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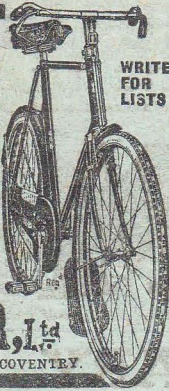


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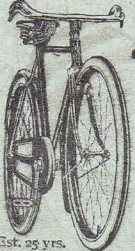


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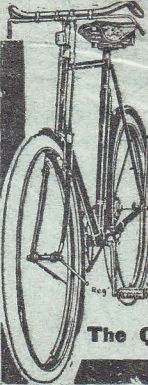
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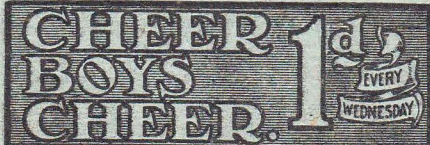
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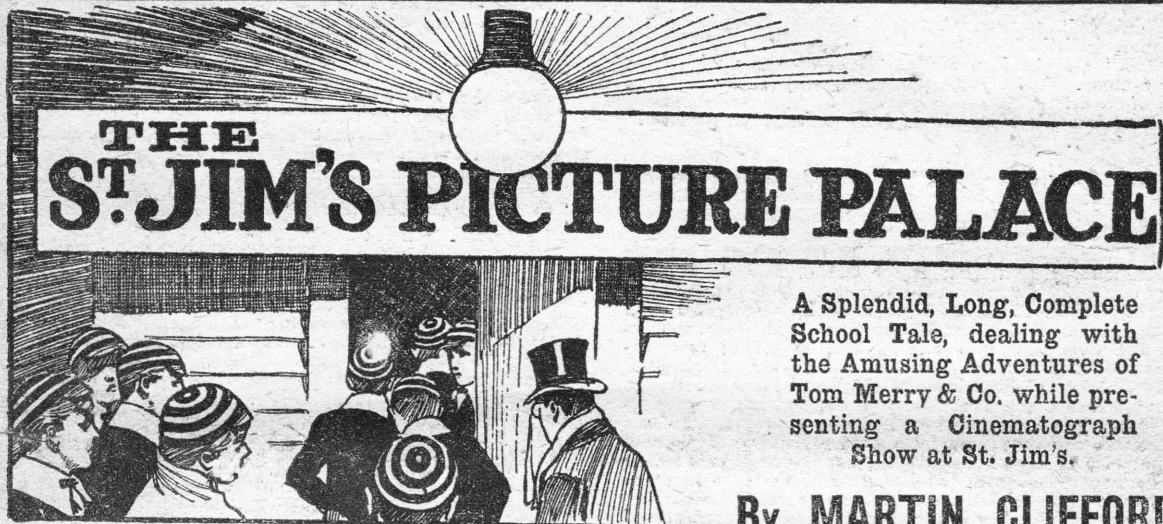
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Tom Merry & Co. while pre-
sented a Cinematograph
Show at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Tom Merry's Compact.

"GENTLEMEN—" bawled Tom Merry.
 "Hear, hear!"
 "Gentlemen—"
 "Yah!"
 "Shut up!"
 "Order!"
 "Gentlemen, we are met together—"
 "Rats!"
 "Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry, of the Shell Form at St. Jim's, broke off with an excited, crimson face, and glared at the tumultuous crowd of fellows round him. He was supposed to be addressing a meeting of the St. Jim's Junior Cricket Club, in his capacity of captain of that august body, but the august body did not seem to be in a mood to listen to its captain just then.

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose, while his chums, Manners and Lowther—the other two partners in the famous firm known to St. Jim's as the Terrible Three—beat violently with a couple of cricket-stumps on the desk which was serving the orator for a platform.

"Order, you duffers!" howled Manners. "Chuck it!"
 "Shut up, and let Tommy speak!" bawled Lowther.

The din, however, continued for some time before the efforts of the Terrible Three to make themselves heard had any perceptible effect, but at last the excited meeting calmed down a bit.

"Have another go, Tommy!" remarked Jack Blake, the leader of the Fourth Form juniors in the School House.

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Blake's elegant chum, who was commonly known as the Swell of St. Jim's. "Yaas, wathah, deah boy! Pitch it to them stwaight, you know!"

"What-ho!" said Tom Merry with determination. "Now, look here, you asses—"

"Order, order!"

"I—I mean look here, you fellows," the orator corrected himself hastily. "You know what we've called this giddy meeting for—to discuss ways and means of raising some funds for the Junior Cricket Club."

"Hear, hear!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "As captain of the club—"
 "Yah!"
 "Shame!"

"As captain of the club," repeated Tom Merry firmly, "I think it is up to us all to pile in and raise the oof necessary to buy all the new things we want for the season, and if any chap present has got any ideas for raising the wind except by us all subbing together, now's the time for him to get up and say so."

"Hear, hear!"

As Tom Merry jumped down off the Form-room desk, a keen-faced, unpleasant-looking junior, with a sneering smile on his thin lips, pushed his way up to the desk.

Blake looked at him with a frown, and growled.

"Oh, buzz off, Levison! We don't want any of your jaw!"
 Levison of the Fourth gave a sardonic grin. Levison's little ways had long ago earned him the title of the cad of the School House, but lately a narrow escape from expulsion had given him a severe fright, and a genuine improvement in his conduct had been noticed. Unfortunately, however, the effect of his fright had begun to wear off, and the unpleasant side of the junior's nature to show itself again. And now it was quite the old Levison who was giving vent to his spiteful resentment against fellows more decent than himself—against Tom Merry & Co., to whom he had made such protestations of his determination to turn over a new leaf.

"I dare say not," Levison remarked coolly. "But I'm going to have my say, all the same."

"Look here, Levison—"

"Oh, let the cad spout if he wants to, Blake," said Tom Merry in disgust. "Fair play, you know, even for cads."

Next Thursday:

"THE NEW HOUSE RIVALS!" AND "WINGS OF GOLD!"

"Oh, all right," muttered Blake. "But Levison fairly makes me tired."

Undisturbed, apparently, by these remarks, Levison hoisted himself on to the improvised platform, and stood there coolly surveying the crowd of juniors swarming beneath him.

There was a yell, partly of derision, and partly of approval.

"Go it, Levison!"

"On the ball!"

"Get down, you rotter!"

"Buzz off!"

"Rats!"

Levison remained unmoved, cool as ice.

"Look here, you chaps," he began, with the same sneering smile playing about his thin features as he spoke. "You've heard what Tom Merry has just said. The club is in need of funds."

"Go hon!"

"We know that!"

"And Tom Merry thinks it's up to us to raise them somehow."

"That's so."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well," said Levison coolly, "I don't agree with Tom Merry there. I ask you, gentlemen, why is the club in need of funds?"

"Sure, 'cos it's stony the club is entirely, ye gosssoon!" put in Reilly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why is the club stony?" continued Levison calmly. "Why, because Tom Merry and his precious friends made a mess of the St. Jim's Empire wheeze, and let it be mucked up by a set of fags—that's why!"

There was a terrific yell from the meeting at Levison's bold indictment, and Tom Merry & Co., in spite of their indignation, felt themselves turning red. Well they remembered the failure of their great scheme for raising the wind for the benefit of the cricket club funds. Their attempt to turn the wood-shed into a music-hall by giving two performances of a variety show daily had been wrecked by Wally D'Arcy and his friends of the Third Form, to avenge a fancied insult, and Tom Merry & Co. had had to give up the idea without having benefited the club funds to any appreciable extent. These facts were certainly not pleasant to the pride of Tom Merry & Co., but it was grossly unfair for Levison to attribute the low state of the club funds to the failure of their well-meant scheme to raise the wind.

The uproar following Levison's accusation was terrific, and Levison took advantage of it to play his last card.

"That's how it is, you chaps," he bawled, "and what I say is this—Tom Merry calls himself captain of this club, so it's up to him to get it out of its present low water, or resign."

Jack Blake made a furious rush at the desk, but Levison, having shot his bolt, skipped down in time to escape him.

