evenings seem a blank space which nothing connected with photography can fill—nothing, at least, unless the beginner possesses an enlarging lantern. This space can be profitably spent in making lantern slides.

There are various ways of making these slides, but the simplest and best method for the amateur to tackle is making them by contact.

The first thing to obtain is a packet of lantern plates. These cost a shilling a packet, and can be bought from any large dealer or agent. When once a brand of plate has been used, it is best to stick to that one brand so that its peculiarities may be mastered.

Next, sort out the negatives, and choose one for printing which is full of detail, and of good graduation of tone.

When the negative has been selected it has to be placed on a printing-frame, film side upwards, and an unexposed lantern plate has to be placed on the negative, film side downwards, this bringing the two glasses film to film. This has, of course, to be done in the dark-room, where the only light is that given by the ruby lamp.

When the plate and negative are in contact, they have to be fixed in by means of the back of the frame and the brass clips. It is an important point not to forget to clean the glass side of the negative before fixing it in the printing-frame! The plate is then ready for exposure.

Measure from twelve to eighteen inches to the burner of an ordinary gas-jet, or any white light capable of giving equal power, and expose the plate for about thirty seconds.

Development of the exposed lantern plate comes next. The developer should be already mixed and placed in the dark-room before the plate is exposed. There are a number of good developing formulæ for lantern slides on the market, and one of the best, perhaps, is supplied by the Imperial Dry Plate Co., Ltd., of Cricklewood, London, and can be obtained already mixed, and costing 1s. 2d. post free.

Pour the developer in one sweep over the plate, and when, within five minutes, the image appears, take it out, and rinse well under a tap. Then place it in the ordinary hypo. fixing bath (16oz. hypo. to 1 pint of water).

When the fixing is complete, the slide has to be washed and dried like an ordinary plate.

To finish the slide, binding strips must be obtained and fixed round the edges. This part of lantern slide making is not so interesting as the foregoing processes, but it has to be done. After the binding strips are fastened, and the slide titled, it can be stored away for showing at the next party.

THE EDITOR.