

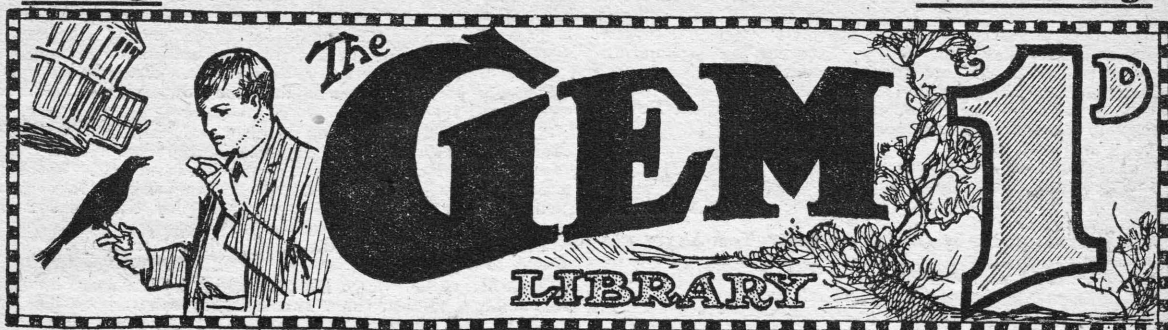
Next
Thursday:

"THE SCHOOLBOY NIHILIST!"

A Grand Tale of Tom Merry.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Every

Thursday.

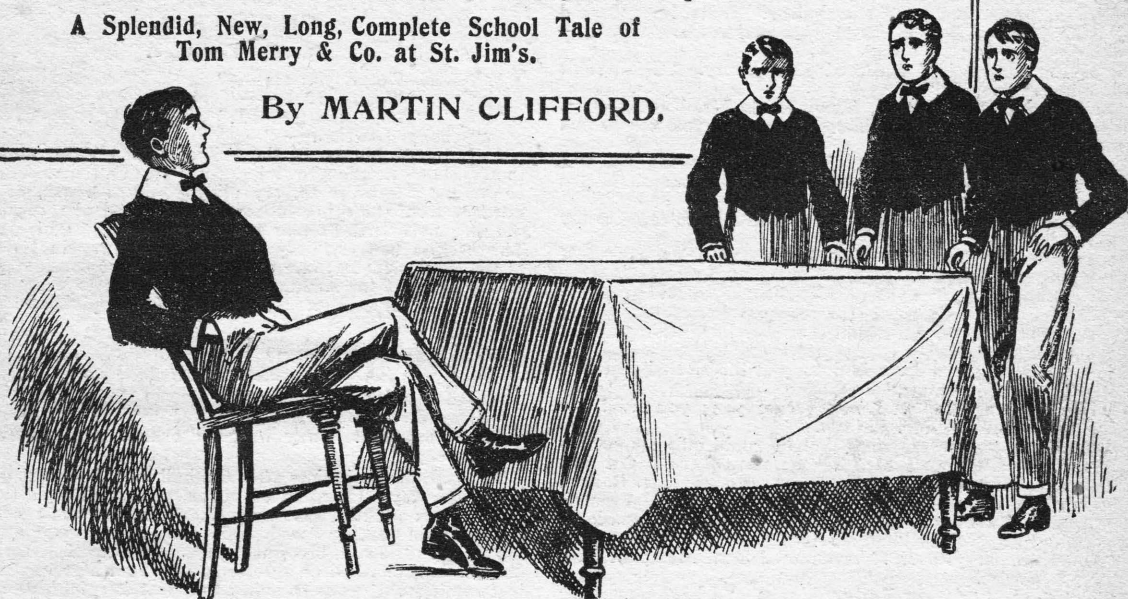


Complete Stories for All and Every Story a Gem.

THE TERRIBLE THREE'S RECRUIT!

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



CHAPTER 1. Not Nice!

"MASTER MERRY!"
Master Merry—otherwise Tom Merry, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's—gave a grunt, but no other acknowledgment of the remark addressed to him.

Master Merry was seated alone in his study, driving away at a Latin imposition that had to be delivered into the House-master's study in the School House before tea-time. And Master Merry was not in the best humour in the world.

For it was still the time of early nightfall, and there was little daylight left between afternoon school and tea-time. And that little daylight Tom Merry preferred to utilise in punting a ball about the quad., if there was no time for regular practice. His chums, Monty Lowther and Manners, had offered to stay in with him, but Tom Merry hadn't allowed them to. He remained in alone, driving off the imposition at top speed. But a hundred lines of "Virgil" are not written out in a few minutes, and Tom Merry was still busy while darkness thickened about the old elms of St. Jim's.

Toby, the School House page, had insinuated a shock-head in at the doorway of the study, but the Shell fellow did not look up; he went on driving his pen as if his life depended upon it.

"Master Merry!"

Grunt!

"I say, Master Merry!"

Grunt!

Toby grinned a little. He came into the study and tapped on the table. Then Tom Merry looked up and pointed to the door with his pen.

"Scoot!" he said, with a brevity that Lycurgus would have greatly approved of. "Bunk!"

"Master Merry——"

"Clear out!"

"But I say——"

"Vamoose!" roared Tom Merry. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Yes, but——"

"Do you want to get out of this study by the door or the window, Toby?" asked Tom Merry, rising from his chair.

The School House page backed away in alarm.

"Oh, Master Tom——"

"Travel!"

"But——"

"Disappear!"

"But Mr. Railton——"

"Whiz off!"

"Says——"

"Mizzle!"

"Yes, but I——"

Tom Merry picked up a Latin dictionary, and Toby fled. The hero of the Shell sat down again at the table, and his pen drove on with renewed vigour. Toby peered cautiously round the door.

"I say, Master Tom——"

Tom Merry looked up in great exasperation.

"I haven't done the blessed impot yet!" he shouted. "I can't take it to Railton till it's finished, ass! Go and eat coke, duffer! Scoot!"

"But Mr. Railton says——"

"Tell Mr. Railton to go and eat coke, too!"

Toby chuckled. He was not likely to deliver that message

Next Thursday:

"THE SCHOOLBOY NIHILIST!" AND "WINGS OF GOLD!"

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to the Housemaster of the School House at St. Jim's. But it was not necessary, for Mr. Railton himself was coming down the Shell passage. Toby heard his footstep and turned round and gazed at him, with a dropping jaw, wondering whether he had heard Tom Merry's words or not.

Mr. Railton's face gave no indication.

"Have you delivered my message, Toby?" asked the Housemaster in his quiet, grave voice.

"If you please, sir—"

"Very well! I will deliver it myself."

Toby cast an apprehensive glance at the door of the study. He would gladly have warned Tom Merry, but he could not, and he retreated.

Mr. Railton put his hand upon the door. Tom Merry was writing away at express speed, and as the door opened he shouted out, without looking up:

"Is that you again, you silly ass? If you come into this study I'll mop up the floor with you!"

"Merry!"

Tom Merry jumped.

All sorts and conditions of blots danced from his pen over the paper and rendered that imposition quite useless for presenting in a Housemaster's study.

He stood up and looked at Mr. Railton in dismay.

"I—I— Oh, sir!" he stammered.

Mr. Railton could not help smiling. Tom Merry looked as if he wished the floor would open and swallow him up—as, indeed, he did!

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" stammered Tom Merry. "I—I didn't know it was you, sir!"

"I can quite believe that, Merry," said Mr. Railton drily. "You would hardly have addressed me so if you had known that it was I."

"Oh, certainly not, sir!" said Tom Merry eagerly. "I thought it was that other ass—I—I mean, I thought it was that ass Toby—"

"I sent Toby with a message to you, Merry, to come to my study."

"Yes, sir. I—I haven't finished the imposition, sir. I—I was trying to get it done in time," stammered the junior.

Mr. Railton looked at the imposition, and smiled again.

"I think that this is a case of more haste, less speed, Merry," he said. "I am afraid that that imposition will not be of much use."

Tom Merry glanced down in dismay at the blotted sheet.

"I—I'm afraid not, sir," he said.

"Never mind, Merry. I will excuse you; you need not bring the lines," said Mr. Railton.

Tom Merry was so surprised that he could only stare. He was almost certain that Mr. Railton must have heard him say that the Housemaster could go and eat coke. Mr. Railton certainly never took any notice of words overheard by accident. Still, there was nothing in Tom Merry's remark to make him feel specially kind, surely.

"Oh, th—thank you, sir!" stammered Tom Merry at last, finding his voice.

"Not at all!" said Mr. Railton kindly. "I have something to say to you, Merry."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, wondering what was coming.

"There is a new boy coming to the school," said the Housemaster. "He is coming from another school, where he has been in the Shell, and he will be put into the same Form at St. Jim's."

"Yes, sir."

"And he will be assigned to this study, Merry."

Tom Merry's jaw dropped.

"This—this study, sir?" he said.

The Housemaster nodded. Tom Merry looked at him blankly.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther—the Terrible Three—had had that study to themselves for a long time, and they looked upon it as their own peculiar property. True, new fellows had sometimes been put in there with them; but always, somehow, fortune had befriended them, and they had had the room to themselves again after a time. They had come to believe in their good luck in this respect, and to take it for granted that they would have that room for their own private den without molestation so long as they condescended to remain the ornaments of the Shell Form at St. Jim's.

Tom Merry understood now why the Housemaster had excused him the lines. Mr. Railton knew that his news could not be pleasant to the Terrible Three, and he had a kind heart.

"V-v-very well, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"That is all," said the Housemaster quietly. "I have really no choice in the matter, as there have been a good number of new boys this term, and space is limited. But, Merry, I have one more word to say. I expect you to make things here quite comfortable for the new boy. I have heard of such things as juniors playing a series of tricks upon a

new-comer, in order to induce him to make some effort to change into another study."

Tom Merry's eyes twinkled for a moment. Those tactics had been adopted by the Terrible Three on one occasion, and Mr. Railton evidently knew all about it. It was often quite surprising to the juniors to find out how well Mr. Railton understood them.

"There must be nothing of that sort, Merry," said Mr. Railton. "This new boy, Barber, is, I understand, a quiet and studious lad, with a good reputation from his last school. I hope you will find him a pleasant companion. I am sure you will not be guilty of any rough play towards a new-comer. I depend upon you, Merry."

And Mr. Railton left the study, without waiting for Tom Merry to reply.

Tom Merry laid down his pen, which he had been holding in his hand all the time, and savagely screwed up the imposition, and threw it into the grate. Then he kicked his chair over, as a sort of safety-valve for his feelings. Then he said:

"Well, I'm dashed!"

Then he went out to seek Manners and Lowther, to tell them all about it.

CHAPTER 2.

Family Troubles.

"PASS, Gussy, you ass—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Pass, you fathead!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

A group of juniors of the School House were punting a footer about in the growing dusk. The ball had come out to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, at some distance from the other fellows, and, instead of returning it, the elegant Fourth-Former had paused to adjust his necktie. The necktie had certainly fallen a little awry in the chase of the elusive footer; but the juniors did not consider that a fitting moment for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to complete his toilet, and they said so. They said so in the plainest of plain English.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"Chump!"

"Send that ball over here!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake! I wegard you as a silly chump, Mannahs! Pway wait till I have tied my necktie. I—ooooooooop!"

The rush of the juniors after the ball sent Arthur Augustus out of the way. He sprawled in the quadrangle; and the last state of his necktie was worse than its first. The swell of St. Jim's sat looking dazed, while the juniors swept on after the footer. The rush brought them towards the School House, and the ball bounced on the steps, and Tom Merry, who was just coming out, gave it a kick and sent it spinning back to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

D'Arcy caught it—with his head! There was a yell from the elegant Fourth-Former, as he reclined in the quad, with the ball bouncing over him, and a roar of laughter from the School House fellows.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Let that blessed ball alone, you chaps!" said Tom Merry gloomily. "I've got some rotten news!"

"Hallo!" said Blake, glancing at Tom Merry's shadowed face. "What's the row? Licked over the impot?"

"No; I'm excused that."

"I don't call that bad news," said Digby of the Fourth.

"What's the matter, old son?" asked Monty Lowther sympathetically.

"There's a new beast coming!"

"Oh!"

"And Railton's putting him into our study."

"Oh!"

"Don't you call that rotten?"

"My hat!"

"Hard cheese!" said Jack Blake. "Lucky he wasn't put into our study, though. You see, it might have been worse."

"Oh, rats! The worst of it is we sha'n't be able to rag him into changing out of the study, because Railton's as good as made me promise not to," growled Tom Merry.

"Well, that's rotten!" said Monty Lowther. "I don't call that cricket on Railton's part. I think he might have trusted us!"

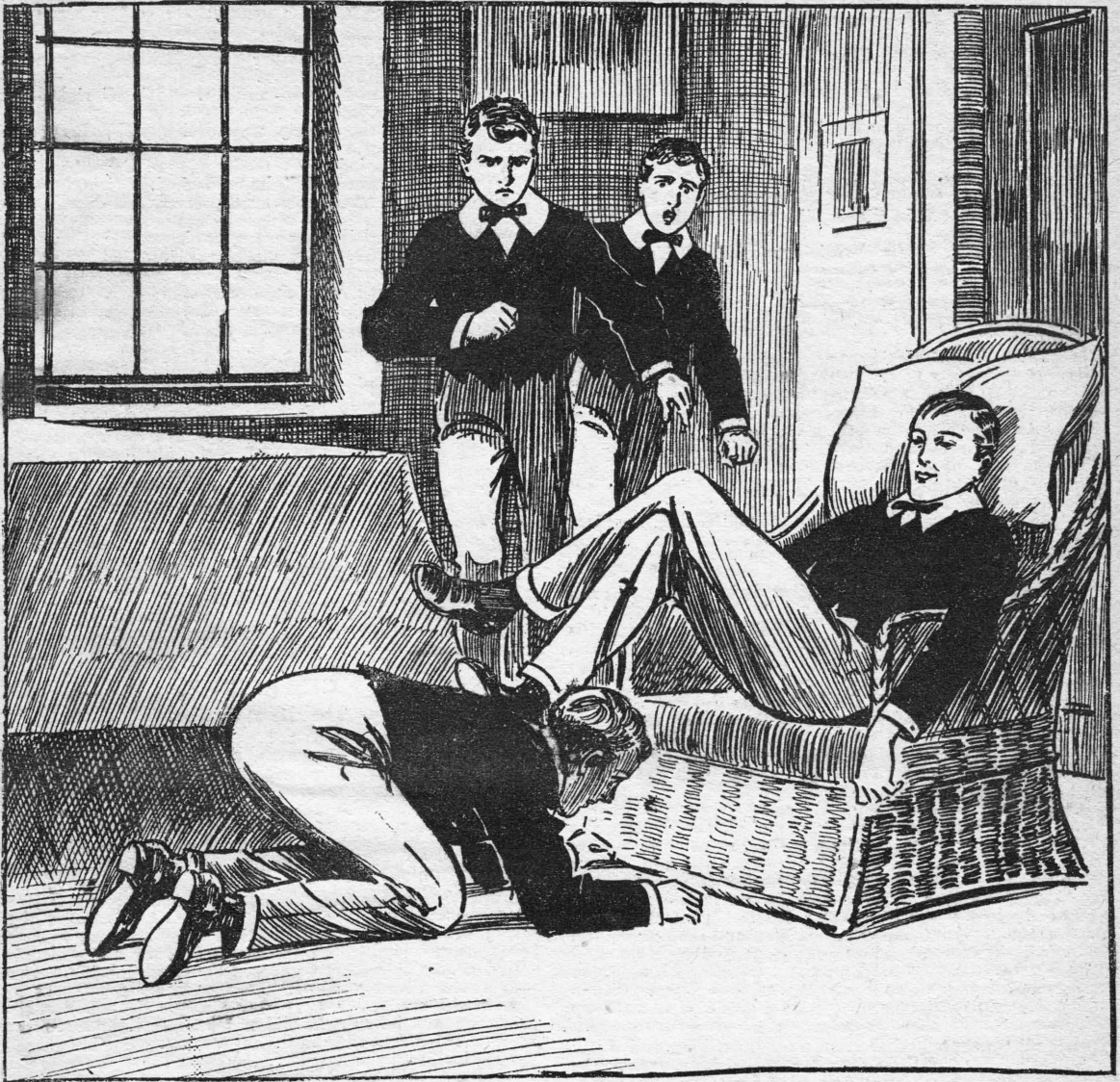
"Trusted you to do what?" asked Blake.

"Ahem! Rag the new chap, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's rotten!" said Tom Merry, with a clouded brow.

"We've had that study to ourselves a long time. If it had



"Come here, Lowther, and sit on the hearthrug so that I can rest my feet on you!" commanded the new boy. "Yes, my lord!" said Monty Lowther meekly, squatting on the rug, and, to the amazement of his chums, taking Barber's feet on his shoulders. (See Chapter 4.)

been a Fourth Form kid, and he had been put into No. 6, it wouldn't have mattered—"

"Wouldn't it?" said Blake.

"Is he going into the Shell, then?" asked Monty Lowther.

"A new kid?"

"So Railton says," said Tom Merry. "I think it's rotten!"

"Why, that's what you did when you came," said Blake. "You were in the Shell at another school before you came to St. Jim's. You can't complain."

"Who's complaining?"

Blake chuckled.

"Well, you sounded as if you were! My mistake, I suppose!"

"You frightful asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Look at Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had recovered from the shock. He had risen to his feet, his clothes splashed with mud, his face smothered with it, his hat gone, and his hair tousled and with mud clinging to it. There had lately been rain, and the quadrangle was not the place anyone would have chosen to roll over in as a matter of preference.

Tom Merry's face cleared as he looked at the swell of the Fourth Form. He roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at my clothes!" yelled the swell of St. Jim's, quite

forgetting for the moment the repose which should stamp the caste of Vere de Vere. "Look at my face!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah duffahs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful ass!"

Monty Lowther shaded his eyes with his hand.

"I—I can't!" he said piteously. "Don't ask me to do a thing like that, Gussy! Don't be hard on a chap!"

"Which silly ass kicked that ball at me?" howled D'Arcy, pushing back his muddy cuffs. "I am goin' to give him a feahful thwashin'. I think it was you, Tom Mewwy! Pway put up your hands, you frightful chump."

"Pax!" said Tom Merry laughing.

"I wefuse to pax—I mean, I am goin' to thwash you! You have wuined my clothes. I wegard you as a dangewous ass! I—"

"Hang it all, Gussy, you might go easy with Tom Merry, now that he's overwhelmed with family troubles," said Manners reproachfully.

Arthur Augustus paused.

"Bai Jove! Is that the case, Tom Mewwy, deah boy?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I'm sowwy," said D'Arcy, at once, lowering his hands.

"Of course, I'm quite willin' to ovahlook your asinine con-

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duct, undah the cires. I am vewy sowwy to heah that you have family twoubles, deah boy. Is it vewy bad?"

"Awful!"

"Your old governess, Miss Pwiscillah, seedy?" asked D'Arcy anxiously.

"Oh, no! Miss Fawcett is all right."

"Your uncle in Amewicah is all sewene?"

"Yes; he's still going strong."

"Lost any relations?"

"Oh, no!"

"Lost any money?"

"Not a bit of it."

"Bai Jove! What is the family twouble, then?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"They're putting a new chap into our study," Tom Merry explained solemnly.

"What?"

"They're putting a new chap—"

"You feahful ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled at the expression on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic face. The swell of St. Jim's had not been prepared to hear of that special variety of family troubles. He groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye, and surveyed the group of yelling juniors with a great deal of scornful dignity.

"I wogard you as a dwove of asses!" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I'm goin' to thwash—"

"You'd better go and wash, instead," said Blake, laughing. "Come after that ball, you chaps? It's still light enough for a kick or two."

"Weally, Blake—"

"My dear Gussy, you can jaw after dark, if you're bound to jaw. Come on, you chaps."

And the juniors rushed after the ball. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gazed after them wrathfully for a few moments, and then, realising that Blake's advice was good, he went into the School House to wash.

Tom Merry & Co. punted the ball across the quad. Three dim figures loomed up in the dusk, and they recognised Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn of the New House. Figgins captured the ball as it came his way, and started off towards the New House with it. There was a yell from the School House fellows as they rushed in pursuit.

"After him!" shrieked Tom Merry.

Tom Merry had forgotten all about his family troubles now. The rivalry between the juniors of the two Houses at St. Jim's was very keen, and the School House fellows had no intention of allowing Figgins & Co. to capture their ball. Figgins's long legs seemed to whisk along, as he dribbled the ball towards the New House. Tom Merry put on a tremendous spurt, and overtook him, and shouldered him off the ball, but as he did so Figgins passed to Kerr, and Kerr kept the ball rolling. Blake and Lowther rushed upon Kerr, and Kerr passed to Fatty Wynn, and Wynn, with a wonderful speed for so plump a junior, dribbled it right up to the porch of the New House.

But there Manners and Herries were upon him, and Fatty Wynn found himself sitting in the quadrangle, while the School House fellows drove the ball back towards home. Some of them paused a moment or two to pile Figgins and Kerr on top of Fatty Wynn, and then sped after the others.

"Hurray!" gasped Blake, as they arrived at the School House. "We've done the cheeky bounders! School House wins!"

"Hurray!"

"Stop that row, you young hooligans," said an unpleasant voice, as Knox, the prefect, came from the direction of the gymnasium. "Stop that, or—ooop!"

Biff!

Whether by accident or design, the footer flew through the air again, and landed upon the thin and somewhat prominent nose of the bully of the Sixth. Knox sat down in the quad, with a dazed expression.

"Phew!" murmured Blake. "You've done it now, you ass!"

Knox jumped up in a fury.

"Merry, you did that!"

"Yes, please, Knox," said Tom Merry meekly.

"You—you insolent cub, I'll—"

Knox rushed at the Shell fellow. Tom Merry dodged round Kildare, who was following the prefect from the gym. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, held up his hand to stop Knox.

"Hold on, Knox!" he exclaimed. "What's the row?"

"Look at my face—"

"Tom Merry didn't do that, Knox," said Lowther. "Nature did that. Of course, you have a right to feel ratty about having a face like that, but—"

"Shut up, Lowther," said Kildare. "Did you punt that footer at Knox on purpose, Merry?"

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"Yes, please, Kildare," said Tom Merry, with unexampled meekness.

"You cheeky young rascal! Come into my study."

"I—I'd rather call another time, Kildare, if you don't mind," suggested Tom Merry.

"You'll come now," said Kildare. "It's all right, Knox. I'll attend to this."

"I can cane the young scoundrel myself, I suppose!" growled Knox.