The meeting was in a state of wild excitement. The juniors were not in the habit of paying much attention to what Levison, the cad of the Fourth, said as a rule, but the words he had just uttered seemed to strike home to them—to reveal an aspect of the affair that they had not thought of before. The idea—unreasonable as it was—of holding Tom Merry responsible for the lack of funds appealed to the more ill-natured and jealous among them, while others fell in with it in a spirit of pure mischief. Besides, if the blame could be landed upon the captain, the disagreeable necessity of a whip-round might perhaps be avoided. Thus it was that the popular hero of the Shell found himself for once the object of a hostile demonstration.

There was a roar of voices.

"Levison's right!"

"It's Tom Merry's fault!"

"Who mucked up the St. Jim's Empire?"

Tom Merry jumped up, blazing with indignation, while his chums looked on helplessly.

"Look here, you asses!" he bawled.

"Yah!"

"Rats!"

"You're no good as captain!"

"Look here, you set of dummies——"

"Oh, scat!"

"Resign, resign!"

"You—you howling duffers!" shrieked the exasperated captain. "What the dickens do you mean?"

"We mean that we're fed up with having no funds and a rotten captain!" said Levison insolently. "Aren't we, you fellows?"

"What-ho!"

"Rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You—you giddy asses!"

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Levison grinned ill-naturedly.

"And this meeting calls on you to think out a wheeze for raising funds, or else to resign the captaincy!" he exclaimed. "We're fed up, and we think it's quite time something was done."

"Hear, hear!" roared the meeting.

Tom Merry glared speechlessly for a moment, and then burst into a half-angry laugh.

"Blessed if I shouldn't be glad to resign!" he exclaimed.

"It's not much fun captaining a lot of silly, ungrateful duffers, anyway."

"Look here——"

"Order, order!"

"Hanged if you kids deserve a decent captain at all," went on Tom Merry, with emphasis. "If it wasn't that I know jolly well you'd make a rotten hash of the whole thing without me, blessed if I wouldn't resign!"

"Faith, an' it's too modest ye are entirely, Tommy darling!" exclaimed Reilly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry firmly. "You fellows are behaving like a set of silly dummies, but I tell you what I'll do."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good!"

"Out with it!"

"Well, it's this. I'll raise ten pounds for the cricket club funds by this day fortnight, or else I resign the captaincy. I suppose that'll satisfy you duffers?"

There was a yell at once.

"Rather!"

"Good for you, Tom Merry."

"Hurrah!"

And the juniors, in high good humour, began to crowd out of the Form-room.

"Mind, we shall hold you to your promise, Tom Merry!" snarled Levison, who was deeply mortified by Tom Merry's bold stand and at the turn events had taken. "No crawling out of the bargain, you know. You stumped up the ten pounds or resign!"

"You won't find me crawling out of it, you bouncer!" retorted Tom Merry contemptuously. "I'm not a worm like you!"

"Oh, come away, Tommy, for goodness' sake!" broke in Lowther, taking Tom Merry's arm, while Manners took the other. "This is a serious matter, you know. Come along up to the study and jaw it over."

"Right-ho!"

And the Terrible Three, with grave faces, left the Form-room arm in arm.

Levison slunk out after them with a very unpleasant expression on his face. The cad of the Fourth was again the inveterate enemy of Tom Merry & Co., and determined to lose no opportunity of trying to undermine the great popularity they enjoyed throughout the junior school, or all St. Jim's, for that matter.

He had thought to have scored a triumph at the cricket meeting by forcing Tom Merry to resign, but now his little scheme stood a chance of being frustrated, after all.

Levison's thoughts were not at all pleasant as he slouched off to his study to seek solace, as was his little custom, in a forbidden cigarette.

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry's Great Idea.

"NOW," said Lowther and Manners together, as they marched their chum into the study—the famous apartment that the three shared in the Shell passage—and shut the door, "what do you mean by it?"

Tom Merry laughed cheerfully.

"Well, I had to pacify the asses somehow, I suppose," he remarked. "I couldn't let them buck against me without doing something, could I?"

"Of course, it was all a put-up job, worked by that cad Levison," said Lowther. "But look at the position now!"

"You're in for it now, Tommy, and no mistake," said Manners.

"Exactly," said Lowther solemnly. "Fairly in for it!"

Tom Merry gave a cheery laugh. His sunny nature was incapable of bearing malice, and all the resentment he had felt at the meeting against the vociferous members of the junior cricket club had quite vanished by now.

"You needn't look as glum as a pair of blessed owls over it, anyway," he remarked. "You heard the bargain I made with the club, and, of course, I've got to carry it out. All we've got to do now is to think of some wheeze for raising some cash somehow, or something like that."

"That's all!" remarked Lowther grimly.

"And very lucid, too, I must say," said Manners.



The concluding film of the entertainment showed Arthur Augustus trying on a new fancy waistcoat, and it fairly brought down the house! D'Arcy's anxious expression as he squirmed and twisted and plumed himself before the mirror, trying the effect of the garment from every possible point of view, fairly made St. Jim's roar. (See Chapter 15.)

The Terrible Three sat down in various parts of the study, and wrinkled their brows in silent thought.

There was a sudden sound of footsteps in the passage, and the next minute the door of the study was burst violently open, making the Terrible Three give a simultaneous start.

A youth of about fifteen with a beaming face rushed in. "I've got it, you chaps!" he shouted joyously. "I've got it! It's the finest thing you ever saw!"

And the new-comer capered about the study in his delight and excitement.

"What?"

"Which?"

"Where?"

Tom Merry & Co. shot out the questions in one breath.

"My new invention!" exclaimed the visitor, who was none other than Bernard Glyn, of the Shell, the amateur inventor of St. Jim's. "My new moving-picture camera! I've finished it at last, and it's absolutely top-notch!"

"Your what?" exclaimed the Terrible Three in a breath. "My camera for taking cinematograph films," explained Glyn, calming down somewhat. "I've been at work at it for a long time, you know, and I've got it right at last."

"My hat," exclaimed Tom Merry, starting up, "a moving-picture camera! Then—then you'll be able to make your own cinematograph films of anything you like?"

"Of course, ass!"

"But what about the machine for showing the films? Have you got the apparatus for—"

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"I've got everything now, and I want you chaps to come out after dinner and help take a trial film with my new camera!" exclaimed Glyn enthusiastically. "I—Hallo, what's up? Ow, you ass! Ow!"

Tom Merry had risen from his chair and hurled himself at the astonished inventor of St. Jim's, and now, locking him in a firm embrace, was waltzing him round the room at a dizzy speed.

"Ow! Stoppit!" roared Glyn, struggling frantically to release himself. "Are you off your blessed rocker, you ass?"

Tom Merry whizzed him on without replying, and crashed into the table, and knocked it flying into the grate.

Crash!

There was a yell from Manners and Lowther.

"Stop it, you chump!"

"You're busting up the study!"

Crash!

The bookcase followed the table, and there was a fresh yell from Glyn as Tom Merry waltzed gaily on.

Manners and Lowther made a rush for their chum and his victim, and grasped them, and tore them apart at last.

Glyn looked quite dazed by this time.

"Now, you silly chump!" roared Lowther, as he and Manners pinned their gasping chum against the wall by the shoulders. "What do you mean by it? Are you dotty, or what?"

"Must be absolutely off your rocker?" growled Manners.

Tom Merry laughed breathlessly.

"Ha, ha!" he gasped. "Can't you see?"

"I can see a silly ass!" howled Glyn.

"See what?" yelled Lowther.

"See which?" roared Manners.

"Ha, ha! Why, c-can't you s-see the wheeze?" gasped Tom Merry. "The—the cricket club scheme, you know!"

"Well, what about it?" shouted Lowther, giving his chum a shake in his impatience.

"What's the ass jawing about?" demanded Glyn.

"Blessed if I know!" growled Manners.

"You—you chumps!" gasped the hero of the Shell. "What—what about Glyn's latest invention, you—you duffers? What—what price the St. Jim's Picture Palace?"

Manners and Lowther started, and dropped their hands, while Glyn opened his eyes in amazement.

"The what?" he asked.