Kildare's lip curled.

"You might overdo it," he remarked. "And you will kindly remember that I am head prefect, and captain of the school, Knox."

And without wasting any more words upon the bully of the Sixth, Kildare marched Tom Merry into his study. Tom Merry took two on each hand with great fortitude. He rubbed his hands ruefully, however, as he left Kildare's study.

Monty Lowther and Manners were waiting for him outside. "Hurt?" asked Manners sympathetically.

"No, it was extra nice!" groaned Tom Merry. "I was think of asking Kildare to give me some more, only I didn't like to bother him. Ow!"

"Never mind," said Lowther consolingly. "You gave Knox a beautiful biff. I wouldn't have missed that for anything. Come up to the study, and we'll have some tea."

The Terrible Three ascended to the Shell passage, and as they approached their study, they discovered that the door was open, and that the light was burning within. Gore, who had the next study, looked out of his doorway.

"Chap in your study to see you, Tom Merry," he said.

Tom Merry grunted. He had forgotten all about the new boy, but he remembered him now.

"New chap?" he asked.

"Yes, says he's going to dig in your study."

Tom Merry gave another grunt. The Terrible Three entered their study with very serious faces, not at all in a good humour.

CHAPTER 3.

The New Junior.

THE new boy was there!

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther did not speak.

They stood and looked at him. The new boy had been sitting down, but he rose as they came in. He was a slim fellow, not so large as any of the Shell fellows, and he had a somewhat pale and studious-looking face, and large, dark, strangely magnetic eyes. His hands were long and slim and very white. His hair was somewhat long, and curled in a kind of wave, and his forehead was large and broad. He was not exactly good-looking, but he looked interesting, and he certainly was not an athlete. He was the kind of fellow whom Crooke of the Shell would have picked upon at once to bully; but his slight form and his evident want of muscularity would at any time have protected him from horseplay on the part of the Terrible Three. They were exasperated to have him in the study, but they would never have laid ragging hands upon a fellow who did not look as if he could stand up to a Third Form fag in fistical combat.

"Hallo!" said the new boy.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry.

"Hallo!" said Manners and Lowther, in heavy tones.

"I'm a new chap," the junior explained. "Mr. Railton told me this was to be my study. He said there were three fellows here."

"We're the three," said Monty Lowther. "The trouble is, we're three, and don't want to be four. Savvy?"

The new boy grinned.

"I quite understand," he said. "You want the study to yourselves. It's only natural. There isn't much room here for four, I must say."

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"Oh, isn't there?" said Tom Merry, a little nettled. "It isn't any better for me than for you," went on the new junior cheerfully. "But it's no good looking glum about it. Better make up your minds to take it serenely."

"Oh!"
"Anyway, here I am," said the new boy. "Is there any tea knocking about? I'm hungry. We used to have tea in the study at my old school. Do you?"

The Terrible Three did not answer for a moment. They began to think that their first impression of the new boy was a mistaken one. He might be slight in build, but he certainly did not lack in coolness, and in cool nerve, at all events, he was "all there."

They began to think that the new junior knew how to take care of himself.

"We're going to have tea in the study," said Tom Merry, at last. "You're welcome to join us, if you like."

"Oh, good!" said the new boy. "I shall pay my whack, of course."

"Just as you like."

"You can begin to make yourself useful by lighting the fire," said Monty Lowther. "I'll get down to the tuckshop."

"I don't mind," said the new-comer.

"What's your name?" asked Manners.

"Barber—Horace Barber."

"Nice name to plant on three inoffensive chaps!" growled Monty Lowther.

Barber laughed. It was evident that he did not easily take offence, and the chums of the Shell rather liked him for it.

Barber showed, too, that he could be useful. He lighted the fire, and had the kettle boiling by the time Monty Lowther returned from the tuckshop laden with purchases. Manners had laid the cloth. Tom Merry was chiefly occupied in rubbing his hands, still smarting from the infliction in Kildare's study.

The Terrible Three began to feel a little more cheerful as they sat down to the tea-table. The new fellow was not so bad, after all, and they considered that they might get on with him. Of course, they could not admit him, at first, at all events, into the select circle of their society. They had no intention or wish to turn the Terrible Three into the Terrible Four. But as Barber had said himself, it was best to live amicably since they had no choice about staying together.

"What did you leave your last school for?" asked Tom Merry, as he poured out the tea. "It isn't usual for a chap to enter the Shell here from outside."

Barber nodded.

"I was in the Shell at St. Kate's," he said. "That's in the North. My people have come South to live, you see, and they prefer me near them."

"Queer taste!" murmured Monty Lowther, into his tea-cup.

"That wasn't the only reason, though," said Barber. "I was getting fed up with St. Kate's."

"Ahem!" said Lowther.

Barber laughed.

"Well, they were getting fed-up with me, too," he explained. "I made a discovery, and since I made it I found St. Kate's too hot to hold me. I suppose I was a little injudicious. But it was ripping fun."

The Terrible Three stared at him.

"Blessed if I catch on!" said Monty Lowther. "Do you mean to say that you are a practical joker? We bar practical jokes in this study!"

"Something in that line," said Barber. "As for barring anything in this study, I fancy that rests with me! I could become cook of the study if I liked."

"Better not take it into your head to like, then," said Tom Merry, in a tone of warning. "We hammer fellows of that sort at St. Jim's!"

"Yes, rather!" said Monty Lowther, with emphasis. "You cheeky little beggar, you couldn't crow over a fag here! They must have been a soft lot at St. Kate's to let you become cook of a coal-locker, I should think!"

"That's because you don't understand," said Barber cheerfully. "But don't let us begin ragging. How do you get on with the fellows here?"

"All right," said Tom Merry, a little puzzled. "We have to keep the Fourth Form in their place, you know. Those chaps in Study No. 6 get on their hind legs sometimes, and we have to squash them. That's all. Of course, we're up against the New House all the time. You see, the School House is cock-house at St. Jim's, and we have to keep up its reputation. We down Figgins & Co. from time to time, to keep them in their place."

Barber grinned.

"And they down you sometimes, I suppose?" he asked.

Tom Merry laughed good-humouredly.

"Well, yes; Figgy generally manages to keep his end up," he admitted. "But the School House is cock-house at St. Jim's. No doubt about that."

"In the School House, I suppose?" grinned Barber.

"Look here, you're a bit too fresh, I think!" said Monty Lowther. "Don't you jaw so much, my kid! Fellows who jaw too much in this study go about with thick ears afterwards!"

"Dear me! You must suffer from thickness of ear very much!"

"Eh?"

"Deaf?" said the new boy pleasantly. "I suppose it's due to the thick ears?"

Monty Lowther rose from the table. His face was very red. The humorist of the Shell was not always able to appreciate fully the humour of others, when it was directed against himself.

"Are you looking for a flat nose?" he inquired.

"Not at all."

"Well, you'll jolly soon get one, if you're not careful!" said Monty Lowther wrathfully. "I don't want to lick you on your first night at St. Jim's, but you'll get it, and get it hot, if you try to be funny!"

"My dear chap, you couldn't lick one side of me!"

"What!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Deaf again?"

Monty Lowther came round the table. He laid his hands upon the shoulders of the new junior, and jerked him out of his chair. Tom Merry and Manners rose to their feet, too.

"Now," said Lowther grimly, "I'll jolly well show you whether I can lick you or not! Put up your hands, you young cad!"

The new boy put his hands in his pockets.

"Hold on, Monty!" said Tom Merry. "It's his first night here, you know. Go easy, and never mind his cheek."

"Well," said Lowther, with a snort, "if he'll shut up I'll let him off—"

"But I don't want to be let off!" said Barber cheerfully.

Tom Merry turned to him sharply.

"You'd better shut up!" he said.

"Rats!"

"What!" roared Tom Merry.

"Deaf, too?" said the new junior, with perfect serenity.

"It seems to be an epidemic in this study. I said rats!"

Tom Merry sat down.

"Lick him!" he said. "I don't interfere any more. He wants some of the rotten cheek taken out of him, I think!"

And Monty Lowther pushed back his cuffs, and advanced upon the new boy.

CHAPTER 4.

The Schoolboy Hypnotist.

BARBER did not seem to want to avoid the conflict, but he looked ridiculously inadequate for it as he faced the long-limbed Lowther. Lowther was nearly a head taller, and certainly much longer in the reach, and he probably had twice as much strength as the new-comer. It looked as if the new boy would crumple up like paper in his grasp. Monty Lowther felt that himself, and he paused once more. He was angry, but he was a generous fellow at heart, and he did not like to tackle a fellow who was obviously no match for him.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean by cheeking a fellow who could knock you into little pieces with one hand? Are you dotty?"

Barber laughed.

"Not at all! I'll tackle you with pleasure—one to one! If those two chaps will step outside the study for two minutes, I'll undertake to dispose of you in that time."

"Do you think we should interfere?" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly.

"Oh, no! But there isn't much room here. And I suppose Lowther isn't afraid to be left alone?"

Monty Lowther went crimson.

"Afraid!" he hooted. "Afraid of a goggle-eyed little whipper-snapper! I'll show you whether I'm afraid or not! Get out of the study, you chaps, if he wants it by himself—I'll wipe up the blessed carpet with him!"

"Oh, all right!"

Tom Merry and Manners stepped out of the study. Barber closed the door after them, and the chums of the Shell stood in the passage, listening for the sounds of combat. But they did not hear any. Once Tom Merry thought he heard a muffled exclamation in Monty Lowther's voice, but that was all.

Manners had his watch in his hand, counting the minutes. A minute and a half had ticked away, and Tom Merry was beginning to feel strangely uneasy.

"Blessed if I like this, Manners!" he muttered.

Manners was looking very serious.

"I don't like it, either," he said. "There's something queer about that kid. I suppose he can't be off his rocker, can he?"

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Tom Merry started. "His eyes look queer," he said. "Yes; I noticed that." "I've a good mind to go in—" "Only a quarter of a minute now," said Manners. "Better stick it out." Tom Merry hesitated. The silence in the study was strange, unexpected, almost uncanny. Why was not Monty Lowther licking the new boy, as he had undertaken to do? Or, if he had failed in that task, he would not be licked himself without a struggle, and any kind of a struggle would make sound enough to be heard in the passage.

But the silence was complete. There was not even the mutter of a voice from within the room. What could it mean?

"Time!" said Manners at last, after what seemed an age to his companion.

He returned the watch to his pocket, and Tom Merry threw the door open.

The chums rushed in excitedly. They did not understand in the least what might have happened, but they were by no means prepared for what greeted their eyes. They stopped, just inside the study, gasping with astonishment.

"My—my—my hat!"

The new boy was seated in the armchair, in an attitude of careless ease. Monty Lowther was kneeling at his feet, presenting him with a cup of tea in the most humble and respectful manner.

The chums of the Shell stared at him blankly. Monty Lowther did not look round. He had his eyes fixed upon Horace Barber.

"What are you up to, you giddy ass?" roared Tom Merry. "What's the little game, Lowther?" exclaimed Manners angrily. "What are you playing the giddy goat like that for?"

Lowther did not reply. He did not seem to hear. There was a curiously set expression upon his face, and a dazed look in his eyes.

"Take the tea, my lord!" he said.

Tom Merry and Manners gasped. Was Monty Lowther gone mad? Barber waved his hand.

"Throw it away!" he said. "Pitch it into the fire, cup and all!"

Monty Lowther rose to his feet. He swung round towards the firegrate, and sent the cup of tea, cup, saucer, and all, crashing into the glowing coals.

"Lowther!" shouted Tom Merry.

Lowther did not look at him. He turned back to Barber, as if for instructions. He seemed to be quite unaware of the presence of his chums in the study. Tom Merry and Manners, their amazement now mixed with alarm, watched him speechlessly.

"What are your commands, my lord?" asked Lowther.

"Stand on your head in the corner!" said Barber.

"Yes, my lord!"

Monty Lowther walked to the corner of the study, knelt down, and stood upon his head, with his feet balanced against the wall, and all sorts of things dropping out of his pockets.

Tom Merry staggered back against the door.

"He's dotty!" he gasped.

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Manners.

"Now jump on the table!" said Barber.

Lowther up-ended himself, and made a spring upon the table. The crockery ware went flying right and left, and there was crash after crash upon the floor.

"Stop it!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Hold on, Lowther!"

Lowther stood trampling among the crockeryware that remained on the table, with his eyes still fixed upon the dark, magnetic orbs of the strange new boy.

"Now punch Manners's head!"

"Yes, my lord!"

Lowther jumped off the table, and advanced upon Manners, with his fists up. The set look upon his face showed that he was not joking. But why he should thus obey the extraordinary commands of the new boy was a mystery.

Manners backed away, so helpless with amazement that he could not possibly defend himself.

Monty Lowther followed him up, punching away, and Manners roared as Lowther's fists came biffing upon his head.

"Stop it!" he roared.

Biff, biff, biff!

Manners put up his hands to defend himself, and Barber, grinning, called Lowther off as if he were a dog.

"Stop!"

Monty Lowther stopped.

"Now go for Tom Merry!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry, dodging round

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the table. "Are you gone mad, or what? What does this mean?"

Lowther pursued him hotly. Barber burst into a roar of laughter, and shouted to him:

"Stop it now, Lowther!"

"Yes, my lord!"

"Come and sit on the hearthrug so that I can rest my feet on you!"

"Yes, my lord!"

Lowther squatted on the rug, and, to the amazement of his chums, took Barber's feet, and placed them upon his shoulders. Tom Merry rushed at the new boy, seized him by the collar, and shook him.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed fiercely. "What have you done to Lowther? He seems to have gone dotty!"

"Right off his rocker!" gasped Manners. "What have you done to him, you young villain?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry shook the new boy fiercely. He was amazed, alarmed, and very angry. He could not make it out at all—it seemed uncanny, as, indeed, it was.

"What have you done?" he shouted.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Answer me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rascal, I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Barber.

"Collar him, Manners!"

"What-fo!"

Tom Merry and Manners grasped the new boy together, and whirled him over. Barber went with a heavy bump to the floor.

"Ow!" he spluttered. "Ow! Cheese it!"

"What have you done to Lowther?"

"Hold on—I'll explain!"

"What have you done, then?"

"I've—ha, ha, ha!—I've hypnotised him!"

CHAPTER 5.

Under the Influence!

"HYPNOTISED him!"

Tom Merry and Manners staggered back in astonishment. Barber rose to his feet, somewhat ruffled, but still grinning. He set his tie straight, and dusted his jacket. Monty Lowther was still sitting upon the hearthrug, looking fixedly before him.

"Do you mean to say that you're a hypnotist?" demanded Tom Merry, finding his voice again at last.

Barber nodded.

"Exactly," he replied.

"I—I can't believe it!"

Barber pointed at Lowther.

"Looks like it, doesn't he?" he remarked.

"Ye-es! But—"

"Speak to him, and see if he knows you."

Tom Merry bent over Lowther, and touched him on the shoulder.

"Monty, old man!" he said.

Lowther did not reply. Tom Merry shook him gently.

"Monty! Don't you know me?"

"Yes," said Lowther; "you're Dr. Holmes."

"What?" said Tom Merry, receding.

"You're Doctor Holmes," said Lowther, "and that's Mrs. Holmes." He pointed to Manners.

Tom Merry turned quite pale.

"It's horrible!" he said. "Do you mean to say that you can put anybody into that state, Barber, and make them do just as you like, and say what you choose?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Make Lowther all right again, then."

"Wouldn't you like to see him go through a few more tricks first?" asked Barber, grinning. "I can make him drink ink or eat sawdust if you like."

"No," said Tom Merry. "Make him come to himself."

"Oh, all serene."

Barber stepped in front of Monty Lowther, fixed his magnetic eye on Lowther's fixed orbs, and made some strange passes before him with his slim, white hands. Lowther gave a start, like a fellow awakening from sleep, and cast a sudden wild-glance round him. Then he jumped to his feet.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "I—I've been asleep, I think! Hallo, who's been smashing up the happy home?"

"You have!" said Manners.

"I? What do you mean?"

"You smashed the crockery, jumping on the table," said Tom Merry.

Lowther turned red.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" he said. "What are you telling

that yarn for? I suppose I couldn't jump on the table without knowing it, could I?"

"That's just what you did do," said Tom Merry. "The new chap hypnotised you. Barber's a hypnotist!"

"Rats!"

"It's true, Lowther," said Tom Merry gravely. "Can you remember what happened when we went out of the study?"

Lowther started, and wrinkled his brows in an effort of thought.

"I—I was going to lick Barber," he said. "I—I seem to forget what happened. I—I don't remember anything after you went out of the study."

Tom Merry looked at Barber. The new boy was grinning hugely. He was evidently enjoying his little joke on the Terrible Three. But the matter did not appear wholly humorous to Tom Merry.

"Is this what you were referring to when you said that your old school was too hot to hold you?" he asked.

"Yes," grinned Barber. "I studied the subject a long time, you know, and I found that I had the gift. I can hypnotise anybody. I was always a bit of a joker, and I made things hum at St. Kate's until they found out I was a hypnotist. It would have been all right then, only I made the mistake of hypnotising my Form-master. I made him do a cakewalk in the Form-room. They couldn't prove it, you know, but the Head was very suspicious, and in the end he asked my father to take me away."

"I should think your father gave you a jolly good hiding!" said Manners grimly.

Barber chuckled.

"He would have," he said. "only I told him that if he did I would hypnotise him, and make him go up to the City one day dressed as a pierrot. Then he decided to let me off."

"You young rascal!" said Tom Merry. But he could not help laughing.

"My hat!" said Lowther. "I'll give you the biggest licking you ever had in your life, for your cheek in mesmerising me, you young cub!"

Barber held up his hand.

"Pax!" he exclaimed. "I've let you into this secret, but I expect you to keep it. I don't want to row with you chaps—I was only showing you what I could do. Besides, if you row with me I can hypnotise you, and make you duck yourselves in the river, or go down to class with curling-pins in your hair. Better go slow."

"My word!" said Manners.

"You've told me that you're up against the Fourth Form here, and against the New House," said Barber. "I'm in your study, and I side with you. Think of the larks we can have if you keep it dark!"

A glimmer of fun came into Tom Merry's eyes.

"And Knox, the prefect!" he ejaculated. "Could you hypnotise a prefect?"

"I could hypnotise a savage bull-dog if I liked."

"Great Scott!"

"My word!" said Lowther. "This chap looks like being an acquisition in this study. I say, we shall be able to wring some fun out of this!"

"Friends, then," said the new boy.

"Just as you like."

"Only you'll have to keep it within bounds," said Manners. "Don't you start hypnotising Form-masters here, or you'll get sacked, the same as you did at your last school."

Barber chuckled.

"I know that. I'm going to stop on the right side of the limit this time. But I was a born humorist, and I don't see why I shouldn't have a little fun—what?"

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry.

There was a tap at the door, and it opened. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form, looked in. His eyeglass glimmered at the new boy, and then he gave a start as he saw the broken crockeryware on the table and the floor.

"Bai Jove! Waggin' a new chap on his first night here, deah boys?" he exclaimed. "I regard that as wathah bad form, you know."

"Go hon!"

"Yaas, wathah! By the way, can you lend me a Latin dictionary, Tom Mewwy? I thwew mine at Hewwies' beastly bulldog the othah day, and the howwid beast picked it up in his teeth, you know, and wowwied it, and now there aren't any S's or T's left."

"Ha, ha, ha! Here you are."

"Thanks vewy much, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a little start. Barber's dark eyes were fastened upon him, and the new junior was making strange passes with his hands. A glazed expression came over D'Arcy's face, and his eyeglass dropped from his eye. The chums of the Shell knew that Barber was putting the "fluence" on, and they watched breathlessly for the result.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, almost inaudibly.

"Take the dictionary in your teeth," said Barber.

"Yaas."

Arthur Augustus obeyed.

"Now go back to your study on all fours."

"Yaas," mumbled D'Arcy.

With the Latin dictionary held in his teeth by the cover, the swell of St. Jim's dropped upon his hands and knees, and progressed out of the study in that manner. The sight was so utterly ridiculous that the chums of the Shell burst into a shriek of laughter. They crowded out of the doorway into the passage to watch the progress of the swell of St. Jim's.

D'Arcy was going down the passage on all fours, the book in his mouth. They watched him till he turned the corner into the Fourth Form passage.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "It's wonderful!"

In Study No. 6, Blake, and Herries, and Digby, the chums of the Fourth, were awaiting the return of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with the Latin dictionary. They all wanted it. Blake looked round towards the door as he heard a peculiar thudding sound in the passage.

"What on earth's that?" he exclaimed.

"Blessed if I know!" said Digby in surprise. "It sounds like—Oh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came crawling into the study, with the dictionary in his mouth. The chums of the Fourth gazed at him in dumb surprise.

D'Arcy crawled on all fours to Blake's feet, and deposited the dictionary there, and Blake gasped helplessly.

"Are you potty?" he jerked out.

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. Blake jumped up and shook him. The swell of St. Jim's seemed suddenly to come to himself. The "fluence" was off.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured.

"What did you play that silly trick for?" yelled Blake.

"Eh? What twick?"

"Crawling into the study with the dictionary in your mouth, you silly ass!"

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake. I suppose I'm not the sort of chap to play such a widdleous twick as that."

"But you did!"

"Wats!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"What did you do it for, you champion chump?"

"I didn't do anythin' of the sort, and I wufuse to entah into such a widdleous discuss," said the swell of St. Jim's with dignity. "Pway cheese it!"

And he sat down at the table to work. Blake and Herries and Digby exchanged amazed glances. They had often suggested to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in a jesting way, that he was "off his rocker," but now they could not help entertaining the possibility of that really being the case.

CHAPTER 6.

Lines for Knox!

THE Terrible Three regarded their new chum with something like awe that evening. The weird gift he possessed was not wholly reassuring to think of. At any moment he might exercise his curious powers upon themselves, and Tom Merry and Manners had no desire to go through Monty Lowther's ridiculous experiences, and Lowther himself had no desire to repeat them. And the chums of the Shell could not help seeing that the schoolboy hypnotist possessed an almost irrepressible sense of humour. They did not wonder that he had found his last school too hot to hold him, after he began exercising his powers as a hypnotist. A Form-master who had been put under the "fluence" was not likely to forgive such a trick. And they wondered how long it would be before the youthful humorist got himself "sacked" from St. Jim's.

But meanwhile they could not help seeing immense possibilities of fun. With such an ally on their side there was no doubt that they could cover the rival house at St. Jim's with confusion. Figgins & Co. would certainly have to hide their diminished heads if Horace Barber put the "fluence" on. And Knox, the bully of the Sixth—it would be something like fun to put the "fluence" on him!

And Barber was evidently ready for anything. The Terrible Three were likely to have to restrain him rather than to urge him on.

"The fact is, you're a dangerous beast," said Monty Lowther, keeping a wary eye upon the new boy, in case Barber should put the "fluence" on suddenly without

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warning. "Blessed if I like having you round the place! If the Head gets to know that you're a hypnotist, I'm willing to bet twopence that he'll ask your governor to take you away. He won't have a giddy hypnotist in the school."

Barber grinned. "You've promised to keep it dark," he said; "and, look here, I'll promise not to put the 'fluence on any of you three. It's only fair to keep it out of the study. I did that at St. Kate's."

"You'd better be careful how you put it on anybody," said Tom Merry. "But it would really be ripping fun to shove it on Knox."

"Who's Knox?"

"A prefect—a chap in the Sixth, and a rotten bully! He sees lights out for us in the Shell dorm. to-night."

Barber's dark eyes twinkled. "If he cuts up rusty, I'll give him a lesson!" he declared. And the chums of the Shell looked forward to bedtime with some anticipation. Knox was the worst-tempered fellow in the School House, and he was 'pretty certain to cut up rusty in one way or another.

When the Shell went up to bed, Barber attracted some attention. The juniors were always curious about new boys. But nothing could have been more quiet and sedate than the new junior's manner. No one but the Terrible Three suspected that he possessed weird powers that placed the rest of the Form at his mercy, if he had chosen.

Knox looked into the dormitory with a scowling face. He had not forgotten the incident of the footer in the quadrangle.

"Get into bed, you young rotters!" he growled. "You new kid, you take the bed next to Crooke's, and you'd better look sharp. Now, then!"

"All serene, Knoxe!" said Monty Lowther. "Don't be waxy! I hope you are not still suffering from the effects of the footer on the crumplet, my dear Knox."

Soft answers are said to turn away wrath, but Lowther's soft answer did not have that effect upon Knox. Knox scowled more darkly.

"Take fifty lines for impertinence, Lowther!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, make it five hundred!" said Lowther. "Very well, five hundred," said the prefect, taking the junior at his word. "Five hundred lines, Lowther, or you stay in all to-morrow afternoon."

"Thanks!" said Lowther lazily. "Won't you give the other chaps some? Tom Merry wants some lines, don't you, Tommy?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry cheerfully, "five hundred lines will do nicely for me. May I have five hundred, Knoxe?"

Knox stared in amazement. He had never known a junior to ask for lines before.

"Yes, you young hound!" he said. "Take five hundred lines!"

"May I have some?" asked Manners.

"Five hundred!" yelled Knox.

"Thanks!"

The rest of the Shell stared blankly at the Terrible Three. They were even more surprised than Knox. There was a football match on for the following afternoon, and certainly the Terrible Three had "done" for themselves so far as that was concerned. For such an impot as five hundred lines would require most of the half-holiday. But the chums of the Shell knew what they were doing. If Barber hypnotised Knox, the lines would not have to be done. Indeed, Barber could easily make Knox write them himself. After what they had seen Barber do to Lowther and D'Arey, their faith in the school hypnotist was unbounded.

"Suppose we have five thousand, though," said Tom Merry reflectively. "Upon the whole, I'd rather have five thousand, Knoxe!"

"Same here!" said Lowther.

"And here!" said Manners.

"Better give me five thousand, too, as I'm in the same study," said Barber. "You might do that as a special favour, Box. Is your name Box?"

"My name is Knox," said the prefect, between his teeth.

"And you can take five hundred lines like the others, Barber!"

"Make it five thou—"

"You cheeky young imp! You're beginning well, I must say," said Knox. "I don't know what your game is, but if you say another word, I'll thrash you till you've got a separate ache in every bone in your body."

"Done!" said Barber.

"My hat!" gasped Bernard Glyn, in amazement. "He's a cool customer, at all events."

"Ice, I should say," grinned Kangaroo.

Knox was taken aback. He had certainly not expected that reply from the new junior. But he was quite willing to keep his word. He ran towards the new boy, his hard face

red with rage. Barber did not move. He did not seem to want to dodge the angry prefect.

But as Knox approached him, his pace slackened, and a peculiar expression came over his face. He seemed at a loss for a moment. That the peculiar motions Barber was making with his hands could be the cause of it no one dreamed, excepting the Terrible Three. They knew!

Knox halted.

Instead of attacking the new junior, he dropped on his knees before Barber. The Shell fellows gazed at him in astonishment.

"What's the matter with Knox?" breathed Kangaroo.

"He's dotty!"

"Oh, look! He's begging the new chap's pardon."

He was!

"I'm sorry," said Knox, in a strange, strained voice. "I beg your pardon, Barber, and I hope you will overlook this."

The Shell gasped.

Barber waved his hand in a magnanimous manner.

"Yes, I will excuse you, if you are good," he said. "But don't let it occur again."

"Certainly not!" said Knox.

"Go down to your study, and write a thousand lines," said Barber.

"Yes, my lord."

Knox rose to his feet, and, looking neither to the right nor to the left, walked out of the dormitory, and closed the door behind him.

The Shell stared at Barber.

"What does it mean?" shouted Gore. "Are you a giddy magician, you new chap?"

Barber chuckled.

"Yes," he replied.

"What?"

"Knox won't bother us any more," said Barber. "Suppose we have a game before going to bed. He won't come up again."

"My hat!"

"I don't understand it."

"Look here, Barber, what does it mean?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three.

"Oh, it's all right!" said Barber. "Don't ask any questions, and I won't tell you any newspaper stories. Let's have a game before we turn in."

The Shell fellows were quite willing. They were astounded, but they were very willing to take advantage of their unaccustomed freedom. In a few minutes leap-frog was in full swing in the Shell dormitory, and the noise the juniors made was enough to wake the fellows in all the other dormitories in the School House.

In the midst of the din the door opened, and Kildare of the Sixth looked in. The captain of St. Jim's stared at the excited juniors in wrathful amazement.

"What does this row mean?" he shouted. "Why aren't you kids in bed?"

The leap-frogers paused.

"You see—," began Tom Merry.

"Didn't Knox see lights out?" asked Kildare.

"Well, you see—"

"Go to bed at once, and take three hundred lines each!" said Kildare. "I never heard of such a thing in my life! You young rascals!"

Tom Merry caught Barber by the shoulder. He could see the intention of the schoolboy hypnotist in his face.

"Hold on!" he muttered. "Not Kildare! He's the deucest chap in the House! You mustn't play any tricks on Kildare."

"Oh, rats!" said Barber. "I'm not going to do lines, anyway."

"Can't be helped. No tricks on Kildare!"

"Look here—"

"I mean it," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, all right—for the present!"

The juniors turned in. Kildare watched them with a stern brow, and then turned out the lights, and left the dormitory. He looked into Knox's study as he went downstairs. Knox was seated at his table, writing away as if his life depended upon it.

"Didn't you see lights cut for the Shell, Knox?" Kildare asked abruptly.

"Don't bother!"

"What?"

"I've got to get these lines done."

"Those lines!" said Kildare.

"Yes."

"Are you dotty, Knox? You know jolly well the Sixth don't have lines," said Kildare, wondering whether the prefect was quite right in his head. "What on earth do you mean?"

"I've got to get them done."

"Do you mean to say that you've been given lines?"
 "Yes."
 "Who gave them to you?"
 "Barber."
 "Who!" yelled Kildare.
 "The new boy!"
 "If you think this is funny, Knox, I'm blessed if I understand where the fun comes in," said Kildare roughly. "Are you ill?"
 "Ill? No. But I've got to get these lines done."
 Kildare drew a deep breath.
 "Either you've gone mad or you're ill, or this is a new variety of joke that I don't understand," he said. "I'll speak to you about this again in the morning, Knox."
 "All right! But do buzz off now, and let me get my lines done," said Knox.
 And Kildare left the study, wondering whether he was dreaming.

CHAPTER 7.

Licked!

TOM MERRY chuckled as he came downstairs on the following morning. He was curious to see Knox, and see whether he had recovered from the effects of the hypnotism of the evening before. Barber came down with the Terrible Three, and they strolled out into the quad in the morning sunshine.
 "Hallo, there's Knox!" said Monty Lowther, with a nod towards the figure of the prefect, who was talking to Sefton of the New House in the quadrangle.
 "I wonder if he'll ask us for our lines," said Manners.
 Barber shook his head.
 "He won't!" he said. "I've made him forget that."
 "It seems too queer to be possible," said Tom Merry musingly.

"Well, see for yourself."
 The chums of the Shell strolled past Knox, but he did not look at them. It was pretty clear that he had forgotten the incidents of the night before in the Shell dormitory.

But the Shell fellows had not forgotten them.
 Before breakfast was over, all the juniors in the house knew of the peculiar incident of Knox having begged the new boy's pardon on his knees. It came to the ears of the seniors later, and they did not believe it, of course. But when Kildare heard the story, he could not help remembering Knox's peculiar conduct in his study, and he wondered. After morning school Kildare stopped in the passage to speak to Knox when the Sixth came out.

"Have you heard the yarn the juniors are telling, Knox?" he asked.

Knox scowled.
 "Yes; some silly rot about me," he said.
 "They say you begged the new kid's pardon in the Shell dorm.—on your knees."

"It's a lie!" said Knox. "You surely are not ass enough to believe such rot, are you?"

"Well, no," said Kildare. "But you were jolly queer last night. You remember when I came into your study—"

"I don't remember your coming into my study," said Knox, looking puzzled.

"You were writing lines."
 "Lines!" repeated the prefect.

"Yes; and you told me that the new junior—Barber—had told you to do them."

Knox snapped his teeth.
 "Look here! Don't talk rot!" he exclaimed angrily.

"I found a lot of lines written in my study this morning, and I thought some junior had written them out, and imitated my hand for a silly joke, though I'm blessed if I can see where the joke comes in. But I certainly never wrote any lines."

"You were writing them when I came into your study," said Kildare quietly.

"It's not true."
 Kildare looked at him steadily.

"You can't be well, Knox," he said. "I suppose you know that I should not say this if it were not true. I think you must have been queer last night, and you don't know what you did. I should consult a doctor if I were you."

And Kildare walked away before the angry prefect could reply. Knox drew a deep breath of rage. He went down the passage, and paused outside the Shell class-room. The Shell were about to be dismissed, and he waited there for them. He wanted to see the new junior very particularly.

The door of the Form-room was thrown open, and the juniors came crowding out. Barber was one of the first, and Knox seized him by the collar as he came out. Barber had no chance to exercise his peculiar powers, even if he could have put the 'fluence on so suddenly.

Knox's grip was on the back of his collar, and it was a grip like iron.

"Ow!" roared Barber.
 "You young cad!" said Knox, between his teeth. "I'll teach you to tell lies about me!"

"Ow! I haven't—I—"
 "Come to my study."

"I—I won't—I—"
 "Come, you rat!"

Barber had no choice about it. Knox whisked him off so fast that his feet dragged along the floor. In a minute he was in Knox's study, and the door was closed. The prefect did not take any chances of his victim escaping; he kept his iron grip on the back of Barber's collar, and with his free hand he took down a cane.

"Now, you young hound—"
 "Ow! Leggo!"

"You have been telling a silly yarn that I went on my knees to you last night—"

"So you did!" howled Barber furiously. "And I'll make you do it again, you brute, as soon as I get a chance! Ow!"

"Oh, I did, did I?" said Knox. "Well, I'll make you go on your knees now, my pippin. Take that—and that—and that!"

Lash, lash, lash!
 The cane descended upon Barber's back with cutting force.

The new junior writhed and wriggled, and yelled and roared. But it was quite unavailing. The prefect was too strong for him. Knox held him as in a vice, and the cane lashed and lashed and lashed. Barber's face went white. He was not a strong lad, and he was by no means built to endure castigation of this kind.

"Leave off!" he shrieked. "Ow, ow, ow! Help!"

Knox desisted at last. It was not Barber's yelling that made him desist; it was the fact that his arm was growing tired.

He threw the cane upon the table.
 "There!" he said, gritting his teeth. "Perhaps you'll be a bit more careful how you talk to a prefect in the future, you young hound!"

"Ow, ow!" groaned Barber.
 "Now get out of my study!"

Knox opened the door, and pitched Barber into the passage, and slammed the door after him. Barber staggered across the passage and fell sprawling.

He picked himself up, tingling all over his back, aching in every bone. He had never had such a licking in his life before, and it dawned upon him that it was not all pleasure to be a hypnotist, and to exercise his peculiar powers without discretion.

"Ow, ow, ow!" he groaned.
 And he limped away down the passage.

He encountered the Terrible Three near the School House door.

"My hat!" Tom Merry exclaimed, in alarm. "What's the matter? You look as if you'd been through a mangle!"

"Ow!" groaned Barber. "It was that beast Knox!"

"He's licked you?" asked Manners.
 "Ow! Don't I look like it? Ow!"

Tom Merry whistled.
 "Couldn't you put the 'fluence on?" he asked.

"Ow! I didn't have a chance. Ow!"

"You'd better be a bit more careful in the future, then," said Tom Merry. "After all, it doesn't do to hypnotise fellows who can get back on you as prefects can. Besides, it will come out that you're a hypnotist. Better let Knox alone."

Barber ground his teeth.
 "I won't let him alone," he said. "I'll make him sorry for this, the hound!"

Tom Merry looked very grave.
 "Look here, Barber," he said seriously, "you played a big jape on Knox, and he's licked you for it. I dare say he overdid it, because he's a brute. But it's even now—and you don't want to feel revengeful about it. That's not cricket."

"Oh, rats!" said Barber.
 The Terrible Three exchanged rather uneasy glances. They could see that there was a hard strain in Barber's nature which they had not noticed at first, and they could not help feeling anxious about what he might do. If a fellow with such tremendous power in his hands chose to take vengeance on the prefect, there was nothing to stop him, and the results might be serious for all concerned.

"I don't half like this," said Tom Merry uneasily. "I'm rather sorry now we promised to keep it dark about his being a hypnotist. I hope he won't make a fool of himself."

"He'll calm down when he gets over the licking, perhaps," said Manners.
 "I hope so."

But the chums of the Shell felt very uneasy.

CHAPTER 8.

Extraordinary Behaviour of Fatty Wynn.

"DIDN'T do anythin' of the sort!"

"You did!"

"I wepeat that I did not!"

Dinner was over, and the juniors were out in the quadrangle. Tom Merry was thinking of the schoolboy hypnotist and his peculiar ways, and there was a very thoughtful shade upon his face when the voices of the Fourth-Formers broke upon his ears. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth, was looking very red and indignant, as he argued with Blake and Digby.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "What's the trouble?"

And Horace Barber drew near, with a grin on his face. Barber was still looking a little pale, but otherwise had apparently recovered from his unpleasant experiences at the hands of Knox the prefect.

"Mattah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly, turning his monocle upon the Shell fellows. "Mattah! Blake and Dig persist that I played an uttably absurd twick last night—that I bwought a book into the studay in my mouth like a dog, goin' on my hands and kneces!"

"So you did!" said Blake.

"You uttah ass——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, it is no laughin' mattah. If Blake wepeats his widiculous statement, I shall have no wresource but to give him a feahful thwashin'."

"But it's true!" grinned Tom Merry. "I saw you!"

"What!"

"There you are!" chuckled Blake. "Blessed if I can see what you deny it for, Gussy! I thought at the time that you were off your rocker."

Arthur Augustus's face became very grave.

"Tom Mewwy, did you weally see me, honah bwright?" he asked.

"Yes, rather—so did Barber."

"What-ho!" grinned Barber.

"Then I am sowwy I have doubted your statement, Blake. I'm goin' to see a doctah," said D'Arcy. "I haven't the slightest wrecollection of anythin' of the sort, and so I suppose I must have been fwightfully ill without knowin' it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Barber.

Blake looked at the new Shell fellow rather sharply.

"After all, there's nothing to laugh at," he said. "Gussy must have been in a bad way. It was an extraordinary thing!"

"Better tell them," whispered Tom Merry to Barber. "They'll keep it dark—and it's a shame to worry Gussy into thinking he was off his rocker."

Barber nodded.

"I was just thinking the same," he said. "I can explain, D'Arcy, if you like. Only you will have to keep it dark."

"Keep what dark?" said Digby.

"The secret."

"Bai Jove! What secwet, deah boy!"

"I hypnotised you," said Barber coolly.

"What!"

"Wats!"

"It's true," said Tom Merry, "and the bounder hypnotised Knox last night, too."

"Phew!" said Blake. "That accounts——"

"Bai Jove! I wegard this as wot! I don't believe any fellow could hypnotise me, you know. I have too much stwength of mind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"It does sound a bit thick," said Digby.

"I'll give you an example, if you like," said Barber, with a grin. "Shall I try on you?"

"No, thanks!" said Digby, backing away a little.

"Here's Fatty Wynn," said Blake. "If you can really do it, try on him. He's a New House chap, and fair game."

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry.

Fatty Wynn was crossing towards the school shop. Although he had not long finished his dinner, Fatty Wynn had room left for some of Dame Taggles's special jam-tarts, and he happened to have funds in his pocket just then. He nodded to the School House fellows.

"No larks!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to get some tarts."

Mrs. Taggles has a fresh lot in to-day. Hallo, you new chap, what are you wagging your paws at me for? Do you want a thick ear? Oh!"

"He's got it!" said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove!"

Fatty Wynn had evidently "got" it. He was the slave of the schoolboy hypnotist already. He halted, and stood looking at Barber with a dazed expression in his eyes.

"Go to the tuckshop," said Barber.

"Oh, yes!" said Fatty Wynn jerkily.

He walked on. The School House juniors followed him, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 208.

curious to see what would come of it. They entered the tuckshop. Figgins and Kerr were there, talking to Mrs. Taggles over the counter, and a large pie stood in sight. It was a specially large steak-and-kidney pie, and the crust looked delicious.

"Hallo!" said Blake. "Laying in supplies?"

"Yes," said Figgins. "You can send this for us during the afternoon, Mrs. Taggles. We don't want it till half-past five or so. We're playing footer this afternoon, and we shall be hungry."

"Yes, Master Figgins!"

"Why not take it yourself, Figgy?" suggested Tom Merry, with a hungry look at the pie. He was thinking of the possibilities of a House raid.

Figgins chuckled.

"No fear!" he said. "It might not get so far as the New House, with so many School House bounders hanging about. Hallo, Wynn, what are you up to?"

"I'm going to have some tarts," said Fatty Wynn, helping himself from a dish of cream puffs on the counter.

"Well, they're not tarts," said Kerr.

"Rats, they're jam-tarts!" said Fatty Wynn, unconsciously speaking at the mental dictation of the hypnotist.

Kerr stared at him.

"I should think your eyes want seeing to, Fatty," he remarked. "I should think anybody would know the difference between a cream puff and a jam-tart."

"Oh, you're an ass!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Eh?"

"And Figgins is a fathead."

"What!" ejaculated Figgins.

"I suppose you'll say that this is a jam-tart next!" said Fatty Wynn, picking up a jam-tart from the counter.

"Why, of course it is," said Kerr, in amazement. "What's the matter with you, Fatty?"

"Jam-tart—hey?"

"Yes, you ass!"

"Well, I say it's a dough-nut."

"What!"

"Isn't that a dough-nut, Figgins?"

"No, it isn't!" said Figgins crossly. "If this is a new dodge in the humorous line, Fatty, you'd better chuck it. I don't see the fun."

"I say it's a dough-nut," roared Fatty Wynn, getting red in the face. Under the mysterious influence of the hypnotist, he imagined that it was a dough-nut.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Figgins.

"Well, if it's a jam tart, you can have it," said Fatty Wynn. And he slapped the tart full upon Figgins's nose.

Figgins staggered back, his face smothered with jam.

"And there's one for you!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, and Kerr took the jam-tart in the eye.

The School House juniors roared. Blake and Digby and D'Arcy had no more doubt of Barber's hypnotic powers. Certainly Fatty Wynn would never have acted in this extraordinary manner of his own accord.

Figgins and Kerr were simply staggered. Fatty Wynn was the best-tempered as well as the fattest junior at St. Jim's. For him to break out in this violent and quarrelsome manner was simply astounding.

Figgins mopped the jam off his face, and breathed fury. Kerr gouged it out of his eye in amazement and rage. But Fatty Wynn had not finished. He picked up the dish of tarts, and pelted his chums with them.

"There you are! There's another, and another, and—oh!"

Figgins and Kerr rushed upon him.

They seized their fat chum and bumped him on the floor, and squashed the jam tarts over his face, and then strode from the tuckshop wrathfully, followed by yells of laughter from the School House juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Barber chuckled.

"You fellows satisfied now?" he asked, as they left the tuckshop, leaving Fatty Wynn rubbing jam from his face in dismay.

"Yes," grinned Blake. "It's wonderful! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove, I wegard it as extwaordinawy! It is a jollay good ideah to hypnotise those New House boundahs, but it is a vewy different thing to hypnotise me. I wegard it as a fwightful cheek on your part to hypnotise me, Barbah!"

"Go hon!"

"Yaas, watah!" said the swell of St. Jim's, with great emphasis. "And, as a mattah of fact, Barbah, I do not quite approve of your ideahs of humour. Under the circs, I see no alternative but to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"My dear ass——"

"Weally, Barbah——"

"My dear fathead——"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy pushed back his glistening white cuffs.

"Pway put up your hands, you wottah!" he exclaimed. Barber grinned.

"My dear chap, do you want me to put the 'fluence on and make you ink your face and do a cakewalk in the Form-room?" he asked.

"Bai Jove!"

"Or to walk on your hands up and down the Form-room passage with your hat on your feet?" asked Barber blandly.

"You uttah wottah—"

"Come on!" said Blake, dragging D'Arcy away. "Barber isn't the chap for you to quarrel with, my son. Come on!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Come on, you ass!"

"Upon second thoughts," said Arthur Augustus very thoughtfully, "I will let the boundah off, considewin' that he is a new boy."

CHAPTER 9.

Knox is Ordered Off!

TOM MERRY came out of the School House with a long coat on over his football clothes. The School House juniors were playing Figgins & Co. that afternoon, and it was time for the match. Barber was standing on the steps with his hands in his pockets, and Tom Merry stopped to speak to him.

"I suppose Fatty Wynn's all right again now?" he remarked.

The new junior nodded, with a grin.

"Yes," he said. "Why?"

"He's keeping goal for the New House juniors this afternoon," Tom Merry explained. "Of course, he will have to be fit."