"The St. Jim's Picture Palace!" repeated Tom Merry beginning to recover his breath. "What price the St. Jim's Picture Palace for a draw—eh?"

"My hat!"

"Phew!"

"My only Aunt Sempronia!"

Manners, Lowther and Glyn uttered these expressive ejaculations together, and stared first at one another and then at Tom Merry.

"But—" began Manners feebly.

"But nothing!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It'll be the catch of the season! I know it will—I can feel it in my bones! I shall get that ten pounds in no time, too!"

"What ten pounds?" demanded Glyn. He had been too busy putting the finishing touches to his invention to go to the cricket club meeting.

Monty Lowther explained.

"Why, this silly duffer has undertaken to raise ten quid for the cricket club funds within a fortnight. Blessed if I see how—"

"You're a dense ass, Monty!" interrupted Tom Merry politely. "Why, can't you see," he went on, his blue eyes sparkling with excitement—"Can't you see what a draw a picture-palace would be at St. Jim's? The shows draw thousands of people every night in the big towns. Picture-palaces are simply booming everywhere."

"That's all very well," said Manners. "And what would the Head say? Lots of the films in those shows are rotten, low-down things, and if you're thinking of hiring them—"

"You ass!" shrieked Tom Merry. "You don't catch on yet! We're not going to hire films, dummy—we're going to make 'em ourselves here in St. Jim's with Glyn's blessed invention, of course! Subjects that will interest the fellows, like cricket and boxing, not rotten murders and burglaries and things! Savvy?"

"My hat!"

Lowther gave a sudden yell.

"Hurrah! Good old Tommy! I see the wheeze now! It's a ripper! You've got it this time, old son!"

And Monty Lowther hurled himself upon his unprepared chum's bosom and fairly hugged him.

Manners and Glyn looked equally enthusiastic.

"Blessed if it isn't a rattling good wheeze!" exclaimed Glyn. "We could rig up the wood-shed again as we did for the St. Jim's Empire, of course!"

"Rather! But we must take jolly good care that those

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blessed Third-Form fags don't muck the thing up for us again!" grinned Manners.

"What-ho!" gasped Tom Merry, struggling frantically in the embrace of Lowther. "Gerrof my neck, Monty, you dummy!"

"I will, my noble lord!" exclaimed Lowther, releasing his chum so suddenly that Tom Merry slid to the floor in a sitting position. "Hallo! Dear me! Let me help you up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you duffer, Monty!" said Tom Merry wrathfully, jumping up, and dusting down his trousers where they had come into contact with the well-worn study carpet. "What the dickens did you do that for?"

"Sorry! Your fault, though!" said Lowther blandly. "You shouldn't spring these wonderful ideas on us so suddenly, you know. The shock's too great—we can't stand it!"

"You ass!"

"My hat!" burst out Glyn suddenly. "Won't the chaps fairly flock to see themselves on the cinematograph! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What-ho!"

"I can see ourselves getting some fun out of this as well as ten pounds!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Clang—clang!

"Hallo, there's the dinner-bell!" said Glyn. "I'll bring my patent camera along here afterwards, and we'll have a try at taking a moving picture."

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry & Co. in chorus.

And the four juniors, chucking over their great scheme, hastened to obey the summons of the dinner-bell.

CHAPTER 3.

Two Brilliant Suggestions.

THE Terrible Three were no sooner back in their study after dinner than the door was kicked open, and a sturdy junior with a cheerful face walked in, followed by an elegant youth wearing a highly-polished monocle.

"Hallo, kids!" remarked Jack Blake, the owner of the cheerful face. "Coming out to the nets for a bit?"

"Yaas, wathah!" chimed in the one and only Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, his elegant companion. "Out you come, deah boys! It's not the wight thing to spend the whole aftahnoon slackin' in the studay, you know!"

"Much better form to go poking one's nose into other chaps' studies and talking rot to 'em, of course, ain't it, Gussy?" asked Lowther sweetly.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his monocle and surveyed the humorous Lowther with a great deal of dignity.

"Weally, Lowthah, I twust you are not makin' any wotten insinuash!" he remarked severely.

"Imposs.!" said Lowther gravely. "Dismiss the unworthy suspish, Algernon!"

"You're wottin', you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo!" said Glyn, marching into the study, with a tripod under one arm, and a square case in his hand. "An addition to the family, I see. Never mind, let 'em all come—the more the merrier!"

"What-ho!"

"Going to take some photos, Glyn?" inquired Blake.

Glyn chuckled.

"I am, old son."

"Good!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy approvingly. "Pway wait while I change my flannels and put on a weally decent waistcoat and collah, though, deah boy! I sha'n't keep you moah than a quarth of an hour or twenty minutes."

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"You're right there, Gussy, you won't!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We're going now. Lead on, Blake."

"Weally, deah boy, I can't consent to be photogwaphed in these flannels, which I have worn several times befoah. It's impos."

"Very well!" said Glyn gravely. "As we can't wait while you change, we must leave you out, that's all, and risk spoiling the pictures. I dare say it's just as well, as you would probably have burst the lens, anyway."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors trooped along the Shell corridor and out into the sunny quad, where the sun was shining brightly. On the way Tom Merry explained to Blake and D'Arcy that Glyn's camera was no ordinary one, outlining also his great scheme of starting a St. Jim's Picture Palace.

The chums of the Fourth were enthusiastic over the idea, and D'Arcy made a generous offer to take the whole affair out of Tom Merry's hands and superintend it himself—an offer which, needless to say, was declined with thanks by the hero of the Shell.

"It's a ripping idea!" exclaimed Jack Blake excitedly. "Blessed if I know how a Shell fish managed to think of such a wheeze! It'll knock that beastly Levison and his crew into a cocked hat!"

"Talk of angels!" whispered Monty Lowther.

Levison came round the corner of the stairs. At the sight of the merry party of juniors his thin face took on an unpleasant sneer, which, however, he managed to change into a twisted smile as he noticed Glyn in the group.

"I hear you've knocked out a new invention, Glyn," Levison remarked, in a tone of assumed friendliness. "Moving-picture camera, or something of the sort, isn't it? How does it work?"

"Find out!" growled Glyn shortly. The Liverpool lad was at no trouble to conceal his dislike to the cad of the Fourth.

"Thanks!" said Levison coolly. "Perhaps I shall; but you needn't get ratty about it!"

And Levison continued his way upstairs, while the juniors passed out into the sunny quad.

"Like that cad's confounded cheek!" growled Glyn. "He's always nosing round my blessed inventions!"

"Good thing they aren't of any value," remarked Lowther innocently. "Else he'd steal them and patent them himself, or something."

Glyn stopped short and glared at Monty Lowther.

"What's that, you ass?" he roared.

"Shut up, Monty!" murmured Tom Merry.

Lowther looked surprised.

"What's up? I only said—"

"Yes, I heard what you said, you—you blessed dummified ass!" roared Glyn. "Not valuable, indeed! Blessed lot you know about inventions—I don't think!"

Monty Lowther grinned.

"Try!" he murmured.

"Look here——" roared the exasperated inventor of the School House.

"Peace, my children!" interrupted Tom Merry pacifically.

"If that ass Lowther's going to work off a lot of idiotic jokes, I'm off!" snorted Glyn.

"It's all right, old chap, he isn't!" said Blake. "We'll jolly well bump him if he tries it on any more, won't we, chaps?"

"What-ho!" agreed the chaps heartily.

And Monty Lowther thought that he had better subside for the present, at any rate.

"Now, the question is," growled Glyn, still looking rather red and angry, as he set the tripod on the ground—"the question is, what shall we make the first moving picture of?"

"If it had not been for your wude remarks, Glyn, I should have been willin' to offah myself——"

"Rats!" growled Glyn. "We don't want to take a tailor's dummy, ass! We want a moving scene, or somebody doing something, or something."

"Nice and clearly put!" murmured the irrepressible Monty Lowther, sotto voce.

"Weally, Glyn, I should be quite willin' to do somethin'——"

"Jaw, I suppose!" remarked Glyn sarcastically. "Make a nice moving picture, wouldn't it—your jaw wagging up and down!"