"I'll put the 'fluence on him again, if you like, and make him let the ball through every time," said Barber, grinning.

Tom Merry's brow grew stern for a moment.

"I suppose you're joking?" he said.

"Yes," said Barber. "I suppose you don't want an extra fellow in the team? I can play footer."

"I'll give you a trial to-morrow at practice," said Tom Merry. "The team's full now. You can come and watch, if you like."

"Thanks! By the way, is the Sixth playing?" asked Barber.

"Yes. School House seniors against New House seniors."

"I reckon I'll watch them."

"Just as you like," said Tom Merry. "We think there's something better to be seen on the junior ground, but please yourself."

"I generally do."

And Barber walked away towards the senior ground. Kildare and his men were already there, and most of the New House seniors. Knox was among the former. When St. Jim's First played an out match, players were selected from both Houses, and Knox had no place in the school team. But in House matches twenty-two fellows had to be found, and Knox played for his House.

Barber's eyes glittered as they rested on Knox, standing with the School House seniors, chatting to Kildare and Darrel. Barber had not forgotten the cruel licking in Knox's study, and it was only natural that he should want to make Knox smart for it. He did not confide his intentions to anybody else. He suspected that Tom Merry & Co. would probably not approve of them.

Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, was refereeing the match. He had just come on the field. There were a good many fellows standing round the ropes to look on, many of them juniors who preferred watching the seniors play. When Kildare was playing there was always some good footer to be seen, and Monteith, the leader of the New House, was a first-rate footballer, though not so popular as Kildare.

Barber joined the juniors. Wally—D'Arcy minor—was standing there with a group of fags, and they were talking about Knox, who, it seemed, had lately bestowed some of his kindly attentions upon D'Arcy minor. Wally was rubbing a very red ear as he passed forcible remarks upon Knox.

"Rot, playing him!" Jameson, of the Third, remarked. "Lots of juniors in the House can play better than Knox. Tom Merry and Blake, for example."

"And our noble selves," said Wally.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at," said Wally. "I would undertake to play Knox's head off. Hallo! There goes the whistle."

The sharp note of the whistle rang out. Kildare kicked off, and the senior game began. The junior game was already going on some distance away, and a fags' game was also in progress in the distance. St. Jim's took its footer seriously, and it was not uncommon there to see four

or five matches going on at once on the extensive playing-fields.

"Did you ever see such a winger?" said Wally disparagingly, referring to Knox, who was playing inside-right for the School House seniors.

Wally was hardly just, for Knox was really playing pretty well. But Wally's ear was smarting from a recent application of Knox's finger and thumb, and he was not disposed to be quite just to the bully of the Sixth.

Barber grinned to himself. Knox was already under his influence, and he meant to exercise that influence in a way that would have amazed the fags if they had known of it.

The game went on for some time, and there was a loud cheer as Kildare scored the first goal against the New House. Five minutes later, Darrel put the ball in, and later on Rushden scored. The School House were three up before the first half was a third over, and the New House fellows looked a little blue. Monteith was looking quite angry as he kicked off again. The New House captain did not take defeat well.

The School House forwards came sweeping down the field again, and Kildare, who was at centre, passed the ball out to the right wing, as he was stopped. Knox received it, and should have passed further out to Rushden as the backs pounced upon him. But he did not. Instead of that, he skied the ball, as if he were going through a gymnastic exercise, and it fell almost upon his head. Baker, the right back, cleared with a kick to midfield, and the play swayed away again.

Kildare gave Knox a sharp look as he raced back to the line.

"What on earth did you do that for, Knox?" he exclaimed.

The prefect did not reply.

"The ass!" said Wally, criticising with great cheerfulness. "Did you ever see such a dummy? He skied the ball just for fluff! The ass!"

"Oh, look at him!" yelled Jameson.

Kildare was on the ball. Knox had rushed up, shouldered his own skipper off the ball, and was dribbling it away towards touch.

The players were so amazed that they stopped dead, staring at Knox.

"You fool!" shouted Kildare, losing his temper. "What are you up to?"

"Stop the ass!"

The New House players robbed Knox of the ball, and bore it away towards the School House goal. Amid New House cheers, Monteith kicked it into the net.

"Goal!" shouted the New House crowd.

Kildare strode up to Knox, his brows dark with anger. He grasped the prefect by the shoulder.

"Are you mad, Knox?" he exclaimed.

Knox scowled at him.

"What did you shove me off the ball for?"

Knox did not answer.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Kildare.

"Nothing," said Knox sullenly.

"Well, you'd better be more careful. It would be better to play a man short than to have the kind of help you're giving us."

"I can play football as well as you can," said Knox.

Kildare's eyes flashed.

"If you argue with me, I shall order you off the field," he said. And he strode back to his place in the line, followed sullenly by Knox.

The whistle sounded again, and this time the School House kicked off. They got away in good style, and bore down upon goal. And now all the crowd were watching Knox and wondering what he would do next.

The ball came to Knox, and he ran for goal, and Baker, the New House back, intercepted him in the penalty area. He robbed Knox of the ball neatly, and Knox swung round and gave him a thump on the shoulder that sent him spinning.

There was a yell from the New House.

"Foul!"

"Penalty!"

"Referee!"

There was no doubt about the foul, and Kildare never even thought of controverting it. Mr. Railton blew the whistle, and play stopped, and the penalty was awarded to the New House at once. Monteith took the kick, and it materialised in a goal, and the New House crowd cheered again.

Kildare tapped Knox on the shoulder.

"Get off the ground!" he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. If you've come to your senses, I'll play you again in the second half. Now I'm going to play a man short."

There was a murmur in the crowd as Knox was seen tramping towards the pavilion.

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"Ordered off!" said Wally. "About time, too."
"Yes, rather!"

The play went on, and the School House fellows certainly seemed to get on better without any aid from Knox. They held their own until the whistle went for half-time, and trooped off with the score unaltered—3 to 2. Kildare sought Knox in the pavilion with a very angry brow, and he found the prefect looking very sullen indeed.

"What did you play those silly tricks on the field for, Knox?" he asked.

"I'm sorry," said Knox, with a peculiar dazed expression in his eyes. "It sha'n't occur again, Kildare."

"All right, then, you can come on in the second half. But mind, if there's any more rot, I shall shift you off the field, and you'll stay off."

Knox nodded without speaking. All the fellows were looking at him very curiously, at a loss to account for his curious conduct.

Knox did not say anything more, but when the team went out for the second half, he went with them, and lined up with the rest. Mr. Ralton blew the whistle, and there was a buzz in the crowd round the ropes.

"Now, let's see what that giddy ass will do next," said Wally.

But even Wally was surprised.

The School House forwards made a rush, Knox with the rest. Baker stopped the ball outside goal, kicking into touch, and Knox plunged after the ball, seized it in his hands, and made a dash for goal, like a Rugby three-quarter dashing for a try.

There was a yell.

"Hands!"

"Stop him!"

"He's dotty!"

"Stop it, Knox, you idiot!" roared Kildare. "Are you mad?"

But Knox did not heed.

He rushed right into the New House goal, and dumped the ball fairly upon the chest of the astounded goal-keeper, knocking him spinning into the net.

"Oh!" gasped the goalie, as he went down.

Knox tossed the ball into the net after him.

Kildare dashed up and dragged him out of the goal-mouth.

"You mad ass!" he yelled. "This isn't the place for monkey-tricks! Get off the field, or I'll kick you off it. Do you hear?"

And Knox walked off. And the schoolboy hypnotist chuckled softly. He thought that he was even with Knox now.

CHAPTER 10.

From Information Received.

TOM MERRY & CO. heard the story when their own match was over, and they came off the footer-ground, having drawn with the New House, one goal to one.

Knox's extraordinary conduct was the talk of St. Jim's. Some of the fellows said that he was ill, and some that he had been playing a practical joke, and some that he was mad. Tom Merry & Co. knew what was the matter with him, and they sought out the schoolboy hypnotist. Barber greeted them with a cheerful grin.

"You did it!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Barber nodded.

"If you're referring to Knox, certainly," he said. "I rather think I'm even with him now for that licking, don't you?"

"Well, yes; but—"

"But it wasn't quite cwicket, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"It wasn't quite football, either," said Monty Lowther, laughing.

"It's not weally a laughin' mattah, Lowthah. It's wathah too thick hypnotising a chap on the footah-field, and makin' him give the game away."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Barber. "I made sure that the School House were well up before I started on Knox. School House won."

"They only just did it, though," said Tom Merry, "and, anyway, it's too thick. You must draw the line at interfering in a footer match, really, Barber."

"Oh, all right, if you make such a point of it!" said Barber.

"I've got an idea," Monty Lowther remarked. "Fatty Wynn's gone to the tuckshop, to refresh himself after his labours in the match. You remember that Figgins & Co. were buying a big pie to-day."

"Yes, rather. I thought of raiding it," said Tom Merry; "but—"

"But they're too jolly careful with it," said Blake,

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grinning. "Figgys made Mrs. Taggles send it while we were playing footer."

"Exactly. But suppose Barber made Fatty tell us exactly where it is, and then led Figgins and Kerr away while we scoffed it—"

The juniors burst into a delighted yell at the idea.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" said Barber.

Fatty Wynn was outside the tuckshop, looking into the little window. Fatty Wynn had come to the end of his funds, and Mrs. Taggles drew a strict line at a certain point upon the subject of credit. Barber lost no time in putting the "fluence" on, and he signed to Tom Merry that it was safe to question the fat Fourth-Former.

"Did you get the pie?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes," said Fatty Wynn.

"Good! Where is it?"

"In the cupboard in the study."

"Door locked?"

"No."

"Study door locked?"

"No."

"Figgins and Kerr in the study"

"No."

"Where are they?"

"They've gone into the gym., and won't be back till after six. I'm keeping out of the study till they go back."

"What on earth are you doing that for?" asked Manners curiously.

"Figgins told me to," said the Falstaff of the New House. And the juniors chuckled. They thought they could guess Figgins's reason.

"Figgys is afraid the fat bounder will wolf the pie!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is the coast clear?" asked Tom Merry. "Anybody likely to spot us if we raid the pie?"

"Oh, not at all!"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "It seems wonderful to hear him answering like that, and not knowing what he's saying."

"Bai Jove, I don't half like it, you know!"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake. "We're going to have that pie!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I suppose I'd bettah go, deah boys," said D'Arcy.. "What is required in a waid of this kind is a fellow of tact and judgment."

"You'll muck it up," said Blake distrustfully.

"Weally, Blake—"

"I don't mind going," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Better not take a crowd, in case the bounders spot us," said Blake thoughtfully. "Look here, I'll go, with Dig and Tom Merry."

"I feel that I ought to come, Blake. I twust I am not the sort of fellow to put myself forward in any way, but I want the waid to be a success."

"Rats!"

"As a mattah of fact, I insist upon comin', deah boys," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "You are bound to come a muckah if I am not there to look aftah you. You wemembah the time you were in London and you lost yourselves."

"You lost yourself, you ass, you mean!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, he'd better come, or he'll never leave off talking!" said Blake. "Come on; better strike the iron while it's hot."

"Good egg!"

And the four juniors made their way to the New House. Fortune seemed to favour them. Not only were Figgins & Co. well out of the way, but the other juniors of the New House were conspicuous by their absence. Even two or three who saw Tom Merry & Co. sauntering towards the House, did not take any special notice of them.

The four juniors entered the House, and ascended the stairs to the Fourth-Form passage. Pratt, of the New House, came out of his study.

Tom Merry & Co. halted.

They expected trouble with Pratt, but Pratt only grinned, and paused to speak a friendly word or two. He was strangely unsuspecting.

"Going to see Figgins?" he asked.

"We're going to give a look-in into his study," said Tom Merry. "Do you know whether Figgins is at home?"

"Out, I think," said Pratt.

"Well, never mind; we'll go in," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Pratt nodded.

"If I see Figgins, I'll tell him you've called," he remarked, as he went on towards the staircase.

"Thanks, do!"
Pratt went downstairs. The School House juniors watched him go, and saw him turn into the hall, without once looking back. It seemed plain that Pratt had no suspicion of their real object in paying that visit to Figgins's study.

"Bai Jove," murmured Arthur Augustus, "we are in luck, you know! Pwatt was always wathah an ass."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I wemembah the silly ass said that my tenah solos were wotten," said the swell of St. Jim's. "A chap who would say that is ass enough for anythin'. It was vevy fortunate that it was only Pwatt we met."

"Hallo—here's another of the beasts!"
Thompson, of the Shell, came down the passage. He started on seeing the School House fellows, but only for a moment. Then he grinned and nodded.

"You fellows come over to see me?" he asked.

"No—we're going to Figgins's quarters."
"Oh, all right, then I won't stop; I'm going to the gym!" said Thompson, of the Shell. And he went upon his way.

"Anothah silly ass, deah boys!"
Tom Merry looked thoughtful.
"Queer they don't smell a mouse," he remarked. "Anyway, as soon as they mention to Figgins that they saw us here, he'll smell a mouse soon enough, so we'd better buck up. Come on, you fellows!"

"Yaas, wathah!"
And the School House juniors stepped quickly into Figgins's study.

CHAPTER 11.

Done Brown!

"WEALLY, Blake!"

"Clumsy ass! What's the matter?"
"I neahly twipped ovah somethin'—"

"Shut up, then! You make too much row!"
Digby grinned, as Blake lighted the gas. Arthur Augustus looked unutterable things. He turned his monocle in a threatening way at Blake.

"Where's the giddy cupboard, Dig?" said Blake.
"We can't be bothered with this duffer, can we?" said Digby, as he and Blake went to the cupboard in the corner of Figgins's study.

Speechless with indignation, Arthur Augustus made a rush at his chums. He measured his length on the floor next instant.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, you asses, I see nothin' to cackle at!" said D'Arcy.

He struggled with something on the floor.
"You giddy ass!" chuckled Tom Merry. "That's not Figgins you're wrestling with. That's a giddy cricket-bag—"

"Bai Jove! Weally, you know—"
"Ha, ha, ha! Get up and lend a hand with this pie, you cuckoo!" grinned Blake.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus, surveying the cricket-bag he had twice come to grief over. "I weally thought that was one of Figgy's wotten twicks—"

"The cupboard's unlocked," said Blake.
"Weally, Blake, I was speakin'—"

"Yes, I know. Cheese it! Lend a hand with this."
Blake pointed to the pie which lay on a shelf in Figgins's cupboard. It was very large, and it looked very appetising. Digby's eyes glistened.

"Worth raiding, eh, Blake?" he said.
"Yaas, wathah! Allow me, deah boys, as a fellow of tact and judgment, you know—"

"You'll do as I tell you, Gussy."
"I wefuse to do as you tell me, Blake!"

"Come on, Dig! Lend a hand, old son, we can't stand talking to Gussy all night!"
"You uttah ass!"

"I say, Gussy, are you going to help or not?" said Blake.
"If we don't buck up, someone will be coming along and spoiling the whole show. Come on!"

Arthur Augustus looked for one moment as if he contemplated instant destruction of his chum. But when Digby and Blake turned to lift the big pie without him, he softened, and lent his aid willingly enough. Carefully the pie was lifted on to the table.

"Bai Jove!"
The juniors could not help but admire Figgins's property. Digby sniffed at it.

"Not much flavour, by the smell," he said.
"Blow that!" said Blake. "What we have to do, is to get it away!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Don't gaup at it like that, ass!" growled Blake. "Say something—"

"Weally, Blake—"
"We can't carry it out of the New House without covering it up, anyway," said Tom Merry, helping Blake to search for brown paper. Arthur Augustus continued to survey the huge pie critically through his monocle, till Blake jerked him from behind and sent him sprawling over the cricket-bag again.

"You uttah beast! You wuffian, Blake!"
"Rats! Get off that cricket-bag! The very thing, Dig!"

"I wefuse—"
"Come off it!" grinned Blake.

And in two seconds Arthur Augustus was yanked off the cricket-bag.

"I shall administah summa wvy cowvection, Blake!" shouted the indignant swell of the School House. "Pway put up your hands, you wottah!"

"Rats! Can't you see you're spoiling the game?"
"Bai Jove! But I insist on takin' the lead in this mattah, Blake. Your conduct doesn't inspiah confidence, deah boy—"

"All right! Come on, ass!"
D'Arcy was on the point of further expostulation. But he seemed to think better of it, and in a moment, he was helping willingly enough.

The pie was soon stowed safely in the cricket-bag, and the little party got under way for the School House. In one of the New House passages they met Pratt.

He grinned and nodded, and passed on into his study without remark.

"I should have been sowwy to have to thwash Pwatt," murmured Arthur Augustus, as they reached the quadrangle.

"You would, my son," said Blake, with a grin.

"If you mean to insinuate, Blake, that I should have any difficulty in thwashin' Pwatt—"

"Oh, come on! We shall have the whole New House on us, soon," said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus nearly let go his hold of the cricket-bag as he turned to administer fitting reproof to Blake. A yell from that youth brought him to a sense of his responsibility, and the pie was saved. Once outside the house, the four juniors broke into a run, and the pie was borne in triumph into the School House, and upstairs into Study No. 6.

"Now you can go!" said Blake to Arthur Augustus, after the pie was at last deposited on the table in the study.

"Weally, Blake—"
"One up against Figgins & Co.—eh?" went on Blake, with a chuckle.

"I was speakin', Blake—"
"Yes, we know. I say, Dig, call the other chaps in!"

"Right-ho!"
"As mastah of the cewemonies, I shall be extwemely obliged if you will, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, as Digby dashed off. "I should be sowwy to thwash you befoah Tom Mewwy & Co., Blake."

"Of course, old son!" said Blake cheerfully. "Just buzz round, and get out the knives and forks. There's a good lad—"

"I wefuse to be a good lad, Blake! I uttahly wefuse—"
"Of course, I forgot! You're a person of tact and judgment!" grinned Blake. "All serene! I'll get 'em!"

Arthur Augustus left his place at the head of the table to administer the much-promised thrashing, when the juniors came crowding in.

"Cut it!"
"What-ho!"

Blake and Digby grinned. Arthur Augustus assumed a calm repose which was intended to convey the idea that such success as this was to be expected when he took the lead.

"Well, I suppose you're going to give us some of it?" said Barber.

Arthur Augustus bowed gracefully.
"Yaas, wathah, deah boys!" he murmured. "Pway make yourselves at home! I take it I am to be carvah."

"It's vevy easy to spoil a pie in the cutting up—" began Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"
"Oh, get on, ass!" said Blake.

D'Arcy glared at Blake.
But he was entertaining guests, and, of course, he considered his private resentment must wait. Tom Merry & Co. took their seats in a manner that befitted fellows who were about to receive crumbs from the rich man's table.

As Arthur Augustus made his first assault on the pie they grinned. The swell of the School House was evidently in difficulties. Lowther asked him if he would like a saw to get through the crust. But at last Arthur Augustus made an incision, and Blake and Digby looked relieved.

"Now for it!"
Arthur Augustus, having a start, as it were, was not quite prepared for developments.

Cutting vigorously at the pie, he was surprised to find that the crust was only cardboard with a thin veneer of pastry on top.

"Bai Jove!"

Blake reddened.

Arthur Augustus looked suspiciously at Tom Merry & Co. They were naturally interested in the curious expression on D'Arcy's face as he stared into the depths of the pie.

"What's the matter, Gussy?" asked Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus apparently did not hear him. Putting the knife into the crust, mechanically he removed a portion of the cardboard pastry.

Blake and Digby went a fiery red as he let it fall on the table. Tom Merry & Co. were grinning from ear to ear. Barber stared, as well he might.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Sorry, Gussy; but I'm so hungry, really—"

"What the deuce are you staring at, ass?" said Blake impatiently. "Go on!"

"Weally, Blake! Considah my posish—"

Without any more ado Blake leaped up.

"The rotters!" he burst out, as he saw what Arthur Augustus was staring at in the pie.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he and the Co. crowded round the carver and surveyed the contents of the pie.

"Ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

Blake dived into the pie-dish and took out a pair of football boots. Digby fished out a pair of batting gloves. Tom Merry took up a paper which lay inside the pie.

"With Figgins & Co.'s compliments!" he read out aloud.

"The bouders!"

"Beasts!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Done!"

CHAPTER 12.

A Little Too Previous

WITH Figgins & Co.'s compliments!" The juniors in Blake's study stared at the inscription blankly.

They could hardly believe their eyes.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, for the fourth or fifth time. "Bai Jove! It's a giddy jape, deah boys!"

"My only hat!"

"Then—then Fatty Wynn wasn't hypnotised at all, and he was only pulling our leg!" Tom Merry shouted.

"Great Scott!"

"The deep young beggar!"

"These Welsh chaps are awf'ly deep, deah boys," said D'Arcy, with a sage shake of the head. "There's that chap Lloyd George, you know; he's awfully deep. And—"

"We've been done!"

"Done to a turn!" grinned Lowther. "My faith in hypnotism is done, too. Fatty Wynn was fooling us—he was not under the giddy 'fluence at all!"

"Wathah not!"

"That's why the New House kids didn't seem to suspect anything when they saw us in the house!" grunted Manners.

"They were all in the game—Thompson and Pratt and the rest!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake drew a deep breath.

"Where's that giddy hypnotist?" he roared.

Barber looked alarmed.

"I—I say," he exclaimed, "I—I don't know how this has come about, but—but I'll swear—"

"Pway don't sweah, deah boy! It's a wotten thing to do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellahs, I twust you will not encouage Barbah to sweah! I—"

"I'll swear—"

"Weally, Barbah—"

"I'll swear that Fatty Wynn was under the influence, and didn't know that he was giving anything away," said Barber, with conviction.

There was a general snort.

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from Tom Merry & Co. They were feeling very sore at being taken in by the New House trio, and their wrath was turned in the direction of Barber. They felt that they owed it to the amateur hypnotist.

"You may be able to hypnotise giddy prefects, but you can't hypnotise porpoises for toffee!" said Monty Lowther warmly.

"You've helped them to do us brown!" said Digby.

"But I say—"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake! "We shall never hear the end of this! The real pie is hidden in the New House all the time, and Figgins & Co. will be killing themselves laughing. I think you're a rotten impostor!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard the feahful ass as a wotten impostah! I quite agwee with the wemarks of my friend Blake!"

"Oh, bump him!" said Blake. "It's bad enough to have a dangerous ass about the place hypnotising people, without his playing into the enemy's hands like this! Bump him!"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah that a bumpin' will meet the case!"

"Collar the giddy ass!"