"It would make a good illustration of perpetual motion, anyway!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass! I could stand in frownt of the camewah, Glyn, deah boy, and sing a tenah solo, for instance!"

"A tenor solo!" howled Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, deah boys——"

Glyn glared at the unconscious swell of St. Jim's, with feelings too deep for words. Arthur Augustus's brilliant idea that the first moving picture with the new camera should be of himself standing up in the quad, singing a tenor solo seemed to rob the amateur inventor of speech for the moment.

The juniors shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you asses——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho!"

"You—you—well, you're the limit, Gussy!" gasped Glyn, with a hopeless gesture, finding his voice at last. "That's all there is about it! You—you ought to be in a home, or something; that's where you ought to be! Blessed if you don't blessed well take the blessed cake!"

"Weally, Glyn——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Glyn stared at the swell of St. Jim's for a moment almost in wonder, and then set about erecting his new camera upon the tripod.

D'Arcy relapsed into an indignant silence, while Tom Merry & Co. wiped the tears of laughter from their eyes, every now and then bursting out into a fresh roar, relapses which drew upon the offenders glances of withering scorn from the insulted swell of St. Jim's.

When the famous camera was finally erected, Glyn gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"Now, chaps," he remarked, "what's it going to be? We want a good subject for the first film, you know."

"Yes, rather! Something that'll interest the chaps, too, you know, when its shown in the St. Jim's Picture Palace," said Tom Merry, a trifle anxiously. "Here's Herries; perhaps he'll have something to suggest."

Herries, one of the chums of Study 6 in the Fourth Form passage, came out of the School House door with a paper bag in his hand. He stared at the group of juniors surrounding the camera.

"Hallo," he remarked, "what's up? Mothers' meeting, or what?"

Tom Merry explained, and Herries cocked his head on one side and looked at the camera thoughtfully.

"So you want an idea for a good film, do you?" he remarked.

"That's it, old man!" said Blake encouragingly. "What's your suggestion? These Shell chaps want a hint from a Fourth-Former, you know, that's all."

Tom Merry & Co. and Glyn began to glare a little.

"Look here——" began Tom Merry belligerently.

Herries waved the paper bag in the air.

"It's all right; I understand," he said loftily. "I've got the very wheeze, too."

"Oh!" said Glyn, a little dubiously. "What is it?"

"It's the very ticket!" said Herries enthusiastically. "See this paper bag?"

"Yes."

"Jolly lucky I happened to have them. It's biscuits. I'm just going over to give him another lesson."

"Eh?"

"I'll make a ripping film! I'll bring him out here, and give him his lesson in front of the camera," said Herries, with great enthusiasm. "He's getting on fine, too. He can beg quite nicely, and he's beginning to die for his country like—like anything."

The juniors looked at one another blankly.

"What the dickens is the ass jawing about?"

"What on earth's he getting at?"

"Off his rocker, I think."

"Well, what do you chaps say?" demanded Herries.

"Don't you think it's a jolly good idea to take a moving picture of the old fellow going through his tricks?"

"What old fellow?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Well, of all the asses!" said Herries warmly. "Why, my dog Towser, of course!"

"Towser!" shrieked Glyn.

There was a roar from the juniors.

"Towser!"

"Your blessed bulldog!"

"That wotten beast Towzah!"

"Yes, Towser!" roared Herries defiantly. "Who the dickens did you think I meant, you dummies?"

"You—you frabjous ass!"

"You silly chump!"

"You howling duffer!"

"You—you cuckoo!"

Herries snorted wrathfully.

"You can jolly well think out your own ideas for your rotten moving pictures," he hooted. "Blessed if I ever came across such an obstinate set of asses! I'm off to give my dog Towser his lesson, anyway."

And waving his bag of biscuits defiantly at the excited juniors, Herries stamped off towards the kennels in high dudgeon.

The juniors gazed at each other for a moment speechlessly, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 226.

even Blake and D'Arcy, Herries' close chums, having nothing to say.

"Well, of all the frabjous, burbling chumps, Herries, with his blessed dog Towser, fairly takes the biscuit!" said Bernard Glyn at last, in measured tones.

And the juniors, without a single dissentient voice, agreed that he did.

Herries was a sensible fellow, as a rule, though a trifle thickheaded and obstinate when he liked. But on the subject of his famous bulldog he was, as even his study mates agreed, a trifle "cracked." Towser was as the apple of Herries' eye, and Herries could never understand that everyone at St. Jim's did not regard his favourite in the same light. For the sake of peace, Herries' chums humoured him as much as possible, though Arthur Augustus D'Arcy frequently objected to Towser, on the grounds that he had no respect whatever for a fellow's trousers.

But on this occasion the group of juniors clustered round the moving-picture camera were unanimous in agreeing that Herries had passed the limit, and many were the wrathful glances that followed that junior's sturdy figure as it disappeared across the quad, in the direction of Towser's kennel.

CHAPTER 4.

The First Film.

"NOW, look here, you chaps," said Glyn at last, when Herries had vanished; "I tell you what we'll do—we'll have a scrap."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Weally, deah boy!"

"Asses! I mean a spoof scrap—a friendly stand-up fight between two of you in front of the camera."

"Good wheeze!" said Tom Merry heartily.

"Rather! Nothing the chaps would rather see than a fight!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha! That's so!"

"It'll have to be jolly well done, though," remarked Blake dubiously. "Mustn't let the chaps see it's a spoof affair, you know."

"My hat, no!" said Glyn. "You'll have to put your beef into it, of course."

"Who will?"

"Well, you and Tom Merry are the best boxers here, except me, of course, but I shall have to be working the camera, you see," said the Liverpool lad calmly.

"Yes, I see a conceited dummy!" sniffed Blake. "Why, I'd take you on with one hand if you like, you bouncer!"

"Rats!" grinned Glyn. "And a jolly good licking you'd get, too!"

"Look here—"

"Chuck it, Blake," said Tom Merry pacifically. "I'll take you on in a friendly spar."

"But that ass Glyn—"

"Oh, rats! Glyn must work the blessed contrivance, of course. Now, what about the gloves?"

"Oh, never mind gloves, as it's only a spoof affair."

"Good!"

Glyn busied himself with the adjustment of the camera. "The old coll. will make a ripping background," he remarked. "It ought to make a jolly good picture if you two chaps play up well."

"Oh, don't you worry about that," said Tom Merry airily.

"Supposing I knock Tom Merry out by mistake, will you stop the film?" queried Blake. "Of course, I'll be careful, but you never know what may happen in the excitement of a good spar."

"Not much likelihood of that happening, though!" laughed Tom Merry. "I shouldn't worry my head too much about that, if I were you, Blake, my son."

"You never know, you know," observed Blake, with a wise shake of the head. "But of course I'll be careful."

"Thanks awfully!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Hallo, here's Herries!"

Herries came up, with Towser on a chain, and the two champions of the Shell and the Fourth Forms respectively took off their jackets and squared up with quite a professional air.

"Stand about here," said Glyn, stepping in front of the camera. "And try to keep somewhere near the same place, and not run about too much. I can move the camera about a bit, of course, but I don't want to have to do it too much, so mind neither of you gives ground too much."

Tom Merry and Jack Blake grinned at the precise instructions of the anxious inventor of St. Jim's as they took up their stand at the spot indicated by him.

The unusual sight of a couple of juniors preparing for a boxing match in the open quad, right under the windows of the School House, had attracted a number of St. Jim's

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fellows to the spot, and quite a little crowd stood round grinning.

Glyn waved them back to a respectful distance.

"For goodness' sake don't come too near and spoil the show!" he exclaimed anxiously. "I'm going to take a blessed moving-picture of these two duff—er—chaps sparring, and I don't want a crowd of duffers pushing in and spoiling the picture."

"Faith, an' it's aisy ye can be in yer mind, Glyn darlint," exclaimed Reilly of the Fourth. "We're not the bhoy's to go spoilin' an iligant fight at all, at all, nor yet a picture of wan, either!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a fight, ass!" growled Glyn. "It's just a friendly spar, that's all—but stand aside, for goodness' sake!"

"Sure an' so we will!"

"Now, start when I tell you!" shouted Glyn anxiously, beginning to wind a little handle at the side of the camera.