Barber made a rush for the door. But the exasperated juniors collared him before he could escape. He had no chance to put the 'fluence on. The juniors did not give him a chance of making the mesmeric passes with his slim hands, and they took care not to meet the dark magnetic eyes that had such a strange power in their depths.

"Bump him!"

"Hard!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ow!" roared Barber. "Leggo! Look here, if you bump me, I'll hypnotise the lot of you! I'll make you eat coke!"

ow!"

Bump!

Barber descended upon the study carpet with a bump that made the dust rise.

Bump! Bump!

"Ow! Yow!"

The unfortunate hypnotist struggled fiercely. But he was powerless in the grasp of so many strong hands. Again he was bumped, and in the struggle his collar was torn out, and his jacket split up the back.

"There!" gasped Blake. "I think that will do. And now you'd better chuck your rotten hypnotism for good, you ass! It's too rotten!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the juniors streamed out of the study, leaving Barber sitting on the floor and gasping for breath.

Barber rose to his feet when they were gone, still pumping in breath, and dusted down his clothes. His eyes were gleaming.

"Can't hypnotise for toffee, can't I?" he muttered. "I'll jolly well show them! I'll make them sit up in class tomorrow morning!"

And the schoolboy hypnotist, grunting breathlessly, took his way to the dormitory, to change his split jacket and get a new collar.

Tom Merry & Co., in no good-humour, walked over to the gymnasium. Figgins & Co. were there, and they greeted the School House juniors with a series of cachinnations.

"Like the pie?" asked Figgins.

And Kerr and Wynn chuckled.

"You blessed fat fraud!"

said Blake, glaring at Fatty Wynn.

The fat Fourth-Former looked astonished.

"What have I done?"

"It was my idea," explained Kerr. "I noticed that you fellows were casting sheep's eyes on our pie when we bought it in the tuckshop to-day, and it occurred to me that you would raid it if you had half a chance. So we rigged up the dummy pie, and left it in the study for you, and gave the fellows the tip not to stop you if you came mooching over. We thought you would."

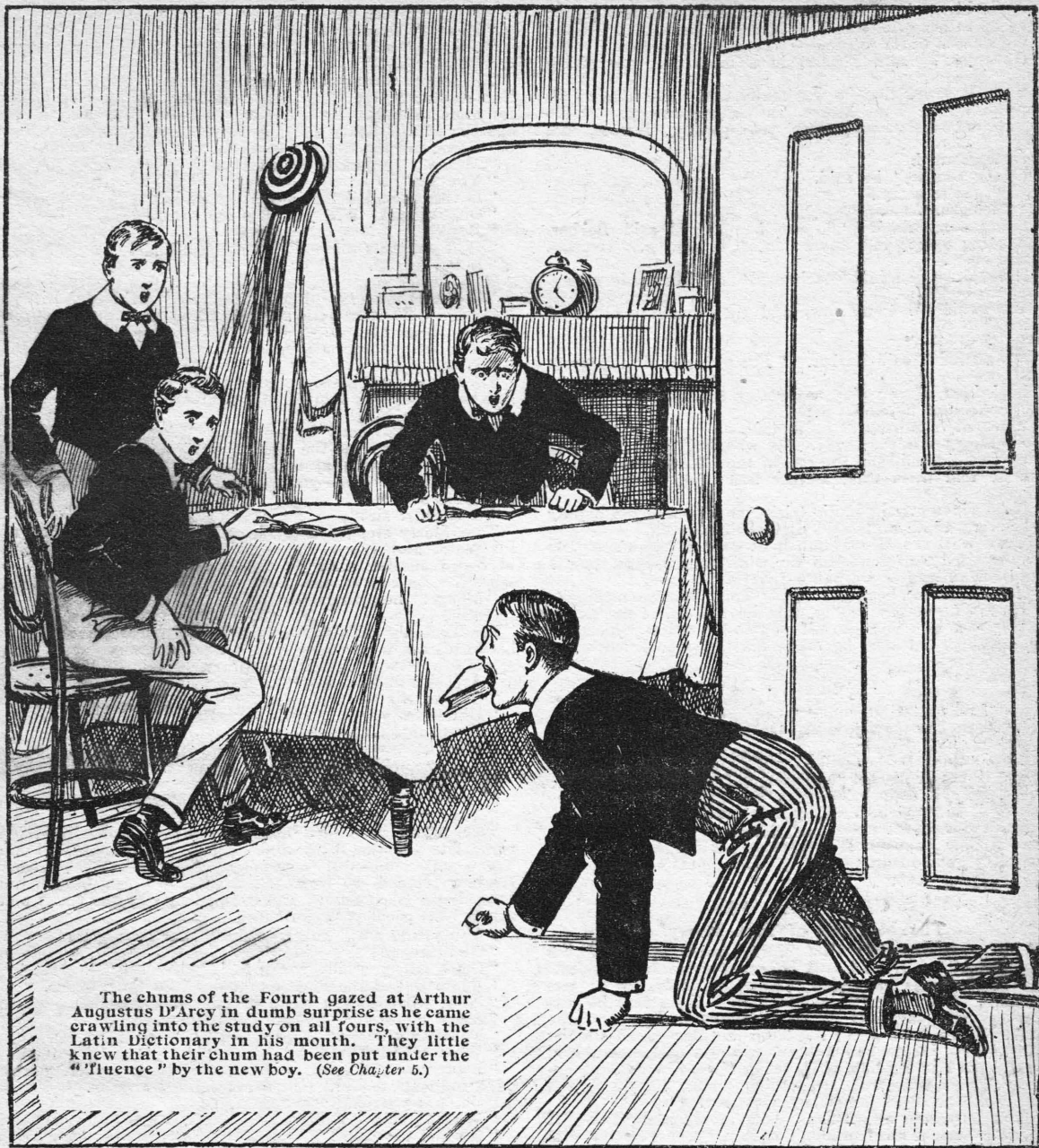
"And I suppose that was why Fatty Wynn answered my questions about the pie outside the tuckshop?" said Tom Merry.

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The chums of the Fourth gazed at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in dumb surprise as he came crawling into the study on all fours, with the Latin Dictionary in his mouth. They little knew that their chum had been put under the "fluence" by the new boy. (See Chapter 5.)

"Eh?" said Fatty Wynn. "Who asked me questions outside the tuckshop?"

"I did—about the pie!"

Fatty Wynn looked amazed.

"I don't remember it," he said. "When was it?"

"Why, not half an hour ago!" said Tom Merry wrathfully. "What do you mean by saying that you don't remember, you fat duffer?"

"I jolly well don't!" said Fatty Wynn. "You're off your rocker, I think! I remember seeing you come up to the tuckshop, and I don't clearly remember what I did just after that. But you never spoke to me!"

"Sure of that, Fatty?" asked Blake.

"Yes, of course, I am, you ass!" said Fatty testily.

Tom Merry whistled softly. The School House juniors moved away, and the New House chums roared with laughter. Figgins & Co. were enjoying the joke immensely, and so were the rest of the heroes of the New House.

Out of hearing of Figgins & Co., Tom Merry and his comrades looked at one another rather curiously.

"You heard what Fatty said?" remarked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"He seems to have been really under the 'fluence, after all."

"Looks like it," said Blake. "I suppose he had the dummy pie in his mind, and you never thought of anything of the sort, naturally. He just answered about the pie that was rigged up for us in Figgins's cupboard. Perhaps the real one has been eaten already. Come to think of it, Fatty wouldn't be able to keep off it!"

"Quite wight, bai Jove! We've bumped that chap Barbah wathah too soon, deah boys!"

"We have been a little too previous, come to think of it," said Tom Merry, rather ruefully. "I suppose we had better tell him we're sorry?"

"Yaas, wathah! An apology fwom one gentleman to anothah is quite sufficient, you know, to set any mattah wight."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't suppose it will set Barber's bones right, if he's got an ache in them," he said. "But I'll go and see him, anyway, and tell him we've made a mistake."

"Yaas. Put it to him nicely, deah boy."

Tom Merry returned to the School House. He found

Barber in his study, doing his preparation. The new junior looked up rather grimly as Tom Merry came in.

"We've seen Fatty Wynn—" Tom Merry began.

"Have you?" said Barber, in a most uncompromising tone.

"Yes. It seems that he was really under the 'fluence all the time," said Tom Merry, rather awkwardly. "We jumped to conclusions rather too quickly, Barber, old man!"

Barber grunted.

"I told you so," he said.

"Well, we're sorry!"

Another grunt.

"Being sorry don't undo the bumping!" said Barber.

"I'm going to put the 'fluence on all of you, just to make matters even!"

"Here, draw it mild!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in alarm.

"You see—"

"You wait till to-morrow, and then you'll see!" said Barber.

"But I say—"

"It's settled!" said Barber. "I'm going to do my prep. now."

"Look here, if you play any rotten tricks on me—"

The schoolboy hypnotist grinned.

"Wait till to-morrow!" he replied.

Tom Merry left the study. He was feeling considerably uneasy in his mind, and the rest of the Co. felt uneasy, too, when he told them what Barber had said. Blake looked angry.

"If he plays any hypnotic tricks on me, he'll get a jolly good hiding, that's all!" said Blake belligerently.

"Yaas, wathah! I considah it beneath a fellow's dig, to be hypnotised and made to do ridiculous things, and I should certainly give Barbah a feahful thwashin'!"

"He's a rum beggar," said Tom Merry musingly.

"There's never any telling what he will do. I can't help thinking that he will go on till he gets the order of the boot. I'm not surprised that he made his last school too warm for him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"There's a time when practical jokes should stop," said Blake, "and that time comes when—"

"When they're played on us, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha! Exactly!"

"I don't think Barber will see that," said Monty Lowther.

Blake clenched his fist suggestively.

"Well, if he doesn't see that, he won't be able to see anything," he remarked. "The first time I feel the 'fluence he gets a dot in the optic."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked that he considered it a jolly good ideah.

CHAPTER 13.

The Madness of Tom Merry.

THE next morning Tom Merry was thinking of the schoolboy hypnotist as he came down to breakfast.

Barber was in a good temper, certainly, for he was all smiles. But his good humour might mean that he was planning some surprises for Tom Merry & Co., and the Terrible Three did not like it. They had discovered already that the new junior had a peculiar sense of humour, and they did not like the idea of its being directed against themselves. There was, truly, something almost impish in the peculiar nature of the schoolboy hypnotist.

"He's jolly rum altogether," Tom Merry remarked. "I suppose a normal chap wouldn't have a queer gift like that at all. I must say I wish Railton had put him into some other study."

"What-ho!" said Manners and Lowther feelingly.

At the Shell breakfast-table, in the dining-room in the School House, Barber sat opposite to Tom Merry. It did not occur to Tom Merry that Barber would begin so soon, and he fell an easy victim.

Mr. Linton was at the head of the table, and he was not looking good-tempered. Mr. Linton was sometimes crabby in the mornings. When he looked cross, the Shell fellows were very careful. But Tom Merry, instead of being careful, appeared to be unusually reckless that morning.

"Will you pass me the salt, sir?" he asked.

Mr. Linton looked at him. It was not usual for the boys to ask their Form-master to pass them things. However, Mr. Linton passed the salt.

"Will you pass the bread-and-butter, sir?"

"Pass Merry the bread-and-butter, Manners!" said Mr. Linton, with a frown.

"Will you pass me a knife, sir?"

"Merry!"

"Will you pass me a fork, sir?"

"Merry!"

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"Will you pass me—"

"Merry!" thundered Mr. Linton.

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, smiling. "Will you pass me the pepper, sir?"

The pepper was nowhere near Mr. Linton's end of the table. The master of the Shell gazed at Tom Merry speechlessly for some seconds. He could only suppose that Tom Merry had the extraordinary audacity to venture to rag him before the Form and the rest of the school in the dining-room.

"Merry!" he jerked out at last.

"Yes, sir."

"Is this intended for impertinence, Merry?"

"Oh, no, sir! Will you pass me the jam?"

"Boy!"

"Will you pass me—"

"Stand up, Merry!"

Tom Merry stood up.

"I cannot understand this insolence," said Mr. Linton, his voice quivering with anger. "You are usually a well-behaved boy, Merry."

"Yes, sir. Will you pass me a handkerchief?"

"What!"

There was a suppressed giggle at the table. Manners and Lowther looked at their chum in amazement, and Lowther pinched his arm.

"Shut up, you ass!" he muttered. "Are you dotty?"

"Will you pass me the pickles, sir?"

"Leave the table at once, Merry!" almost shouted the Form-master. "You—you insolent boy! Leave the break-fast-table at once!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Tom Merry stepped away from the table. He picked up his plate, and placed his cup and saucer upon it, and arranged another plate on top of the cup, and placed the salt-cellar on top of the plate. Mr. Linton stared at him.

"Merry!" he ejaculated.

Crash!

Mr. Linton's voice startled the junior, and the crockery in his hands fell to the floor with a terrific smash.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Are you insane, boy?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"How dare you play such absurd tricks?"

"My dear fellow—"

"What!"

"You see, old boy—"

Mr. Linton rose to his feet. His face was red with anger.

"Leave the dining-room at once, Merry!"

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry proceeded towards the door. He lifted his right foot off the floor, and hopped, instead of walking. There was a buzz of amazement from the whole room. Kildare jumped up from the Sixth Form table, and ran towards the Shell fellow, and grasped him by the collar and stopped his peculiar performance.

"You young ass!" he growled. "How dare you!"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Come out, you silly young fool!"

Kildare jerked the Shell fellow out into the passage.

"Now, what do you mean by it?" he demanded.

"Mean by what?" gasped Tom Merry.

"These silly tricks."

"What silly tricks?"

"I suppose you know what you're doing, unless you've gone suddenly dotty?" Kildare exclaimed angrily.

"Oh, get your hair cut!"

"What!" yelled Kildare.

"Go and eat coke!"

Kildare gasped. He had certainly never been spoken to like that by a junior before. He clenched his hands hard, and then paused. There was a dazed look in Tom Merry's face that reminded him of an expression he had seen upon Knox's face on a certain occasion. He dropped his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Are you well, Merry?" he asked.

"Right as a trivet, cocky."

"Do you know what you are doing?"

"I suppose so. Where did you get that face?"

"Go to your study and stay there!" said Kildare.

"Right-ho, old cock!"

Tom Merry went upstairs. Kildare returned to the dining-room, looking very puzzled. A thunderstorm seemed to be brooding over the Shell table during the remainder of breakfast. The fellows did not envy Tom Merry. A severe caning was the least he could expect for his extraordinary conduct in the dining-room.

What had he done it for?

There was only one explanation to the juniors who knew of the peculiar powers of the schoolboy hypnotist. Manners and Lowther cast furious glances at Barber. He grinned serenely. They could not betray him. In the first place, it

would have been sneaking. In the second place, they had promised to keep a secret the fact that he was a hypnotist. They were regretting their promise now.

After breakfast Kildare joined Mr. Linton as the latter left the dining-room. The Shell master's brow was like a thundercloud.

"I think Merry is not well, sir," said Kildare. "You don't mind my saying so? It seems to me that he has had a fit, or something."

Mr. Linton started.

"Do you think so, Kildare? It was, indeed, most extraordinary. Is he subject to attacks of any sort, do you know?"

"No; I never knew he was, sir," confessed Kildare. "But—but I saw another chap here the other day acting in a most extraordinary manner, and that put it into my mind. I—I suppose there can't be something in the air? It is extraordinary. The chap I am speaking of is a prefect, and he acted as if he had gone dotty—ahem—I mean, insane. Merry certainly didn't seem to know what he was doing."

"It would be extraordinary if two boys had similar attacks of this most unusual nature," said Mr. Linton a little tartly.

"Quite so, sir; but—but all the same, I'm sure that Merry was not responsible for what he did just now."

"I will question him," said Mr. Linton.

"He's in his study, sir."

"Very good!"

Mr. Linton ascended to the Shell passage, and looked into Tom Merry's study. Tom Merry was there. He was standing by the window, looking out, and he turned round as Mr. Linton came in, and stared at him strangely.

"Merry!" said Mr. Linton.

"Hallo, Wally!"

Mr. Linton staggered back.

"Merry, do you know who I am?" he gasped.

"Yes; you're D'Arcy minor."

"The boy is mad!" exclaimed Mr. Linton aghast. "Merry, remain here. I will telephone at once for the doctor from Rylcombe. This must be seen to. Remain here!"

"Yes, sir."

And Mr. Linton hurried downstairs.

CHAPTER 14.

A Surprise for the Shell.

THE Shell were in a buzz of excitement when they took their places in the Form-room that morning.

Tom Merry was mad!

That was the extraordinary story that ran through the Form. Those who had seen his strange conduct in the dining-room could hardly doubt it; and the New House fellows, when they heard about it, hardly doubted it either.

That he was confined to his study, and that the medical man had been sent for from Rylcombe, was known to the whole school.

The fellows were excited naturally. They had never suspected Tom Merry of incipient lunacy. But there seemed to be no doubt about it now. In the Shell Form only two fellows knew better—Lowther and Manners. And they could not explain. Barber, of course, knew as well. Barber was grinning to himself with a sort of gnomish glee. He was evidently very well pleased with himself. Monty Lowther and Manners, mentally, were promising him all sorts of things when lessons were over. But before lessons were over their own turn had come.

Mr. Linton was very grave. Tom Merry was one of his best pupils, and although he had been angry at first, all his anger, of course, had vanished now, and he was only sorry. He was not in a humour, however, for any ragging in the class-room, and when Monty Lowther and Manners started it together, the fellows looked at them in astonishment. The chums of the Shell could not have chosen a worse moment.

"Manners!" said Mr. Linton, indicating that Manners was to construe.

Manners rose to his feet.

But instead of construing Virgil, he placed the book on the end of his nose, bending his head back, and commenced balancing it.

Mr. Linton gazed at him dumbfounded.

"Manners!" he thundered.

"Ow," roared Gore, as the book slid from Manners's nose and fell upon the back of Gore's head—"oh, you silly ass!"

"Silence, Gore—"

"Ow! I've got a biff on the napper, sir!"

"Silence! Manners, how dare you!"

"Sorry, sir!" said Manners. "I'll try with the inkpot!"

"What!"

Manners jerked the inkpot from its slot in the desk, and tried to balance it upon his nose. The effect was disastrous. As the inkpot rolled over, Manners's collar and tie were

drenched with ink, and several splashes were bestowed upon the fellows round him. Gore jumped up and left his place, in alarm, and Skimpole gave a yell.

"Manners!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Yes, sir?"

"What are you doing? What—?"

Mr. Linton paused. He remembered Tom Merry, and turned quite pale. Was Manners a sharer of the mysterious madness of his chum?

"Manners!" he said faintly.

"He's mad!" roared Gore, rubbing the ink from his face with his handkerchief, and quickly reducing his handkerchief to an ink rag. "He's as mad as a hatter! He's as mad as Tom Merry! Ow! I'm inky all over! He ought to be shut up in an asylum! Ow!"

"Bless me!" said Skimpole. "I am very inky! I—"

"Manners, come here!" said Mr. Linton, very gently.

"Yes, sir."

Manners came out before the class, hopping on one leg. He held the other straight out before him, and the effect was comical enough. Mr. Linton dodged away just in time to escape being prodded upon the watchchain by Manners's extended boot.

"My hat!" gasped Kangaroo. "What a game! Is it a jape?"

"He's dotty!" said Glyn.

"He's as dotty as Tom Merry!"

"Great Scott! Look at him!" yelled Kangaroo.

Manners was following up the Form-master, hopping upon his left leg, with his right prodding at the amazed and dismayed Form-master.

Mr. Linton, gasping with astonishment and dismay, retreated round his desk, and Manners followed him fast.

"Boy," gasped Mr. Linton, "go back to your place! Sit down at once!"

"Rats!" said Manners.

"What!"

"Stand where you are, and I'll puncture you!" said Manners, hopping round the desk after Mr. Linton.

"Good heavens!" gasped the master of the Shell, faintly, as he dodged Manners's boot. "This is—is terrible! The boy is certainly mad!"

"Look here, you're not playing fair!" said Manners, as Mr. Linton circled the desk again. "Come out into the open!"

"Boy!"

"I'll have you in a minute!"

"Help!"

Biff, biff!

The hopping junior tapped the Form-master's chest with his boot at last. Mr. Linton staggered back towards the boys' desks.

"Seize him!" he exclaimed feebly. "Boys, he has taken leave of his senses! Secure him!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Kangaroo.

The Cornstalk junior ran towards Manners, and several more fellows lent a hand. The unfortunate junior was secured.

He did not resist. He stood smiling at Mr. Linton, and seemed to be wondering why the Form-master did not continue to play the game.

"Take him to the Shell dormitory!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"Dr. Short is there, and he will see to him as well as to Merry."

"Yes, sir," said Kangaroo. "Come on, Manners, old man! We're not going to hurt you, sonny, but you must come!"

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" said Manners to Mr. Linton.

"Good heavens!"

Manners was removed from the Form-room. Mr. Linton sat down and mopped his brow with his handkerchief. He was in a perspiration.

It was some minutes before the juniors returned, having disposed of Manners in the Shell dormitory, where Tom Merry was already in the hands of the medical man from Rylcombe.

They took their places, and an attempt was made to resume lessons. Unfortunately, it was Monty Lowther who was first called upon to construe.

Lowther rose, and instead of construing Latin, began to sing in a high-pitched voice:

"Won't you come home, Bill Bailey?"

Mr. Linton jumped.

"Lowther," he shouted, "you are taking advantage of the unfortunate state of your school-fellows to pretend to be afflicted in the same way."

"Won't you come home, Bill Bailey?" chanted Lowther.

"Silence!"

"Won't you come home?"

"Lowther!"

"She moans the whole day long," resumed Lowther. "I'll

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do the cooking, darling, I'll pay the rent. I know I've done you wrong—

"Lowther!"

"Remember the Sunday evening I turned you out," sang Lowther cheerfully, "with nothing but a brush and comb—"

"Good heavens!"

"Ain't it a shame! I know I'm to blame—"

"Montague Lowther!"

"Bill Bailey, won't you please come home?" chanted Lowther.

"He's mad!" yelled Gore.

"Mad as a hatter!"

"Mad as the other two!"

"It is—is extraordinary!" gasped Mr. Linton, sinking into his chair. "Noble, take Lowther to the Shell dormitory."

"Yes, sir," said Kangaroo.

"I cannot understand this! It is like an epidemic! But Lowther certainly is not in his right senses! Take him away at once! The class will be dismissed for the morning," said Mr. Linton. "I—I do not feel equal to it any longer. You may leave the Form-room. Dismiss!"