"Not yet!"

There was a chuckle from the interested crowd of juniors looking on.

"Faith, an' it's only a blessed barrel-organ it is, after all!" shouted Reilly, in tones of great disappointment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give us 'Home, Sweet Home,' old son!" requested Digby of the Fourth.

"Here's a penny, and mother says will you go into the next street?" yelled Wally D'Arcy, Arthur Augustus' scape-grace minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Glyn, with a red face, kept on turning the handle.

"Now!" he shouted suddenly.

There was a cheer from the crowd as Tom Merry and Blake shook hands and began to spar briskly.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Tom Merry!"

"Biff him, Blake!"

Glyn ground away at the little handle of his camera, while the two combatants hit out, countered, ducked, and danced round one another in the most workmanlike fashion. They were very equally matched, and it was a long time since they had stood up to one another in a fistical encounter. Though rival leaders of the juniors of the School House at St. Jim's, they were staunch chums, and their rivalry was of the friendliest description.

Both were keen and good boxers, and nothing loth to stand up to one another, each recognising in his opponent a foeman worthy of his steel.

"Pile in, Shell!"

"Sock it to him, Fourth!"

Tom Merry and Blake went at it hammer and tongs. The encouragement and partisan shouts of the onlooking crowd were beginning to excite them a little. The Fourth and Shell Forms were pretty equally represented among the spectators, and the feeling of Form rivalry, never very long absent from the breast of any St. Jim's junior, began to rise at the sight of the two champions doing battle so stoutly.

"Go it!"

"Hurrah!"

Jack Blake made a masterful lunge at his adversary, when his foot suddenly slipped on the grass, and he fairly ran his head on to Tom Merry's fist with a force that caused him to stagger.

There was a shout from the Shell fellows.

"Now's your chance, Tommy!"

"Go in and finish him!"

The spectators seemed to be determined to look upon the fight as anything but a friendly spar.

Tom Merry lowered his fists for a moment.

"Sorry, Blake!" he gasped.

Blake, his head swimming, recovered himself with an effort, and rushed to the attack again.

"It's all right!" he growled. "Come on!"

There was a yell from the Fourth.

"That's right, Blake!"

"Buck up!"

"You're not done yet!"

Slightly nettled by his mishap, and excited by the cheers of his supporters, the hero of the Fourth pressed Tom Merry hard, and the latter responded no less briskly.

Thud—thud—thwack!

The blows fell fast and furious, and the gladiators began to breathe hard as they stood up to one another doggedly, neither giving way an inch.

Glyn grinned as he ground the handle of his beloved machine.

"That'll make a ripping picture!" he remarked, with satisfaction. "They're going it jolly well, I must say!"

"Yaas, wathah! A little too much, deah boy, don't you think?" said Arthur Augustus anxiously, as he watched Blake

aim a really terrific drive at Tom Merry's chin, which that junior fortunately parried. "Those shoutin' asses are makin' them excited, you know!"

"You're right, Gussy!" whispered Lowther solemnly. "Don't you think you ought to stop them before they go too far?"

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye and gazed at the combatants a little dubiously.

"If you weally think it's my dutay, Lowthah——"

"Of course it's your duty, Gussy!" said Lowther, with great earnestness.

"Vevy well, then. I think, as a fellow of tact and judgment, that I weally had better stop them. They are getting quite angry."

"What-ho!"

Judging by the looks of the combatants they really were beginning to forget that it was only a friendly spar they were engaged in. They were beginning to throw all caution to the winds, urged on by the shouts of the crowd, and were hammering away at one another right lustily.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy screwed his monocle a little more tightly into his eye and stepped forward—right in front of the camera.

Glyn gave a fiendish yell.

"You ass! Gerrouth of the way!"

D'Arcy jumped.

"Weally, Glyn——"

"Where are you going, you duffer?" roared Glyn, still turning away at the handle. "Keep off the grass, can't you?"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I'm goin' to stop the beastly fight, deah boy; it's gone far enough."

Glyn gave a howl.

"You—you shrieking duffer! Keep off! You'll spoil the blessed film, you—you——"

"Wats!"

And Gussy marched on towards the excited combatants with a great deal of dignity.

Glyn groaned as he turned the handle.

"The fearful ass! He'll spoil the whole show! Just as I'm coming to the end of the film, too!"

"It's all right!" chuckled Lowther. "Keep on turning, old son! You'll see something funny in a minute to finish the picture!"

Monty Lowther was right. The lot of the peacemaker, like that of the policeman, is usually not a happy one, and Gussy's was no exception to the rule in this case. Amidst yells of protest and derision from the crowd, he pushed in between the excited combatants in the most reckless manner, with the inevitable result.

Tom Merry's fist crashed on his ear at the same moment as Jack Blake's smote him a terrific round-arm blow on the nose, and the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's let out a terrific yell, and dropped as if he had been shot.

"Yawooh!"

Tom Merry and Blake let their hands fall to their sides simultaneously, while a roar rang from the watching crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Churning away as if for dear life, Glyn came at last to the end of his film, and he heaved a sigh of relief and grinned.

"Good! Gussy's given me a fine wind-up to a rattling good film," he remarked. "The pictures ought to bring down the house when they're shown, I think."

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

There was a rush of juniors now that the film was finished, and the fallen swell of St. Jim's immediately became the centre of a grinning crowd.

After glaring first at the fallen peacemaker and then at one another, Tom Merry and Jack Blake had begun to laugh. As both bore very plain traces of the fight upon their features, the effort was rather a painful one, but the fight was obviously over, and the two heroes were shaking hands, when Arthur Augustus sat up, holding his head with both hands.

"Ow!" he groaned. "Ow! Yow! Gwool! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled the crowd.

"Oh! Ow! You feahful wuffians! Ow!"

"Sorry, Gussy! Our mistake!" grinned Tom Merry.

"What did you want to rush in between us like that for, you blessed ass?" demanded Blake.

"He wanted to stop the fight, you see!" explained Monty Lowther blandly. "And he did it! Blessed if I know what the chap's grumbling about!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you feahful wottahs! You've thwown me into a feahful fluttah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind, Gussy!" explained Glyn cheerfully. "I've got a jolly good film, you know, with a ripping end-up, thanks to you, old man!"

"Bai Jove, Glyn, you wottah, you haven't had the beastly cheek to take me on your wotten movin' pictchahs?" shouted the unfortunate D'Arcy.

"What-ho!" grinned Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! I'll give you a feahful thwashin'!" roared Arthur Augustus, struggling to his feet, and quite forgetting in the excitement the repose which is supposed to stamp the caste of Vere de Vere.

"Hold him!" chuckled Glyn, calmly proceeding to pack up his precious camera. "Don't let him loose—he's dangerous!"

A dozen hands grasped the dishevelled swell of St. Jim's and swung him back as he made a furious lunge at the Liverpool lad.

"Lemme get at the wottah!" he shouted furiously.

"Rats!"

"Bai Jove! You wude wuffians! Lemme go!"

"Some other time, Gussy!" chuckled Lowther. "You aren't safe now, you know."

"You feahful wottahs!" shrieked D'Arcy. "Welease me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound of a window being thrown up with some violence, and the angry voice of Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, rang out above the uproar.

"What's all that row about?" he roared. "D'Arcy, how dare you make such a shindy in the quad?"

There was an instant hush, and the hands released the swell of St. Jim's as the juniors began to melt quietly away. Arthur Augustus groped for his eyeglass at the end of its cord.

"Weally, Kildare," he spluttered indignantly, "I have been tweeked with gross diswespsect——"

"If I have any more row from you or any of you other young sweeps I'll come down with a cane and treat you to something else!" growled Kildare. "Buzz off at once, all of you, and you, D'Arcy, go into the house and clean yourself up at once! You're in a disgraceful state, and I'm surprisid at you!"

And Kildare slammed down his window and turned again to the work which the disturbance in the quad, had interrupted.

Arthur Augustus glared round in speechless indignation. After his well-meant efforts as peacemaker, he felt that he had indeed been hardly treated. He turned and limped into the School House in a very injured frame of mind indeed.