The Shell crowded out.

They were glad enough to be excused the remainder of morning lessons; but they were amazed, and most of them were very much concerned for the Terrible Three.

Lowther was taken up to the Shell dormitory. Manners and Tom Merry had been put to bed, and they had gone quietly enough. Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, was in the dormitory with Dr. Short, the little medical man from Rylcombe.

"What! Another of them!" gasped Dr. Short, as Lowther was brought in.

"Yes, sir. Quite dotty!" said Kangaroo.

"This is amazing!"

"Can you account for it in any way, doctor?" asked the Head, who was looking very pale and disturbed.

"I cannot, sir—absolutely!" said the medical man. "It is the most extraordinary case I have ever heard of—absolutely! The boys must be taken every care of, and they had better not attend lessons again yet; but—but it is remarkable, sir, that they seem to be absolutely normal in every respect, excepting—"

"Excepting that they have suddenly become insane?"

"Absolutely!" gasped the doctor.

"It is amazing!" said the Head. "I cannot understand it in the least! Three more healthy and normal boys I have never seen!"

"It is absolutely astounding!"

"It is a puzzle!" said the Head.

"Absolutely!" said Dr. Short, apparently finding some comfort in that absurd adverb. "I admit that I am very much surprised. But we shall see."

"The giddy medico can't understand it any more than we can," Kangaroo remarked, as the Shell fellows went down.

"He's quite in the dark—"

"Absolutely, as he would say himself," grinned Barber.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Kangaroo turned to the new boy suddenly.

"Look here, I suppose you've not had anything to do with this?" he exclaimed.

Barber backed away a little.

"I!" he ejaculated. "How? Why?"

"Well, I don't know," said the Cornstalk junior. "But it's queer that the three of them should go balmy all at once, just after you've arrived here, and been put into their study. I don't know whether lunacy is catching."

"Oh, rot!" said Barber.

He walked away rather hastily. It was beginning to dawn upon the new junior that perhaps he had gone a little too far. In the quadrangle, the Shell fellows gathered in groups, discussing the matter. They could not understand it in the least. They were as puzzled as the medical man, and though they talked of nothing else, they did not come anywhere near finding a solution of the mystery.

CHAPTER 15.

The Schoolboy Hypnotist on the Warpath.

"BAI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered the ejaculation. The Fourth Form had been dismissed at last, and they found the Shell already out. And Kangaroo, and Glyn, and Thompson, and a crowd more Shell fellows hurried up to them to tell them the amazing story. The Fourth were amazed to hear it.

There were four of them who understood—the chums of Study No. 6. They knew that Horace Barber must have been putting the fluence on.

The four chums drew apart from the crowd of fellows who were eagerly discussing the matter, and consulted

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among themselves. All four of them were looking very wrathful.

"It's weally too bad of the wottah!" said Arthur Augustus. "I do not wegard it as cwicket at all!"

"He's a rotten cad!" said Blake wrathfully. "He said that he would get even with us for bumping him, but—"

"But this is too thick!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Besides, it will get the three into trouble," said Blake.

"Unless they tell about Barber being a hypnotist, fellows will think they are rocky in the crumpet."

"And they've promised not to tell."

"Yaas, it's a wotten posh!"

"We can't tell, either," said Herries thoughtfully.

"We've promised, too! It wasn't fair of Barber to put us in such a position!"

"The wottah!"

"We can't tell about him," said Blake, "but we can jolly well bump him for his rotten cheek! Where is he?"

"He doesn't seem to be in sight," said D'Arcy, surveying the quadrangle through his eyeglass.

"Well, look for him."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the four chums separated, to seek Barber. It was pretty clear that the schoolboy hypnotist was purposely keeping out of sight. He knew that as soon as the chums of Study No. 6 heard the story, they would look for him.

It was Blake who found him, but not as he expected. Blake looked into the gymnasium, and discovered Barber sitting there with a book in his hand. Barber regarded him steadily over the book as he approached, and his dark, magnetic eyes were fixed upon Blake's. Blake felt a queer feeling coming over him, and he guessed what it meant. Barber dropped the book, and made the hypnotic passes with his hands.

Blake's pace slackened, and he walked up to Barber peacefully. The influence was on.

"Go out of the gym," said Barber calmly. "Go and sit on the window-sill of the Head's study, and don't move on any account."

"Yes," said Blake submissively.

"If anybody speaks to you, say 'Get your hair cut!' and nothing else."

"Yes," muttered Blake.

He quitted the gym. In the quadrangle his chums sighted him.

"Found him, deah boy?" called out D'Arcy.

Blake did not reply. He walked back to the School House, and with some difficulty climbed upon the window-sill of the Head's study, which was high from the ground.

There was a surprised exclamation within the study. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton were there, with Mr. Linton, the three masters in deep and anxious consultation on the mysterious state of the Terrible Three. At the sight of a sturdy junior's broad back at the window they stared in surprise, as well they might.

"What impertinence!" exclaimed the Head. "The whole school seems to be in an extraordinary state this morning. That is Blake of the Fourth, I think."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Railton. He stepped to the window, and tapped on the glass. "Go away at once, Blake!" he called out.

The Fourth-Former did not move.

Mr. Railton raised the sash, and tapped Blake on the shoulder.

"Blake, go away at once! How dare you!"

"Get your hair cut!"

Mr. Railton almost staggered.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "I never heard of such extraordinary insolence. Blake, go to my study at once. I shall cane you severely."

"Get your hair cut!"

"Will you obey me, boy?"

"Get your hair cut."

Mr. Railton, red with anger, pushed Blake off the window-sill. The junior dropped into the quad, with a grunt. Immediately he climbed upon the window-sill again. The three masters looked at him speechlessly. There was no grin on Blake's face. He was evidently in deadly earnest. The Head came to the window.

"Blake, I command you to go away."

"Get your hair cut!"

"Oh, this is too much. Are you mad, Blake?"

"Get your hair cut!"

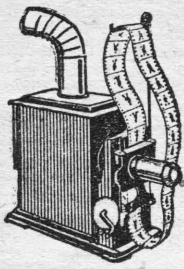
"Is it possible?" Mr. Railton exclaimed, in horror. "Has Blake suffered from the same extraordinary attack as the Shell boys? Is this pretence, Blake—"

"Get your hair cut!"

A crowd of fellows were gathering round the window now,

(Continued on page 20.)

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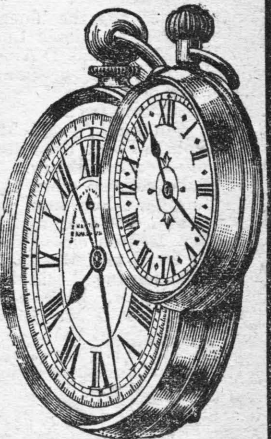
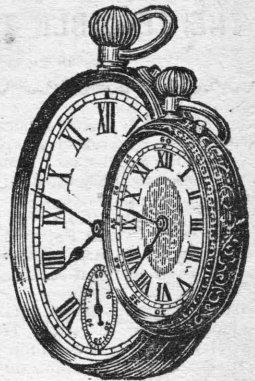
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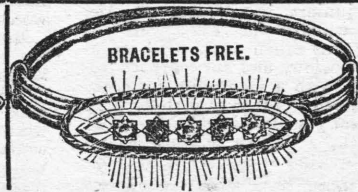
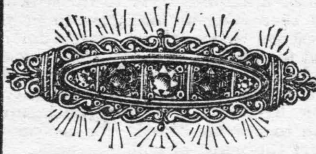
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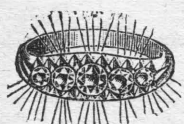
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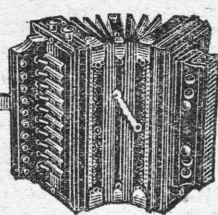
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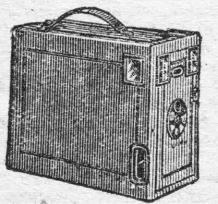
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THE TERRIBLE THREE'S RECRUIT.

(Continued from page 18.)

gazing at Blake, in astonishment. In the study, the three masters were silent and alarmed.

"Come down, you ass!" said Figgins. "You'll get a licking. What are you sticking on the window-sill for, you chump?"

"Get your hair cut!"

"He's dotty," said Fatty Wynn. "The School House is a blessed lunatic asylum. They ought to raise a subscription to buy one another strait-jackets."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus came racing up. The swell of St. Jim's was looking very excited. He knew what was the cause of Jack Blake's strange conduct.

"Blake, deah boy, come down!" he exclaimed.

"Get your hair cut!"

"Bai Jove! It's the 'fluence!"

"The what?" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley.

"Oh, nothin'," said D'Arcy, realising that he had come perilously near to breaking his word unintentionally.

"Blake, my deah chap!"

"Get your hair cut!"

"Take him away," said Mr. Railton. "Take him away to the Fourth-Form dormitory. Dr. Short must see him. This is most extraordinary."

But Blake resisted when the juniors, in obedience to Mr. Railton, dragged him from the window-sill. They were too many for him, however, and he was taken away, still struggling. Mr. Railton closed the window, and turned back towards the Head and Mr. Linton, with a face quite pale.

"It is—amazing!" said the Head. "It is as if there were madness in the air. Blake is usually a most sensible boy."

"Quite so," said Mr. Railton. "There is some extraordinary influence at work. I suspected at first what the boys call a rag, but it is quite clear that these unfortunate lads are not responsible for their actions."

"Quite clear!" said the master of the Shell, with a nod.

"But—but they cannot be all mad!" the Head exclaimed, in bewilderment. "Four boys could not all go mad in one morning, without any cause whatever."

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"It is evidently not insanity," he said. "If it were possible, I should suppose that they were the victims of hypnotism."

"Hypnotism!" ejaculated the Head and Mr. Linton together.

"Yes. I have seen subjects in hypnotic trances act in a manner equally extraordinary," said Mr. Railton. "But it is absurd to suppose that there is a hypnotist at this school who would play such a daring and inconsiderate trick upon the boys."

"It would be very extraordinary," said the Head.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Linton. "Look at this!"

He pointed to the window. Outside, in the quadrangle, Herries and Digby could be seen. They were clasping one another, and waltzing in the quad., surrounded by a staring crowd of juniors.

"Herries and Digby, too!" gasped the Head.

"I—I feel as if I were dreaming!" murmured Mr. Linton.

Mr. Railton compressed his lips.

"It is absurd to suppose that insanity can have attacked so many boys in one morning," he said quietly, "and the only other explanation is—"

"Hypnotism!"

"Yes. And it only remains to find the hypnotist!" said Mr. Railton.

CHAPTER 16.

The Last of the 'Fluence!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY jammed his monocle very firmly into his eye, and looked upon the peculiar antics of the two juniors in the quadrangle. Herries and Digby were evidently under the mysterious 'fluence. They were waltzing in the quad. with a complete disregard of the amazed looks and ejaculations around them.

"It's a blessed epidemic of madness," said Figgins. "I don't understand it myself. What the dickens does it mean, Kerr?"

But Kerr shook his head.

"It beats me," he said.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "The uttah wottah!"

Figgins tapped him on the shoulder.

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"What's the matter with your pals, Gussy?" he asked.

"I'm afraid I cannot explain, Figgay, deah boy!"

"Oh, you know, then?" said Kerr.

D'Arcy nodded.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then why can't you explain?"

"Because I pwomised the wottah!"

"What rotter?"

"Ahem! I'm afraid I can't say any more," said Arthur Augustus, in distress. "I must not bweak my word, you see."

And he hurried away, leaving Figgins & Co. more amazed by his words than by the strange antics of Herries and Digby, and the peculiar conduct of Blake. Fatty Wynn tapped his forehead.

"Looks like it!" agreed Figgins.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had not "got it" yet. But he felt that his turn was coming. It would not be long before he did get it. He was the last of the fellows who knew Horace Barber's secret, and he had no doubt whatever that Barber would lose no time in putting the influence on him also.

The swell of St. Jim's was in a decidedly difficult position—a "doooid awkward posish," as he would have called it himself.

But for his promise to keep the new boy's secret, he would have made his knowledge public at once. It would have been his duty to do so. But nothing could justify breaking a promise. But if he sought out the schoolboy hypnotist, to reason with him, and get him to release Tom Merry & Co. from their thralldom, he guessed what the result would be. Barber would put the "fluence" on him at once, and he would be a helpless slave to the will of the hypnotist.

But there was nothing else to be done. His chums must be rescued from their extraordinary state, and D'Arcy looked for Barber.

"Aftah all," murmured the swell of St. Jim's, "a fellow with a wemarkably stwong personality like mine can resist a wotten hypnotist. I shall buck up, and defy the uttah wottah to put his beastly 'fluence on, and I wathah think he will get the worst of it."

He found Barber in the room. The new junior was alone, and he was grinning. He grinned still more as D'Arcy came in. He had expected him.

"Seen the other chaps?" he asked airily.

"Yaas, you uttah wottah!"

Barber chuckled.

"I fancy I'm getting my own back," he remarked. "You fellows won't bump me again in a hurry, I think."

"Wats! I weward me as a wotten twick, and I ordah you to wesease Tom Mewwy and the othahs at once fwom your wotten hypnotism," said D'Arcy angrily.

There was a low exclamation outside the door of the gym. Figgins & Co. had followed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Thinking that the swell of St. Jim's had "got it," as Fatty Wynn had said, the chums of the New House intended to look after him, in case he came to any harm. As they approached the doorway of the gymnasium, they heard what he said to Barber, and in a flash they understood.

"Hypnotism!" murmured Figgins.

"The new chap!" muttered Kerr.

"Who'd have thought it!" said Fatty Wynn, with a low whistle of amazement. "It—it can't be true!"

"Hush! Listen!"

"I ordah you to wesease them," said Arthur Augustus, with some heat. "Othahwise, I shall give you a feahful thwashin'. Do you undahstand? Don't make your wotten passes at me. You cannot hypnotise me now I am on my guard. I have too stwong a personality for that."

"Good old Gussy!" murmured Figgins.

"I wepeat, Barbah—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice died away.

Figgins & Co. looked into the gym. Barber had his back to them, and did not see them. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was facing them, but the expression of the swell of St. Jim's was fixed. In spite of his strong personality—which perhaps was not quite so strong as he supposed—he had fallen under the hypnotic influence quite easily.

Barber was making slow passes before his face. The lids of D'Arcy's eyes drooped, and he closed them. Barber chuckled softly.

"Open your eyes, D'Arcy!" he said.

D'Arcy opened his eyes.

"Go!" said Barber. "You're to go into the Head's study, and do a cakewalk there. Do you understand?"

"Yaas."

"Go at once!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked to the doorway of the gym. Barber looked after him, grinning, but his grin died away as he saw Figgins & Co. The three New House juniors had their eyes upon him, and he knew that they must have been watching him, and that his secret was discovered.

"I say, keep it dark, you fellows!" Barber exclaimed eagerly.

Figgins frowned.

"So you're a giddy hypnotist!" he said.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?"

"I'm not going to keep it dark," said Kerr, scornfully. "I would never have believed it possible, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. It's jolly clever of you, but it's a rotten trick to play on anybody."

"Oh, rats! You'll keep it dark, or——"

"Or what?" exclaimed Figgins, clenching his big fists.

"Or I'll put the 'fluence on you three chaps, and make you punch one another black and blue," said Barber coolly.

"You can't put it on three at once, I suppose," said Kerr, with a grin. "Collar him, you chaps, and we'll make him own up before all the fellows. We're not going to have the whole school supposing that Tom Merry & Co. are mad, just to please that rotten jokist."

"No fear!" said Figgins.

And Figgins & Co. rushed upon the schoolboy hypnotist.

Barber had no chance.

He could not, as the keen Scottish junior had remarked, hypnotise three fellows at once; Figgins & Co. gave him no time to hypnotise even one. They collared him, and whirled him off his feet, and dragged him out of the gym.

"Hallo! What's the row here?" demanded Kangaroo, as a crowd of juniors were attracted by the sight of the School House boy struggling with the chums of the New House. "Hands off the School House, you bounders!"

"Pax!" said Figgins. "We've found him out. He's a giddy hypnotist!"

"What?"

"He's hypnotised Tom Merry and the other chaps," Kerr explained.

"Phew!"

"Mind he doesn't get the 'fluence on you," said Fatty Wynn. "He's had it on me—you remember what you said I did in the tuckshop, Figgy, and I couldn't remember——"

Figgins uttered an exclamation.

"My hat! Yes, I remember the bounder was there!"

"Gussy's just gone in," exclaimed Kerr.

"After him!"

Figgins & Co. rushed after the swell of St. Jim's, anxious to stop him before he could get to the Head's study. They left Barber surrounded by an excited and threatening crowd of fellows. D'Arcy was already in the School House, and as the New House juniors ran in and after him into the lower passage, they saw him disappear into the doorway of the Head's study.

"Too late!" gasped Figgins.

It was indeed too late to stop the swell of St. Jim's from obeying the command of the schoolboy hypnotist. He had entered the Head's study without knocking, and the three masters there looked at him sharply. It was the first time anybody had ever known the elegant Fourth-Former to be guilty of such an indiscretion.

"D'Arcy!" said the Head sternly.

"Yaas, sir."

"What do you want here?"

"I am goin' to do a cakewalk, sir."

"What?"

Arthur Augustus did not answer again. He began to cakewalk. Mr. Railton, Mr. Linton, and the Head stared at him blankly. It was another case of the same mysterious malady—they knew that at once.

Mr. Railton strode towards him suddenly, and grasped him by the shoulder, and forcibly stopped the performance.

"D'Arcy," he said quietly, "listen to me."

"You are intewwuptin' the performance, deah boy!"

"Who told you to do that?" asked Mr. Railton, fixing his eyes upon D'Arcy with a steady gaze.

D'Arcy was silent.

"You were told to do that, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir."

"Who told you?"

Silence.

"You see, sir," said Mr. Railton, turning to the Head, "the boy is evidently under the influence of another, but cannot speak his name. Doubtless he is being influenced to keep silent on that point. It is obviously a case of hypnotism."

There was a roar from the quadrangle. The masters turned hastily to the window. Out in the quad. an excited crowd of juniors were gathered. Figgins & Co., too late to stop D'Arcy, had returned to take summary vengeance upon the hypnotist. Barber was wriggling in the grasp of a dozen juniors. The shouts of the boys were wafted in at the open window of the Head's study.

"Bump him!"

"Bump the rotten hypnotist!"

"We'll teach him to hypnotise here!"

"Bump him!"

"Give him another!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton smiled slightly.

"You hear that, sir?" he said.

"Yes," gasped the Head. "What—what does it mean?"

"It means that the boys have discovered the hypnotist."

Dr. Holmes nodded. He understood. He crossed to the window and called out to the excited crowd in the quadrangle.

"Boys!"

The hubbub ceased at once. The fellows, startled by the Head's voice, turned towards the window. Barber, with his clothes rent, his jacket split, and his collar hanging by a single stud, staggered from amid the press of juniors. Kildare had just arrived upon the spot, and the Head made a sign to him.

"Kildare, bring that junior here—the new boy, Barber."

"Yes, sir."

One minute later the dishevelled new boy, gasping for breath, and with Kildare's grip on his collar, was marched into the Head's study.

"Barber," said Dr. Holmes sternly, "you are discovered! You have the power of hypnotism, it appears?"

Barber was silent.

"If you do not answer me at once frankly I will flog you and expel you from the school!" said the Head grimly.

"Ye-es, sir! I—I am a hypnotist," faltered Barber.

"Very good! You have hypnotised the boys who have behaved in an extraordinary manner this morning?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You are, I suppose, able to release them from the state you have thrown them into?"

Barber grinned a little.

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Do so with D'Arcy."

"Very well, sir."

Barber made a few passes before the dazed face of the swell of St. Jim's. The masters and Kildare watched him with breathless interest. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a kind of start, and stared round him wildly.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed. "How did I get here? What——"

"He's all right now, sir."

"Bai Jove! You uttah wottah, you have been puttin' the 'fluence on, aftah all——"

"You will do the same thing for the other boys, Barber," said the Head, in his deep voice, "and then you will pack your box and leave this school by the next train."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Barber.

"A boy with such a dangerous gift cannot be allowed here when he has shown himself so wanting in self-control as to exercise it in this way," said the Head sternly. "You have thrown the whole school into confusion by these absurd tricks, and caused a great deal of trouble. If you had not been found out I do not think you would have admitted the truth, and a number of boys here would have remained under the imputation of being partially insane. You have acted recklessly, thoughtlessly, and wickedly, Barber. I shall not punish you, because I do not think you fully realise what you have done. But you will leave this school instantly, and I shall write to your father explaining the matter. And I should recommend you, if you gain admission to another school, to cease from exercising that unfortunate gift. Not a word! You may go!"

And Barber went.

When the boys of St. Jim's gathered in the Form-rooms for afternoon lessons one place in the Shell-room was empty. Horace Barber had gone.

He had already left St. Jim's, and he did not return. Tom Merry & Co., free from the mysterious "'fluence" now, took their usual places in the Form. They were not sorry that Barber had gone.

"He was too jolly dangerous a chap to have about," Monty Lowther remarked, when the juniors came out after school. "I'm glad he's gone."

"He would have picked up an awful crop of lickings from the fellows he hypnotised if he had stayed," grinned Manners.

"Yes, rather!"

"And we've got the study to ourselves again now," said Tom Merry.

"By Jove, yes! I forgot that! Hurrah!"

And to celebrate the recovery of their own special den the Terrible Three stood a magnificent banquet in the study to all the whilom victims of the Schoolboy Hypnotist.

THE END.

(Next Thursday: "The Schoolboy Nihilist," another magnificent tale of Tom Merry & Co., by Martin Clifford. Order in advance. Price One Penny.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 208.

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEEK:

THE SCHOOLBOY NIHILIST!

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. He is drowned at the entrance of the ice barrier.**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. 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.

After a period of hard and strenuous work, the aeronef is completed, and the final arrangements are made in its long saloon. The next days see the commencement of the wonderful voyage of the airship, *Wings of Gold*, into the Antarctic circle.

Professor Von Haagel accidentally and unconsciously blackens his face with ink. On passing the galley, wherein are Jackson, Tooter, and Mr. Crooks, the cook, he hears a yell, and looks in at the porthole. The three men see the blackened face, and are at first startled; but, upon recognising the professor, reassure themselves with the remark that he is merely slightly mad.

(Now go on with the story.)

Signs and Wonders of the Region of Eternal Ice.

Surely the outlook was the abomination of desolation—eye-aching, monotonous, hideous. Lance and Maurice, as they hung over the rail, had the same thought in their minds.

"It's a sore on the face of the earth, Lance," said Fordham. "The North Pole, for loneliness, must be a little London to it. Not a bear, not a bird, not a wolf—nothing but confounded ice and snow. Did you ever see anything so ghastly?"

"Only once, old chap, and then I had a nightmare."

"And what grisly sight did you see on that joyous and festive occasion?"

"Your sweet face, dear boy," answered Lance, as he edged round the rudder. "You seemed to smile at me, and yet I recovered. I have a strong constitution. Farewell! I must catch the post."

Lance inflated one of the balloons with hydrogen. He tied a brief and cheery message to it. It soared away to the north-east, rising high above the aeronef.

"It's a million to one that no human being ever sees that again," said Maurice. "I'd like to wager on it."

A haze was rising in the north. It swallowed up the derelict. Lance pulled at his pipe thoughtfully.

"Those are long odds, Maurice," he said. "I take you for fifty, and then only for cigars."

"Done! My dear Lance, during the last few days you have been developing into an impossible idiot! Why, the odds are more than a million to one. If it travels, it won't come within forty miles of the ship. Nobody will ever see that again."

"Get out your cigars," laughed Morton, putting up his powerful binoculars. "I can see the little beggar quite plainly. If you don't believe me, look for yourself. Have a squint. Come along; pay up!"

Fordham shook the ashes from his pipe.

"Turn out that cigar," he said.

"Turn out a cigar be hanged! I won, and I want fifty!"

"Dear one," chuckled Fordham, "you are mistaken. Your memory has failed you. You forget the terms of the wager. I emphatically stated that no human beings would ever set eyes on that balloon again. You, apparently, have

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done so, but still you have lost. I do not consider you a human being. I consider you an ass!"

The *Wings of Gold* was making a steady fourteen miles an hour, and no more. They kept on until the sun grew pale, and a greenish haze began to shut in the horizon. Like the snuffing out of a candle the light failed, and then, like clusters of jewels, the radiant stars hung and quivered in the sky.

The phenomenon puzzled them all. In tropical regions the twilight is brief, but here, when they expected a long after-glow, there was no twilight at all. Von Haagel could not explain it. He shook his big, round head. And then a cry of awe and wonder burst from them.

It was raining fire!

"Der meteors! Der meteors!" cried Von Haagel. "Ach himmel! Der meteors!"

The sky blazed with their incandescence. The meteors shot across the ebony blackness in countless thousands. Then there was a dazzling burst of white-hot flame that almost blinded them, a sensation of scorching heat, and a crash from below.

"By thunder!" came the even voice of Teddy Morgan. "That was close!"

A meteorite, and evidently a heavy one, had fallen barely thirty yards from the aeronef.

"It licks the Crystal Palace for fireworks, and no error!" said Jackson, but his tones were shaky.

The dazzling display went on for ten minutes, and then only a few stragglers burst into glow, to sail through the arch of heaven, and then to disappear.

Von Haagel was in an ecstasy of delight. He had seen a sight unrivalled in the annals of astronomy. He laughed like a child, and rubbed his hands together.

"Oh," he cried, "dot was glorious! Ach, it was suplime! Dot is a new cluster of meteors, and I shall gall them—I shall gall them—ja, ja!—I shall gall them 'The Lanciads,' after mein dear poy Lance. Ach, I lofe der meteors. I lofe them because they laugh at us. I can tell you, when I see a gomet, when dot gomet shall return—like little Bo-Peep's sheep, mit his tail behind him. Ach, yes, dough it is den dousand years! But der meteors—no! We say they will

return in one—three—five years. They do, and they do not. They laugh at us."

Fordham had made no rules, and had set up no barriers between master and servants. On such an expedition, he thought it wiser and fairer not to do so. All the men were volunteers—all were risking their lives. He was not surprised, therefore, when the hoarse voice of Mr. Crooks ascended from beneath his feet, and asked:

"They looks red-'ot, sir. Was they red-'ot? Why not?"

Professor Von Haegel was always eager to impart knowledge to any inquiring mind. He began to explain that meteorites, so far as their real composition was known, were a mystery. They were waifs and strays of space. Those that fell on the earth had approached too near in their wild flight. The force of gravity had pulled them down, and the density of the atmosphere, acting like a brake, had checked their terrible velocity, and flashed them into white heat. He was getting on nicely, when the same gruff voice from below ascended, and remarked:

"'Taters is hot at times, an' also white. Why not? But they ain't metyers, though mealy. Why not?"

There was a unanimous and instantaneous roar of laughter.

"And winkles do not grow whiskers or hair," murmured Jackson; "but a hairpin comes handy to tickle 'em out wiv, and not 'arf! Say, Bill, ain't I gettin' on wiv my haitches? Just twig! A hairpin comes in handy to tickle a wrinkle!"

"Why not?" growled Mr. Crooks. "Winkles has shells. We ain't. So has nuts. Why not?"

"Switch on the lights, Teddy," said Lance, "and let us look at it."

Mr. Crooks's eye was fastened unwinkingly on Mr. Tooter's face.

"There's 'air!" said Mr. Crooks, dragging his voice from the depths. "Why not? If not 'air, they is bristles! Why not?"

After this unarguable statement, Mr. Crooks departed.

"Dot Crooks is der most extraordinary man I ever saw, Maurice," said Von Haegel. "Dot soup he made was lovely!"

Dinner was over. Lance had gone to the wheel. Fordham and Von Haegel were taking their ease, cigar in mouth, before the stove, but the energetic engineer was at work mending Maurice's watch. The whistles of the speaking-tube squeaked.

"Anything the matter, old chap?" asked Fordham, springing to the tube.

"Come up and see!" said Lance's voice.

Maurice put on his furs.

"It's all serene," he said, nodding to Von Haegel. "I'll soon trot back to give you a game of cribbage."

The slight breeze created by the aeronef's motion (she was barely moving) had a bitter sting in it. Fordham was glad enough to get into the deckhouse.

"Dash it!" he growled. "This air is like breathing pins and needles and tacks! Well, Lancelot, my Knight of the Round Table, what is the great excitement?"

"I don't know," said Lance, brushing the ice from the glass. "There is something in front of us—a light. I've seen it twice. It's not the Aurora, or I'm badly mistaken, laddie. It may be a mock moon or a mock sun. These latitudes are uncanny. There! Do you see it?"

"Yes, I do," said Fordham. "Great Scott!"

A luminous ball shot up through the darkness ahead far into the sky. It burst like a rocket, and vanished.

Boom!

The air vibrated and pulsed with the thunderous echo of a heavy report. It was like the distant explosion of a heavy shell. The startled men came running from below, shouting unanswerable questions. Then there was a silence, broken only by the everlasting fr-r-r of the fans and the puffing of Professor Von Haegel.

Lance pointed to the south. They stared through the glass expectantly and wonderingly.

Again the luminous sphere cut the velvety blackness of the night as it rushed towards the stars. It belched out a glowing flame and a thousand fiery fragments that fell like dust. A muttering crash drifted over the eternal ice.

Maurice and Lance looked at the professor. His eyes were round, and his mouth was open. He caught their glances, and shook his big head.

"Ach!" he panted. "I know not. I am dumb, dear lads."

The eye of Mr. Crooks was boring into the gloom. He spoke at length from the depths.

"Is they fireworks?" he said. "Why not?" His eye turned, as if on a pivot, and rested upon the hairy visage of Mr. Tooter. "And them is whiskers," he added, "which is sprouting. Nice? Why not?"

No one laughed. There was a shout from Jackson, and almost a scream. He was staring up through the glazed

dome. Some object was hovering above the aeronef—black, shapeless, and more terrifying through its very mystery.

Farthest South—Teddy Morgan is Convinced—The Professor Gives a Scientific Lecture, which is not concluded—A Drink for Mr. Crooks—A Wonderful Sight.

There was a harsh, grating shriek, so hideous, so terrible, so uncanny that it sent the blood surging back to their hearts. No human ear had heard such a shriek. Shaken to the very souls, their eyes glassy and protruding, and their lips wide apart, they gazed up at a shapeless thing.

Then it was gone, and the stars were winking down. With a hoarse shout, Lance dragged open the door and rushed out. Maurice and Tooter floundered after him. The deck was glazed with ice. Tooter slipped and fell sideways against the rail-netting, but Lance and Fordham floundered on and peered ahead.

"There—it's there!" said Maurice hoarsely.

A dark, moving patch hung over the gleaming ice. The hideous cry came back to them, and softened into a long, shuddering wail. The two men were breathing heavily. A puffing, scrambling noise announced the arrival of the professor. Teddy Morgan had the presence of mind to switch on all lights. In the glare they saw the perspiration gleaming on Von Haegel's forehead.

"Get back, dad," said Lance quickly. "You'll kill yourself!"

"Ach, I do not gare!" panted the German. "What was dot, dear lads—what was dot?"

Teddy Morgan dashed up with a rifle in his hands. Little Jackson's teeth were chattering, but not with the cold. The engineer tried to pierce the hazy gloom with his binoculars. He was the steadiest of them all. He clicked a cartridge into the weapon. But Morgan looked in vain. There was nothing but grey-white ice and the grey-blue sky, with its festoon of stars.

They went back to the deckhouse. Tooter had hurt his forehead in his fall, and he was sent below to bathe the cut and patch it up.

"All I can make of it isn't much," said Fordham. "The thing was alive, and it could fly and yell."

"By thunder, and how it could yell!" said Morgan, filling his pipe. "It seemed as big as a house. This beats everything."

Von Haegel fanned himself with a handkerchief.

"Himmel," he puffed, "it has been an efening of vonders—der meteors, der vireballs, der noises, and der—der unknown! It is always der unknown dot terrifies. Ach, what was dot—what was dot?"

"It wasn't no sparrer, not 'alf, it wasn't!" said Jackson nervously. "I went as white as milk an' no horror; and I've got a stitch in me side nah, and a bad 'un. I don't believe a fat lot in ghosts, but a fmg like that makes a cove want to chase himself."

"I'd give fifty pounds to get a clear sight of the brute," said Lance.

"And I'd double the money," added Fordham. "I can't get that yell out of my ears. It's still buzzing there."

Teddy Morgan smoked vigorously. The stubborn engineer was beginning to think that, after all, the professor might not be the harmless crank he believed him to be.

"What's your idea, Teddy?" asked Lance.

"By thunder, sir," growled the engineer, "only a fool goes back on what he's seen! I give it up. I don't believe in bogeys any more than Jackson. If that thing's alive, it has to eat. What does it feed on? It can't feed on ice—nothing can feed on ice. It's a big climb down for me after what I've said; but I'm beginning to think that there's something more than ice in front."

Von Haegel was scribbling in his notebook. He looked up.

"Morgan," he said, "you are a vicked rascal! You saw the wings of gold dot Lance shot. From where came wings of gold?"

"I don't know, sir."

"And when one knows not and the thing is dere, it is madness," said the professor. "It is folly to deny. If you told a savage that your countrymen travelled eighty miles an hour, he might not believe. To him it is madness, but it is true. And so on, Morgan, we will convince you. You shall not laugh at the poor professor. Ach, you need not shake your head and flush! You all laugh at me. And I laugh, too, for I like to see you laugh, and it is good to laugh for everybody. Shake hands mit me, Teddy."

"I'm proud to do it, sir," said Morgan. And he meant it.

They all loved the great, simple-hearted scholar. With the learning of all the ages in his head, he had the heart of a child. The events of the night had driven all thought of

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sleep from their heads, but it was necessary. Maurice ordered all except Morgan and Lance to bed.

"Now we can talk," said Fordham. "Slew off those propellers, Teddy."

Morgan obeyed, and the vessel glided on until the momentum was exhausted.

"Safe or not safe, we're going to lie close at night," went on Maurice. "How many of us could work this thing, Teddy?"

"Three, sir, if we did our own cooking."

"Then three it's got to be. I don't like it, boys. That uncanny visitor has given me the hump. We'll right-about-face to-morrow back to the ship."

Lance nodded his approval.

"You're right," he answered. "It's too risky, and the world can't afford to lose the professor. I expect we shall have to rope him up to make him stay behind. But it isn't fair to him and the other fellows. We three will see it through."

"Teddy looks otherwise," said Fordham. "Don't you like it?"

"Well, by thunder, I do and I don't!" said the engineer. "Somehow, it don't seem the thing to interfere with a man's liberties too much. We're all volunteers, though some of us get paid. It seems a pity to turn tail. Let them all have a say in the matter, Mr. Maurice. I'm going to run this old tank to the Pole or bust it. If you send Mr. Von Haegel back, he'll do something desperate. Let 'em please themselves."

It was decided to take the engineer's advice. Lance and Maurice spent the night in the wheelhouse, sharing the watch in turn. The sun came up, revealing the frozen wilderness stretching its desolate vistas on every side. Maurice took it upon himself to speak plainly to the men. They were unanimous. They would not go back.

"Plucky beggars," said Lance. "What a difference daylight makes, though. By Jove, I was as farked as a fox in a sack last night, and now I'm game for anything! I wouldn't say anything to dad."

"You'd better not, old chap. Oh, great Scotland, what's that?"

There was a terrific clatter outside the saloon. Lance and Maurice darted to the door. It was just lunch-time. In the corridor they saw a curious sight. Professor Von Haegel was sitting on the floor, snorting and rubbing his face. At his feet lay a sirloin of beef and a collection of crockery. Mr. Crooks's piercing eye was fixed on the ruins.

"Hang it, what have you been doing now? What's all this mess?" cried Morton.

Mr. Crooks pointed downwards solemnly, and hauled up his voice from the vasty depths.

"That's beef!" he growled. "Them was a dish and a tureen, and them's horseradish and gravy! Why not, sir?"

"But how the dickens—"

Mr. Crooks's eye sought the ceiling, and tried to drill a hole in it.

"I was coshed from behind, sir," he replied. "When a man is coshed from behind things will drop. Things what is dropped will sometimes bust. They have busted. Why not?"

Having spoken these words of truth and wisdom, the cook brought his eye down on the beef, and added:

"The gravy is spiled. Gravy wot is spiled is generally spiled. It was good gravy. I made it. Why not?"

"Hang the lean rascal!" said Lance. "Hurt, dad? What did you do it for?"

Von Haegel had received most of the gravy. When Lance raised him, he snorted fiercely.

"Ach, Himmel!" he gasped. "Der vind is out of me knocked, and mine vace all tingle. He open der door ven I was runnin' past, and I not see him. But I do not gare. You laugh at me, you vicked poys. You shall laugh no more. Shake hands mit me! Shake hands mit me! It is suplime, it is wonderful, it is superb! Ach, your hands!"

"Not till you've washed them," chuckled Maurice. "I prefer my gravy on my plate. What are you grunting about now?"

"He must have heard that his mother-in-law is dead, or whence his joy?" said Lance.

The professor was beaming. He kicked the beef out of the way, and danced on the dish.

"Suplime, wonderful, glorious!" he cried. "Bah! Ve haf done it, ve haf done it! Ah! Vings of Golt! Dear Vings of Golt!"

"I've got it!" shouted Lance. "He's been shooting the sun. We're farthest South."

"Yes, yes; farthest South!" shouted Von Haegel. "Sixty-dree miles, dear lads—sixty-dree miles!"

"Hurrah!" bellowed Fordham. "Take it and wash it, Lancey, while I check its figures."

The figures were correct. Wings of Gold had broken the

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record handsomely. All except Mr. Crooks shouted and cheered. William Tooter yelled louder than anyone, and when his mouth was stretched to its widest extent the cook's eye sought it, and the cook said slowly and solemnly:

"There was a mighty cave with grass growing round it. Caves is holes, and grass is herbs. That grass ought to be mowed, and the cows will eat it. Why not?"

The cold was so keen that anything like a pace was impossible. The wheelhouse was so cold that, in spite of the radiators and petroleum stove, Morgan was almost numbed. But the cold could not keep them below. The aeronet travelled about eighty miles an hour. Even at this speed the vibration was not unpleasant. Towards three o'clock, when Crooks brought up a steaming can of hot coffee, Jackson uttered a shout.

The day had been hazy, and soon after one the sun had only been a luminous circle. Now the mist rolled back like a curtain. They snatched out their binoculars.

"Mountains, by Jupiter," gasped Fordham, "and as high as the Pyrenees!"

"A volcano—a volcano!" cried the professor. "Look, mein lads!"

A plume of black wavered over one of the lower heights. Four other peaks rose majestically, and wore a gleaming cap of snow. The mist shut down as swiftly as it parted. It swirled below them in great white billows.

"I give in, by thunder!" said Morgan. "I didn't see a speck of snow on two of them."

"Confound the fog!" growled Maurice. "It looks like staying a month. How far off do you think they were?"

The atmosphere was so deceptive that the guesses differed tremendously. The lowest guess was sixteen, and the highest forty-five miles. Then tongues ran loose for ten minutes, and the excitement was intense.

Unless Morgan, Tooter, and Von Haegel were badly mistaken, there was not a vestige of snow on two of the peaks. They were absolutely confident about it. Their glimpse of the mysterious range had been so transitory, that Lance and Maurice had failed to notice the extraordinary phenomenon. But for Morgan, the sceptic, to be so convinced, convinced them all. Von Haegel puffed, snorted, and rubbed his hands. He was almost frantic with delight.

"Did I not say so?" he gasped. "Have I not all der time said so? Und why should ut be not? I haf read der story of der world in der rocks and stones. They dell no lies."

"Winking blackbirds!" muttered Tooter. "I'd trust a chink of rock sooner than Jackson."

"And I'd sooner chase yer wiv one than believe yer—not 'alf!" said the little Cockney, whose ears were sharp.

Morgan, perhaps for the first time, was interested. His incredulity had been badly shaken.

"You mean to say, sir," he asked, "that there was a time when the earth got on without a sun? I've not listened to you like I ought to have done, being a pig-headed ass."

"Hallo! Teddy is crawling down!" laughed Fordham.

"Simply tumbling!" said Lance.

"No, no; do not chaff him, dear lads," said Professor Von Haegel—"do not chaff him. But it is true, Morgan. Long, long ago, when der earth was cooling, and der crust was thin, it lay surrounded by vast crowds of warm mist. Der sun was useless. It could not pierce the vapours. Der atmosphere was like ein hothouse. Der vast seas were luke-warm. Derrible storms raged, and der mighty forests sprang oop—forests dat give us now our coal; und horrid beasts swarm in der air, in der vater, and in der terrible swamps."

Mr. Crooks had his unwinking eye on the professor.

"I have seen a swamp," he grunted, "and there was frogs in it. They were fond of croaking. Why not?"

"Shut hup, yer long clothes-prop, or I'll chase my fist over yer!" said Jackson.

"And there was newts also," growled the unabashed Crooks, turning his withering gaze upon the Cockney, "but they weren't so ugly as you. Why not?"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" tittered Mr. William Tooter. "Why not? is good."

"Oh, be quiet, men!" said Lance. "If there were any monsters in those ancient swamps uglier than the three of you, it's a blessing they're extinct. Go on, dad! Teddy is all ears."

It was impossible to offend the old German. He shook his brainy head chidingly at Crooks.

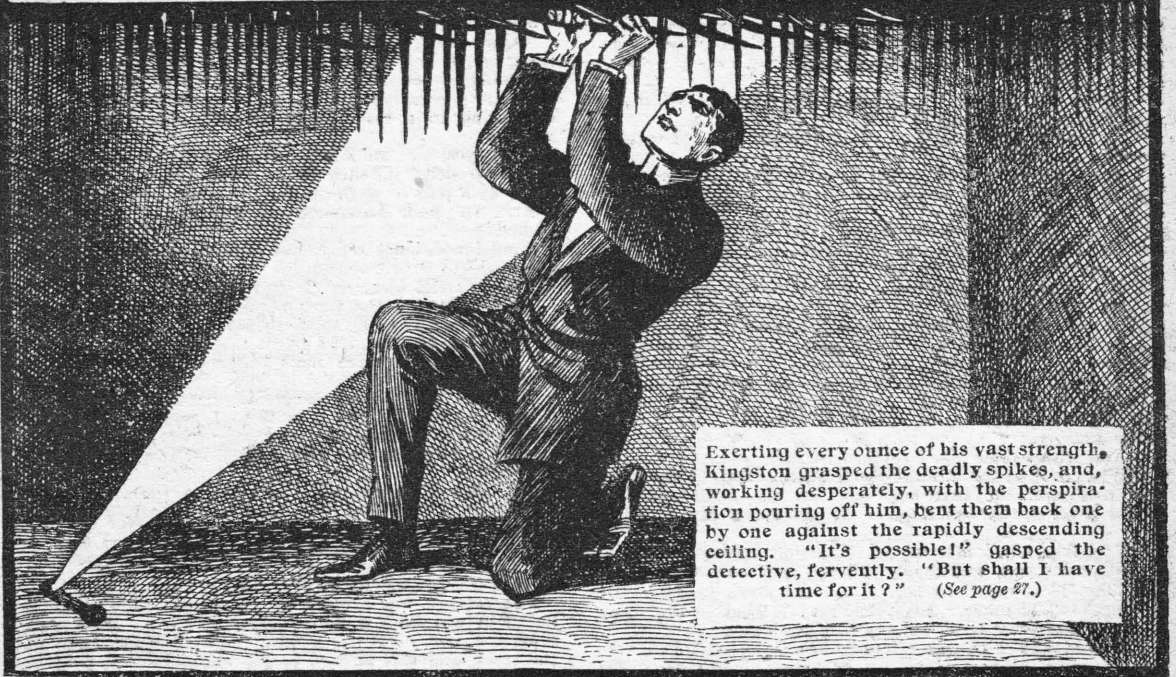
"Fill mein pipe, Lance," he added, "and do not be angry. Let us all be happy, and you shall laugh at me always. I must not be learned, and I must speak simply. Der world was young at der time I speak of, but it was very old, all der same. Der great beasts were of the lizard kind. I will gif you der names of a vew of dem."

(This thrilling adventure story will be continued in next week's issue of "The Gem" Library. To avoid disappointment order your copy well in advance.)

A Grand, New Series of Short Complete Stories, introducing Frank Kingston, Detective and his Boy Assistant Tim.



Skill Against Cunning!



Exerting every ounce of his vast strength, Kingston grasped the deadly spikes, and, working desperately, with the perspiration pouring off him, bent them back one by one against the rapidly descending ceiling. "It's possible!" gasped the detective, fervently. "But shall I have time for it?" (See page 27.)

CHAPTER 1.

A Mysterious Communication.