CHAPTER 5.

Bernard Glyn is Annoyed.

BERNARD GLYN returned to his study in high spirits. His chum, Harry Noble, the Australian, commonly known as Kangaroo, looked up as he entered.

"Had any luck, old man?" he enquired.

"What-ho! Got a jolly good film, I think!"

"What of?" asked Noble, interestedly.

"Weren't you there, then? Had a rare old time in the quad—fight between Tom Merry and Blake, you know."

Noble stared.

"My hat! I've only just come in from the carpenter's shop, but I heard a beastly row going on! What on earth were Tom Merry and Blake fighting about?"

"Oh, it was only a spoof affair—at first anyway!" grinned Glyn. "Later on they both got a bit excited and slogged away at each other like anything!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, it was funny! And Gussy provided a ripping finale to the film by rushing in between the combatants, and getting biffed by both!"

"My hat! How rich! Wish I'd been there!" chuckled Noble.

"Oh, it was great!" said Glyn with relish. "Now I'm going to collect my traps and buzz off to the dark room to develop this blessed film—Why, hallo!"

He had opened a drawer in his desk as he was speaking, and he broke off short as he glanced inside it with a puzzled frown.

"What's up?" queried Noble.

"Why, I could swear I shoved the blue paper of the drawings of my patent camera just inside this drawer when I went out," said Glyn anxiously. "The special formula I had worked out for developing the blessed films was noted on the back of the paper, too."

"Well, I haven't touched it, of course," said Noble. "Sure you put it there, old man?"

"Absolutely certain," said Glyn, in a worried tone. He began to go through the half-dozen other papers the drawer contained.

ANSWERS

"It's funny," said Noble, puzzled. "Here's Dane; perhaps he knows something about it."

A slim lad, with a dark, pleasant face, and wonderful magnetic brown eyes, entered the study quietly.

"You haven't been to the drawer for anything during the last half hour or so by any chance, have you?" asked Glyn hopefully.

Clifton Dane, the third occupant of the end study, looked surprised.

"Certainly not, Glyn, I've just come in from Rylcombe, as a matter of fact; and anyway, what reason should I have for going to your drawers at all? Have you lost something?"

"Yes I have," said Glyn, hastily going through his pockets. "No, not there! I know I left it in the drawer. It's the paper giving all the most important details of my new camera."

"Pity you didn't lock it up, if it's so important," observed the practical Noble. "Haven't you got a copy of the paper?"

"Yes, it's not that, but I haven't patented the thing yet, and I don't know whose hands the idea may not get into if it's lost. As for locking it up, you don't expect to find thieves at St. Jim's as a rule, I suppose?"

"Oh, draw it mild, old man," protested Noble. "How do you know the blessed paper's been stolen?"

"Well, it's gone, and I know it was there, so it follows it's been taken, which comes to the same thing as stealing, I suppose," exclaimed Glyn excitedly. "If I knew who it was, I'd jolly well—my hat!"

He broke off suddenly, as a new thought struck him.

"What's up now?" queried Dane.

"My hat! I believe I can guess who the rotter is!" shouted Glyn. "Levison!"

"Levison?"

"Yes, Levison! You know what a cad he is, and how keen he is after my inventions—he's tried to steal one once before!"

"Yes, but—"

"But rats! I tell you I'm practically certain of it!" said Glyn warmly. "Now I come to think of it, Levison tried to pump me about my camera when I met him on the stairs on the way out to the quad! It's Levison, for a million!"

"I should think it's quite likely—there's hardly another chap in the House cad enough to do a thing like that," said Clifton Dane quietly. "But have you got any proof?"

"Proof!" shouted Glyn. "No, but I jolly soon will have! I'll make the rotter own up—I'll hammer him till he does! Where is he? Lemme get at him!"

And the excited inventor of St. Jim's rushed from the study in search of Levison.

Dane and Noble exchanged glances.

"Hope the duffer doesn't go and make a bloomer, and find the blessed paper in his pocket, or something, after all," said Noble, a trifle nervously. "You know how keen he is about his blessed inventions."

"He seems certain enough about it, anyway," said Dane.

"And if anybody's taken it, I should say it's sure to be Levison. I vote we go after him, anyway. We may come in as witnesses or something, if he's having a row with Levison."

"Right-ho!" assented Noble heartily.

And the two chums quitted the study in the track of their enraged chum.

As they anticipated, Glyn had made straight for Levison's study, and they saw him march in without ceremony just as they got to the end of the Fourth Form passage.

The cad of the Fourth was in his study alone, as it happened, and he jumped up hastily, holding his hand behind his back, as the door suddenly flew open, and Glyn walked in without any warning knock.

Glyn sniffed as he took in the atmosphere of the little room.

"Smoking again!" he exclaimed scornfully. "What a blessed outsider you are, Levison, and no mistake!"

"Look here," said Levison, flushing a little at the scorn in the Liverpool lad's voice, but bringing his hand out from behind his back and taking a puff at his cigarette out of sheer bravado. "Did you come in here—without knocking, too—to tell me that? If so, you can get out!"

"I'll get out when I've said what I've come to say," said Glyn grimly. "And not before!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"You know what I've come about well enough, you cad," exclaimed Glyn furiously. "Where's the plan you took out of my study?"

Levison looked at the inventor coolly.

"Perhaps you will kindly tell me what you are jawing about," he remarked nonchalantly.

"You know well enough, you rotter!" blazed Glyn. "Where's the plan of my camera you've stolen? By Jove, if you don't give it back I'll—"

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And the enraged Liverpool lad took a step forward into the study threateningly.

Levison threw his cigarette-end into the grate, and skipped hurriedly round to the opposite side of the table.

"Get out of my study!" he howled. "I don't know what you're talking about! I haven't touched your blessed plans! I appeal to you, chaps," he continued, looking to Noble and Dane, who were watching from the doorway. "Take this blessed ass away—he's dangerous!"

"Rats!" growled Noble. "You deserve a jolly good licking, anyway, for being such a nasty, low, cigarette-smoking beast! I should have thought that last fright you got, when you were nearly expelled, would have made you drop your rotten habits for good, too!"

"All the same," said Clifton Dane quietly, keeping his strange, dark eyes upon the cad of the Fourth as he spoke, as if he would read what was passing in his mind, "you could hardly rag Levison without any proof, Glyn—it would hardly be ericket."

"I tell you I know he's got my drawings! I'm sure of it!" roared Glyn.

"Well, I tell you I've never seen or touched any rotten drawing; and I don't even know properly what you're raving about!" said Levison between his teeth. "I heard you'd invented some moving-picture camera or something of the sort; but I didn't believe there was anything in it, and I don't now either!"

"Don't you, you blessed sneak!" roared Glyn, making a rush round the table. "My hat, I'll jolly soon show you—"

The table crashed over, sending a pool of ink to the floor, and with a bound the Liverpool lad had closed with Levison, and his grip was upon the back of the cad of the Fourth's neck like a vice. Levison was a weedy youth of indifferent physique, while Glyn was exceptionally strong and sturdy for his age.

"Yow! Ow! Help!" yelled Levison, his coolness deserting him as he felt that iron grip upon the nape of his neck.

"Leggo! I tell you I haven't touched your rotten papers!"

"Well, I tell you I don't believe you!" said Glyn determinedly. "Here we are! Rub your face in that!"

He dragged the unfortunate Levison to where the pool of ink was glistening on the study carpet, and forced him down, first on his knees, and then on his face.

"Ow! Oh! Groo! Gerooooch!"

The remorseless inventor ground his victim's face on the carpet in the middle of the pool of inky fluid with no gentle hand, and Levison struggled and spluttered frantically.

"Poof! Ow! Pah! Grouch!"

Grind! Grind!

"There!" panted Glyn at last, red with his exertions. "Perhaps that'll teach you not to be such a cad in future!"

And he flung the inky, gasping, spluttering cad from him, and stamped out of the study.

"Bit rough on Levison, wasn't it, if he didn't take the paper?" ventured Clifton Dane, as they regained their study.

"I tell you he did take it!" bawled Glyn. "And I'm jolly well going to prove it, too, before long!"

"Anyway, the ragging won't do Levison any harm—he's such an out-and-out cad!" said Harry Noble.

And the chums of the end study left it at that, though Glyn did not explain how he was going to prove that Levison was the culprit, as he firmly believed him to be.

CHAPTER 6.

Wally & Co. are Caught.

IT was close on tea-time, and there was a general bustle of preparation throughout the studies at St. Jim's. In Study No. 1 in the Shell passage the bustle was greater than ordinarily, seven juniors altogether being engaged in the absorbing operation of making ready a feed of unusual magnitude.

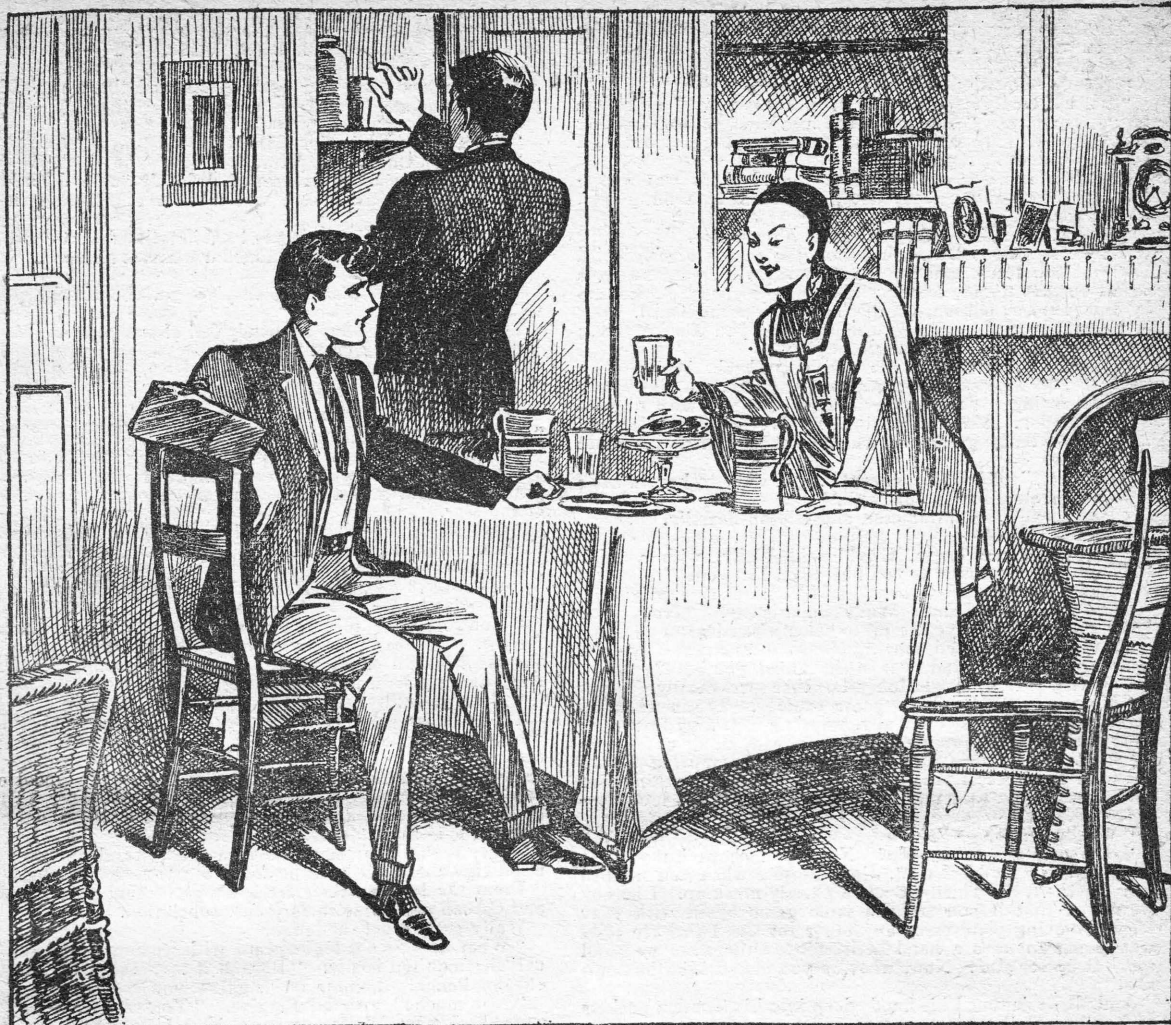
The seven were—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, the joint owners of the study; and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form.

After the affair in the quad, there was a general feeling among the famous Co.'s that the usual harmony which reigned between them should be restored, and, by way of completely effecting this purpose, there had been a great putting together of funds for a grand feed.

As the biggest of the junior studies, Tom Merry's had been selected as the scene of the spread, and Figgins & Co. of the New House had been invited as guests.

Already there was evidence that all the high feeling which had been temporarily engendered by the fight in the quad, between the leaders of the two studies, had vanished.

Tom Merry was whistling cheerfully as he jammed the kettle on the fire to boil, though his musical efforts were somewhat weird owing to the fact of his lips being decidedly puffy and swollen.



As Gilmore turned to the cupboard, Wun Lung picked up the glasses of lemonade and changed them. The manoeuvre was done so quickly, and so suddenly that Mark barely had time to see it. Mark stared at the Chinese junior blankly. (An exciting incident from "DOWN ON HIS LUCK," the splendid long, complete school tale of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars, contained in this week's issue of THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

Blake was humming to himself as he cut the bread-and-butter, in spite of the fact that his left eye was a delicate shade in green and threatened to assume a deep, purple hue before long.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had both a bruised eye and a puffy mouth, but he seemed quite oblivious to these blots on his personal appearance, as he sat on the edge of the study table, swinging his legs thoughtfully.

"Penny for your thoughts, Gussy!" said Manners.

Arthur Augustus came back to earth with a sudden start.

"Eh?"

"Penny for your thoughts!"

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Here's the penny, if you don't believe the offer's genuine," said Manners, pulling a coin out of his trousers-pocket and offering it to the swell of St. Jim's.

"No need to waste the penny, Manners," remarked Lowther. "We know what he's thinking about—the latest thing in rainbow-coloured waistcoats, of course!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Or in spotted ties!" said Digby.

"Weally, Digby—"

"Or patent shoes!" put in Tom Merry.

"You ass, Tom Mewwy!"

"Or striped socks!" grinned Blake.

"You chump!"

"Or silk toppers!" said Manners.

"You duffah, Mannahs!"

"Or coloured shirts!" grunted Herries.

"Howwies, you uttah ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gazed at his facetious chums in turn through his famous monocle.

"As a mattah of fact, you duffahs, you are quite w'ong!" he exclaimed heatedly. "I was thinkin'—"

"Of the draper's young lady in Rylcombe, then?" suggested the humorous Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothin' of the kind, Lowthah, you ass! I was thinkin' of the 1st of April last."

"Oh!"

There was a general exclamation, and the grins of the juniors became suddenly a little sheepish.

Arthur Augustus smiled quietly.

He was more fond of recalling that memorable date than were his chums—and no wonder. On that famous occasion he had made April fools of every one of his chums before the whole school in the most unmistakable fashion, when they had informed him beforehand that he was not capable of japing a kid in the Third Form. No wonder the swell of St. Jim's smiled when he thought of it!

"Ahem! All that's ancient history now, Gussy," grunted Herries. "You aren't going to rake all that blessed business up again, are you?"

"Mannahs asked me what I was thinkin' about, you know."

"Oh, rats!" growled Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Gussy's going to cackle I'm off!" exclaimed Herries with emphasis. "I can stand some things, but I'm blessed if I can stick that!"

"Weally, Hewwies, you uttah chump—"

"I think Gussy's scored this time, I must say," said Tom Merry, laughing. "Manners asked him what he was thinking about, and now he knows. Hallo! Here's Figgins & Co., I expect. Come in, Figgy!"

Footsteps sounded up the passage, and there was a perfunctory knock at the study door, which was then flung open unceremoniously.