"**T**HANK you, Tim! They will do there." Frank Kingston, the famous detective, looked up from his newspaper, and smiled at Tim Curtis. The youngster had just entered the room with a batch of letters, and he laid them on his master's desk.

"Anything else, sir?" he inquired.

"No, nothing else, young 'un."

Tim retired, looking rather disappointed. His greatest ambition was to help his master in a real case. Of course, he was delighted at being page-boy to Frank Kingston, but Tim recollected the many adventures he had gone through when Kingston was fighting the Brotherhood of Iron, and, like *Oliver Twist*, Tim longed for more.

Kingston rose from his chair, and picked up the small pile of letters. The top one was written in a neat lady's handwriting, and he placed it in his pocket, with a smile.

"From Dolores," he murmured. "I'll read that later!"

Kingston was a firm believer in the maxim of business before pleasure, so he glanced over the other letters. One envelope was of cheap manufacture, while the writing upon it was written by an evidently unpractised hand. The detective turned it over.

"This looks the most interesting of the bunch," he told himself, ripping the flap back. "Marked 'urgent,' too. I wonder—"

He had unfolded the letter before him, and paused as he commenced reading it. His calm, unemotional face showed

no signs of what thoughts were passing through his mind. But when he read the letter through a soft whistle escaped his lips.

He examined the letter minutely.

"Yes, it's genuine enough," he decided, "and I'm quite curious to know what trouble this is that Mr. Lawrence refers to. He gives no details, and as I don't know his address I shall have to keep the appointment if I want to satisfy my curiosity."

He glanced through the letter again. It contained very few words, and these were written in a scrawly, uneven hand, plainly proclaiming the writer to be a member of the upper working-class.

"Dear Sir,—I hope and trust you won't be offended with me for writing this note, but hearing of your marvellous triumphs, I could not overcome the temptation to write. Before Heaven I swear there is a murder being committed in this village, a slow, diabolical murder. I daren't put anything on paper, sir, so will you see me? I will be at the cross-roads near the station, a mile from Little Aspall, at two o'clock to-day (Wednesday). It's urgent, sir, terribly urgent, and I'm afraid of going to the police.

"JOHN LAWRENCE, Little Aspall, Herts."

Kingston laid the sheet of paper on his desk, and stood for a few moments, thinking deeply. Suddenly, he glanced up at the clock, and saw that the time was ten-thirty.

"I'll go," he declared suddenly. "The thing may lead to nothing, but, somehow, the idea of this fellow making this request appeals to me. I won't disappoint him."

He rang the bell, and Tim appeared.

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"Tell Fraser to be ready with the car at twelve o'clock," he said. "You, too, had better dress yourself in plain clothes. I shall want you with me."

"A case, sir?" asked Tim eagerly, with sparkling eyes.

"Yes, my lad, a case. Off you go!" Kingston smiled at the youngster's enthusiasm, and then looked up Little Aspell in the road map. It proved to be a small village a mile from the station, and forty-eight miles from London. Who John Lawrence was, and what position he occupied, remained to be seen.

At twelve o'clock precisely Frank Kingston's large landaulette glided away from No. 100, Charing Cross, with Fraser, Kingston's faithful servant, at the wheel. And a few minutes to two it came to a halt at a spot where four roads met, one mile from the village. Fraser had made inquiries, and found that these were the only cross-roads thereabouts, so no mistake was possible.

"Our friend hasn't turned up yet," exclaimed Kingston, as he stepped from the car, and found the spot to be deserted save for themselves. He had explained to Tim on the way down what the note contained, and the lad was agog with excitement.

"It ain't quite two yet, sir," Tim reminded his master.

"I— Hallo, I don't suppose this'll be him, will it?" Tim pointed up the road to the figure of an ancient farm labourer, who had just clambered over a near gate. He came towards them, and, arriving opposite the car, touched his cap respectfully, and removed an aged clay pipe from his mouth.

"Arternoon, mister!" he exclaimed wheezily. "'S'pose you're from Lunnun—eh?"

"Yes, we're from London," replied Kingston. "I suppose you don't happen to—"

"You ain't—you ain't come about Mr. Crayford's butler, 'ave you, sir?" asked the countryman, in a slight tone of awe. "Poor chap, 'e—"

"What is it you are referring to?"

"Why, ain't you 'eard, sir? There's bin a murder in this 'ere village to-day, there 'as! Young Lawrence, 'oo's bin butler to ole Mr. Crayford for nigh on ten year, was found in the church spinney stabbed to death! Sakes, mister, I dunno wot things is a-comin' to, that I don't!"

Kingston gave Tim a meaning glance, his own face very serious.

"Was this young butler's name John Lawrence?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, sir, that's 'im, or, rather, it were 'im," said the old fellow heavily.

"And where does Mr. Crayford live?"

"Why, over at the Grange yonder, sir. Straight along this 'ere road, an' the fust big 'ouse on the right-and side. You'd never credit wot a queer ole gen'leman Mr. Crayford be—"

"Probably not," interrupted Kingston briskly. "Here's a shilling for you, and thanks for the information!"

"Why, bless me!" exclaimed the old man, gazing at the shilling. "Thankee, sir, thankee! That's the way. Straight 'long that road, an' the fust big 'ouse!"

Kingston and Tim were already in the large Rolls-Royce, and it went gliding away up the road indicated. The Grange was reached in a few moments, and as Kingston walked up the garden-path he noted that the place was in a state of dilapidation. The house was an old one, creeper-covered, and it was surrounded by a high wall.

In response to Kingston's ring the door was opened by a raw country youth, evidently new to his job. Kingston was informed that Mr. Crayford was at home, and after waiting a few moments in the hall he heard a footstep on the stair. The individual that was approaching him was, indeed, a queer-looking character.

A thin, round-shouldered little man, with thick, untidy hair and whiskers, pure white. His face was wizened and wrinkled, and his age might have been anything from sixty-five to eighty.

"Mr. Kingston, I think my servant said," he exclaimed, in a deep, vibrating voice. "May I ask why you have paid me this visit?"

"I was near the village, and happened to have a few words with an old countryman," replied Kingston truthfully. "I hear your butler, Lawrence, has been—"

"Good gracious me, sir! Surely there was no need to come pestering here!" exclaimed Mr. Crayford testily. "First the police, then a reporter, and now you. Upon my soul, it is too bad! What have I to do with the matter? Simply because the man happened to be in my service, does that say why I should satisfy every curious inquirer? Good-afternoon, sir!"

The queer old man angrily held the door open, and Kingston had, perforce, to leave the house. He walked slowly to the roadway, taking note of everything in the

Grange grounds, finally passing through the heavy, wrought-iron gates.

"To the village, Fraser!" he ordered briskly.

"Right, sir!"

"There's something about this affair I don't like," said Kingston, when the car was once more moving. "It is a great pity, Tim, that Lawrence should have been killed before I could learn his secret. Poor fellow, it proves how true his story was. It proves that the men he suspected suspected him in turn, and killed him before he could give the game away!"

CHAPTER 2.

An Important Clue—A Diabolical Trap.

"THAT'S the spot, sir; just under them bushes!"

It was Parkins, Little Aspell's one and only constable, and now they were standing in the church spinney at the precise spot where John Lawrence had met his death. The ground was private property, so there were no curious onlookers.

"The poor chap's lyn' at the George and Dragon now, sir," proceeded Parkins importantly. "It only 'appened last night, sir, though the body wasn't found till about nine o'clock this mornin', when old Davis, the sexton, was a-passin' through. Bad business, sir—mortal bad!"

"Quite so," agreed Kingston, who was on his knees in the grass, closely examining certain marks, which were quite unintelligible to Parkins and Tim. "You say the local inspector's been here? Of course, he saw these footprints?"—pointing to a set of very distinct footprints in the soft ground.

"Oh, yes, sir; an' his conclusion seems to be about right. A tramp done it, sure as anything. Them footprints are made by a pair o' worn-out ragged boots, just as a tramp 'ud wear. An' poor Lawrence was found with all his pockets picked!"

Kingston did not reply, but walked round in a circle with a thoughtful expression on his immobile face.

"What's the idea, sir?" inquired Parkins, puzzled.

"I'm following the track of the murderer," replied Kingston shortly. Then he suddenly stood upright. "Constable," he said, "I want you to go to the George and Dragon and see if there are three nails missing from Lawrence's left boot-heel."

A half-crown changed ownership, and Parkins set off briskly, telling himself that the gent from London was a real sport. Meanwhile Kingston continued his investigation.

"What 'ave you sent old red-nose off for, sir?" asked Tim shrewdly.

"Because I do not wish everyone in the village to know my business," replied the detective grimly. "This is a graver matter than they think—far graver."

Kingston paused and looked round him.

"Ah!" he exclaimed with satisfaction. "Tim, run over to that cottage, and borrow a rake, will you?"

The cottage was a good two hundred yards up the road, but Tim was back again in three minutes. He found that Kingston had procured a long piece of wood from one of the trees, and this he tied to the rake-handle to lengthen it.

"Now we shall very probably make an interesting discovery," he said, and walked across to a small pond close by. It was narrow, and, standing on one bank, Kingston was able to drag the rake along the muddy bottom. After four unsuccessful attempts the rake dragged heavily, and at last a much worn and large-sized boot came to light, followed almost immediately by its fellow.

"Clue No. 1!" murmured the detective. "Now we'll follow the trail of the man with the rubber heels—the real murderer of poor Lawrence."

Tim was agog with excitement, and followed his master down the road with eager interest. It was a lonely lane, bordered on either side with high banks and thick hedges. The road was sandy, and Kingston had no difficulty in following the trail.

Presently they came to a halt before a six-foot wall, into which a small wooden door had been built—a stout oak affair. It was locked.

"I had an idea it was so the whole time. This wall, young 'un, surrounds the grounds of the Grange, and my queer old friend, Mr. Crayford, who was so snappy to me, could tell a deal more of this foul business than he chooses."

"What, do you think he did it, sir?"

"I don't say that," replied Kingston, "but I mean to get over this wall to-night, Tim, and make a thorough investigation. For the present we can do nothing, so what do you say to the idea of tea?"

"It's a jolly good 'un, sir!" grinned Tim.

The day was already beginning to draw in, and the clear aspect of the sky told that there was no rain threatening. At ten o'clock that night the stars were shining brightly,

save where a few fleecy clouds hid them from view. The lane which ran along beside the south wall of the Grange was silent and deserted.

Silent and deserted, that is, except for two forms who silently made their appearance a few minutes later. They were Frank Kingston and Tim, and in a very short time the pair were standing in the grounds of the old house, which could be seen against the sky-line, with its old-fashioned chimney stacks and gabled roofs.

Leaving Tim outside, Kingston chose one of the smaller windows, and although it was securely fastened, he had it open, with no noise, at the expiration of two minutes. As soon as he entered he produced his pocket electric torch, and flashed the powerful light around.

The room was furnished, but evidently never used. From this he passed to a kind of lobby, continuing up a broad corridor, which was divided by a heavy baize door. He flashed his light into every room as he passed, but they were all deserted. Then, at the very end, was a door stouter than the rest, and fitted, unlike the others, with a new-fashioned, patent lock.

A locked door always has a certain fascination about it, and the detective was very soon fitting his bunch of fine skeleton keys into the lock. Three attempts were unsuccessful, but at the fourth the lock gave a click, and the door swung open.

Kingston was calm and easy of mind, and he paused for a moment to listen. Nothing could be heard but the faint rustling of the trees outside, and, his torch ready, he stepped into the room.

And then a startling thing happened.

Almost on the second after he had stepped over the threshold a loud snap sounded, followed by a heavy fall. Kingston twirled round like lightning, and then drew his breath in sharply, as he saw in the cold light of his lamp a huge iron shutter, which had fallen into place over the doorway, making exit absolutely impossible. He flashed the light round the room, and saw that it was small, absolutely bare, and had no other exit—not even a window. He was trapped!

He heard a sound behind him, and at the same time a gleam of yellow light shot into the room. Kingston turned his head, and saw, framed in a tiny square near the ceiling, the wrinkled, gloating face of Mr. Jonathan Crayford!

CHAPTER 3.

The Only Hope—Escape—A Foul Plot Exposed.

"GOOD-EVENING!" exclaimed Frank Kingston, in no way losing his self-possession. "I feel I am forced to admit, Mr. Crayford, that at the present moment you hold the trump card."

"At the present moment, eh?" snarled the old man, with a deep chuckle. "You interfering fool! Do you think you will ever leave that room alive? Do you think you will ever see the light of day again?"

Kingston smiled.

"I was under that impression, certainly," he replied easily. "I had no wish to end my existence so abruptly, and—"

"Enough!" snapped Crayford. "You are caught in a death-trap, do you hear? A death-trap! Look above your head."

Crayford laughed loudly, and with a snap closed the opening through which he had been talking. Kingston flashed his light above, and, in spite of his consummate calmness, started. The whole ceiling was covered with long twelve-inch iron spikes.

"What a foul trap! There's no— Good heavens!"

Kingston uttered the last words as he saw the whole ceiling begin to slowly, very slowly, descend. In five minutes it would be all over; nothing could save him from those deadly spikes, for they covered every foot of the ceiling, and would surely pierce his body in half a dozen places.

Even then Kingston's amazing coolness did not desert him. He grasped one of the spikes firmly, and then, exerting every ounce of his terrific strength—strength equal to that of three ordinary men—bent it, like a piece of wire, back close against the heavy oaken ceiling.

"It's possible," he gasped fervently. "Shall I have time?"

Another of the spikes was treated in the same manner—another, and another; and all the while the ceiling was descending lower. It was a race with death—a race that might even yet be lost.

The electric torch had been set on the floor, and its rays clearly showed Kingston how many of the spikes he had turned back. The perspiration poured from him in a manner that would have amazed his personal friends, for Kingston had never in his life before exerted his strength as he was doing now. He was using it to the last ounce, and the task he was performing was almost incredible. Yet he never paused for breath; to have paused would have been fatal.

He was on his knees now, and his task was only half-

completed. Desperation allowed him to continue the terrible battle, and with deadly regularity the spikes were turned back. At last he lay on his back, his breath coming in great gasps, and only two more of the wrought-iron points remained to be dealt with. They were done.

Kingston himself, too, was almost in a similar state. He lay down, absolutely spent, but a grim smile of victory was on his lips. He had beaten almost certain death; he had won an almost impossible fight. With a dull thud the movable ceiling touched the floor—or, rather, the remaining spikes did so. Being a foot high, the space Kingston had cleared just allowed him to lie there unhurt, with dozens of the deadly things all around him. But he, in the haven he had prepared, lay untouched.

The ceiling, after two minutes, slowly began to ascend, and Kingston was glad of the respite. He recovered his breath quickly, and by the time the sliding door shot up and admitted the hawk-like figure of Jonathan Crayford, he was ready for anything.

The villain strode in, holding a lighted lantern before him. And then he uttered a shrill shriek of terror and staggered backwards, for with one leap Kingston had sprung to his feet and grasped hold of the old man's collar.

"Now, you scoundrel," he exclaimed sternly, "perhaps you will admit I was not too sanguine a short while ago! We may as well dispense with this—and this!"

As the detective uttered the last words he gave a violent tug at Crayford's beard and hair. Both came away and revealed a cringing, cowering man of about forty years of age. Terror shone in his eyes.

Kingston released him, and he staggered against the wall, dazed, too terror-stricken to resist. In two strides Kingston was out of the room. He pulled the door to with a snap, so that it locked.

Then the detective hurried upstairs. On the first landing he saw one of the squares in the fumed oak panelling open. It was the secret entrance to a hidden chamber in the old house, which Crayford had left open while he went below.

Kingston had known from the very first that Crayford was no old man, and this alone had told him what to expect. A few steps and he came to a dimly-lighted room, bare and cheerless. On a bed lay an exact counterpart of Jonathan Crayford, but this man was thin and weak. He was, as a matter of fact, the real Jonathan Crayford.

Kingston found that he was too ill to speak to him, and so, with a swift glance round the room, he rejoined Tim. One hour later the murderer of John Lawrence was safely lodged in the village lock-up.

"You see, Tim, the scoundrel who nearly ended my life was, in reality, a man who had served Mr. Crayford as secretary ten years ago," explained Kingston, as the Rolls-Royce landaulette glided towards London. "The old chap was a miser, and all his fortune he kept in gold and notes in the house—where, no one knew. In some manner this secretary got to know of the secret chamber, and evolved a diabolical scheme when he returned after a nine-years' absence in America."

"You mean, sir, he thought of killing Mr. Crayford?"

"Exactly, young 'un! He meant to kill the old man and take his place in the house. Being a recluse, the deception would never have been found out, but for Lawrence, who evidently suspected something, and communicated with me."

"But why didn't this secretary chap kill the old man right off, sir?"

"Because Mr. Crayford, being a strong-willed man, and a miser into the bargain, refused to reveal the hiding-place of his wealth. The secretary was slowly starving him to death, thinking by that means to force the secret from him. It was a daring scheme, but, thanks to poor Lawrence, the scoundrel will hang for his misdeeds!"

"But about that there room, sir, with all them spikes?"

"That was built by Mr. Crayford himself," replied Kingston lazily. "The old chap's one dread was that of burglars, and so he built a very efficient trap, although I doubt whether he would have used it except as a means of terrorising anyone who broke in."

"Efficient, sir?" exclaimed Tim, with a grin. "It might 'ave been efficient to any burglar chap, but it'd take a blessed lot more than that to kill you, sir!"

"I don't know so much about that, Tim," answered Kingston gravely. "Without exaggerating, it was the nearest shave I've ever experienced!"

THE END.

(Another thrilling, complete adventure story of Frank Kingston, Detective, next Tuesday, entitled: "At Turn of Tide." Order your "GEM" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 208.

NEXT WEEK: "THE SCHOOLBOY NIHILIST!"

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Six Hundred Correspondents for One Reader!

Here is a letter from one of my girl chums, which indicates the astounding popularity of Our Correspondence Exchange amongst readers in every part of the Empire. Miss Williams's request for a correspondent was inserted in the Chat Page in the ordinary way, with the wonderful result that she has received no fewer than six hundred replies! This is Miss Williams's letter:

"30, Opal Street,
Kennington Park Road.

"Dear Editor,—I noticed in your Chat Page that a great number of 'THE GEM' readers are following my example. I have a great number of correspondents. If any of your girl readers are in need of a chum, will they kindly write to me, and it will be a pleasure for me to hand over some of my correspondents, both girl and boy chums, and would they please write their name and address in full. My letters have now reached to over 600.

"Yours truly,
"GRACE EVELYN WILLIAMS."

"P.S.—Will Bessie F. kindly correspond with me?"

You are evidently a very popular young lady, Miss Williams! No doubt the publication of your letter will have the desired effect.

What a Teacher says of "The Gem."

Here is a letter from one of my young lady readers, holding a responsible position in life, who pays a frank tribute to what she knows to be a paper full of nothing but the amusing, interesting, and above all, innocent and healthy reading matter that a good story-paper ought to contain. This is what Miss Lockley says:

"Sunningdale,
"King's Norton,
"Warwickshire.

"Dear Editor,—I see in our Chat each week that you have plenty of letters from Gemites, and so I am sending one more to add to your lists of correspondents. I am one of your girl readers, and have been for several years. I am twenty years of age, and spend my time coaching boys for the entrance exams. All my pupils read THE GEM, at my recommendation, and we all agree that there is only one word fit to describe it, and that is 'ripping.' I always look at our Chat Page first. I think it is a splendid idea for keeping the readers united. I also read 'The Magnet,' but not regularly. I have not missed my weekly GEM for years.

"I like all the Terrible Three, but I must say I am particularly interested in Kerr, partly because he is of the same nationality as myself.

"I have done, and am still doing my best to encourage

my boy and girl chums to read THE GEM, and I do so with an easy mind, because I know that nothing in the paper could offend the most fastidious of readers. The moral standard is so high and so well maintained that it helps boys to strive to live honourable and decent lives, without the preaching they all so much detest.

"I should be pleased to receive an answer, or letters from any boy Gemite who cares to write to me—any age—and the more the merrier. I am interested in all sports, music, electricity, and I collect postcards and cigarette cards.

"I shall be glad if someone will write, as I am rather lonely.

"Wishing you every success with your papers, I remain,
"Your sincere reader,
"WINIFRED A. LOCKLEY."

Very many thanks for your most welcome letter, Miss Lockley. I much appreciate your high opinion of THE GEM, and I hope that a closer study of "The Magnet," gained by the regular reading of it, will cause you to form an equally high opinion of our famous little companion paper. I feel sure that the publication of your letter will ensure your loneliness being cheered by congenial correspondence.

Replies in Brief.

"Jack Blake," Cork.—Thanks for your letter, which interested me very much. I am afraid that your idea of a series of "Fashion" articles and hints would hardly be popular enough with the great bulk of my readers to be included in this page. I am glad you like the "Miniature Magnet" Competition now running in our companion paper; you will see that your request for a GEM competition has already been fulfilled.

R. Lancaster, Burnley.—Thanks for your interesting letter. There are a large number of quiet hobbies open to your choice. Stamp, crest, or postcard collecting, fretwork, photography, wood-carving, cabinet-making, book-binding, model-making, picture-frame making, etc. Handbooks on practically all these hobbies can be obtained from L. Upcott Gill, Bazaar Buildings, London.

"A True Turkish Gemite," Constantinople.—I was very interested to receive your letter, and am very glad to learn how much you enjoyed reading the tales of Frank Kingston. You will, I think, be particularly interested in the thrilling stories, dealing with the further adventures of this popular character, which are now running. The suggestion you make interests me, but I am not thinking of making such drastic changes as this would entail at present. I shall be glad to hear from you at any time.

Back Numbers Offered and Wanted.

Any reader requiring back numbers of "The Magnet" Library, "Marvel," "Union Jack," and "Pluck," etc., should apply to John Bentley, 5, June Street, Blackburn, who has a lot to dispose of, and who would exchange them for halfpenny issues of THE GEM Library.

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Master Ernest Grover, of 9, Belmont Park Road, Leyton, has Nos. 100 to 188 of THE GEM and "The Magnet" Libraries which he wishes to dispose of.

Will any reader let W. H. T., of 22, Albert Street, Regent's Park, N.W., have Nos. 42 (halfpenny series), 51, and 60 (penny series), of THE GEM Library?

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If R. M., of 5, Hunter Street, Newcastle, New South Wales, cares to write to James Cape, 31, Strand Street, Newtown, Mountain Ash, Glam., Wales, he will be able to obtain any back numbers of THE GEM between 57—61, 63—108, 145—154, 158—181.