"Wally!" exclaimed the juniors with one voice.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's minor, the scamp of the Third Form at St. Jim's, and the exact opposite in many respects to his elegant major, stood in the study doorway, backed up by Jameson and Gibson, his special chums of the Third.

"What the dickens are you doing here, you cheeky young rascal?" exclaimed Blake wrathfully.

"Yaas, wathah! What do you want heah, Wally, deah boy? Pway wetire!" said Arthur Augustus in his stately way, surveying his minor through his eyeglass with distinct disapprobation. He was looking at Wally's inky collar and fingers and dusty garments, which formed part of his usual appearance.

"Oh, rats!" said Wally elegantly. "I want to have a little jaw with you old fogies, that's all."

"Hear, hear!" said Jameson and Gibson heartily.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus!" said Wally, with a sniff. "You can jaw as much as you like when I'm gone!"

"And that'll be pretty soon!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Oh, seat!" exclaimed Wally impatiently. "Now, look here, you old fogies, you're up to some blessed game of some kind with that blessed moving-picture camera of Glyn's, I know! We've got wind of it in the Third, you bet!"

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther sarcastically.

"Now, what is the little game exactly? That's what we want to know?" went on Wally, wagging a grubby forefinger at the grimly silent juniors in the study with an air of fatherly warning. "If you're thinking of running a moving-picture show on the lines of the St. Jim's Empire, or anything like that, I warn you that the Third aren't going to be left out—not much!"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy, do! Now, you chaps know what happened to your blessed St. Jim's Empire when you tried to run it without the Third—it was a ghastly muck-up. I hereby warn you that if you try the same game again with your blessed moving pictures or any other rot the Third are jolly well going to have a hand in it, too! Otherwise, we shall muck it up for you! Now, what do you old stick-in-the-muds say?"

And Wally jammed his hands deep into his trousers pockets and cocked his head on one side as he waited for the answer to that question.

Blake picked up a large piece of butter by its paper wrapping, and Tom Merry took an egg in each hand, while Manners and Lowther armed themselves with a couple of jam-tarts apiece from the dish on the table.

"We say, get out," said Tom Merry tersely; "and do it now, otherwise—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Wally. "I— Ow! Oh! Gerroooooch!"

He had been keeping a wary eye on Blake and the piece of butter, and as the Yorkshire junior's arm went up Wally ducked. But Blake had allowed for the ducking, and the hero of the Third received the butter in a slimy mass full in the ear.

At the same time an egg flew over Wally's shoulder and burst on Jameson's nose, while a jam-tart attached itself longingly to one of Gibson's eyes.

There was a yell of fury from the Third-Formers, while the juniors in the study burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ow! Groo! Beasts!" yelled Wally & Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll make you sit up for this!" yelled Wally, gouging the sticky butter from his eye. "Just you wait, you set of moth-eaten duffers!"

Tom Merry seized a couple more eggs, made a threatening motion towards the door, and the Third-Formers whipped out in a second and slammed the door.

"Well, my hat! Of all the blessed nerve, your minor takes the cake, Gussy!" gasped Tom Merry, putting down the eggs.

"Blessed if— Hallo!"

The door popped open again.

"Beasts!"

"We'll jolly well make you sit up for this!"

"Yah!"

There was a rush of juniors towards the door, which promptly slammed to again. The chums looked at one another, breathing hard.

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"If we could only catch the cheeky young duffers, we'd give 'em a lesson!" murmured Blake. "I— Well, my hat!"

The door suddenly flew open again, and there was a loud yell from outside.

"Rotters!"

"We'll give you fits for this!"

"Yah— Oh! Ow! Yow!"

The derisive yells were turned suddenly to loud exclamations of dismay, and there was a noise of scuffling in the passage.

"Now, then, we've got you! What the dickens are you cheeky fags up to, eh?" exclaimed a well-known voice.

Blake gave a yell.

"It's Figgins & Co., and they've got the cheeky young villains!"

There was a roar from the study full of exasperated juniors.

"Bring 'em in, Figgy!"

CHAPTER 7. The Court-Martial.

"BRING 'em in!"

Many eager hands assisted Figgins & Co. to march their straggling captives into the study. The juniors grinned at the expressions of dismay upon the faces of the fags.

"Caught in the act!" grinned Figgins, the lanky chief of the famous New House Co. "I rather think we came along just at the right time."

"What-ho!" chuckled Kerr and Fatty Wynn, the other two partners in the Co.

"You're right," said Blake, with a chuckle of grim satisfaction. "These three young sweeps have been handing out the most fearful cheek to us for the last five minutes. You came along just in the nick of time!"

"Hear, hear!"

The fags wriggled in the grasp of their captors, but that grasp only became the firmer. The little apartment was crammed now to its fullest capacity, and there was only just room for the thirteen boys it contained to stand up. Escape for the fags was out of the question, especially as the burly Herries rose and shut the door, placing his chair in front of it as an additional safeguard.

Wally took in the situation at a glance, and made up his mind that there was nothing for it but to face the music.

From the look on their faces it was evident that Jameson and Gibson also came to the same conclusion.

Wally gave a defiant laugh.

"What do you old fogies want with us, now you have got us?" he inquired coolly. "Blessed if we want to stay in this old dog-kennel. Lemme go, Figgins, you beast!"

"Not much!" grinned Figgins. "You've got to pay for your cheek now, Wally, my son. Now I come to think of it, you've been wanting a licking badly for a long time," added Figgins oracularly.

"Oh, rats! Leggo!" growled Wally.

"And this is how you bring up your minor, Gussy?" said Tom Merry, with a gesture of despair.

Arthur Augustus looked distressed.

He had been gazing at his minor with great disapproval through his monocle, and now he allowed that famous article to drop to the end of its cord, and began to polish it briskly, while he looked at his grinning chums appealingly.

"Weally, deah boys!" he said, in great distress. "I am afwaid my young bwothah has wathah forgotten his manna's on the pwesent occasion. Still, I am sure you will be willin' to ovahlook it in considewation of a pwopah apology. Wally, you young wascal, pway apologise to my fwriends immediately, as one gentleman to othahs!"

"Rats!" said Wally ungratefully. "For goodness' sake ring off, Gus! You make me tired!"

"Weally, Wally!"

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

Arthur Augustus frowned at his minor, and looked extremely unhappy. He felt that Wally should be corrected for his lack of respect for his elders, but at the same time a feeling of loyalty towards his minor prevented him from taking any part against him. The swell of St. Jim's reflected, in a troubled way, that after all Wally was a scion of the illustrious house of D'Arcy, the pride of which it was necessary to preserve from any indignity at any cost.

But D'Arcy's chums had no thoughts of such matters, and were not likely to take D'Arcy's point of view at all.

"Now, I think this is an excellent opportunity for these cheeky fags to be taught a lesson, you chaps," said Tom Merry solemnly. "We're fed up with their cheek!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Fed up with getting the worst of it, you mean," remarked Curly Gibson. And Wally and Jameson chuckled.

"All right, just you wait, young feller-me-lads!" growled

Blake. "You'll be singing a different tune presently, I promise you!"

"Let's have a formal court-martial," suggested Digby. "I propose that Blake preside."

"Jolly good idea to have a court-martial, Dig," said Manners heartily. "But Tom Merry must preside, of course."

"I suggest Figgins," said Tom Merry. "He's a guest in the study, and he wasn't here when these kids were dishing out their cheek, so he can't be said to be prejudiced before hearing the evidence."

"Good idea, only buck up with the blessed court-martial, for goodness' sake," said Fatty Wynn, glancing longingly at the tempting array of eatables on the table. "I'm fearfully hungry!"

"Go hon!" murmured Lowther.

"Well, I'll take the job on!" grinned Figgins. "But someone had better be told off to keep tight hold of the prisoners. They wriggle like a lot of blessed eels!"

"Tie 'em up with handkerchiefs!" suggested Herries.

"Good wheeze!" shouted the juniors.

"Weally, deah boys—"

But the "deah boys" took no heed of Arthur Augustus. They meant to see the affair through properly, evidently. Each of the prisoners was secured in a trice with a handkerchief bound tightly round his ankles, and another round his wrists, their arms being thus secured behind them.

"You beasts!" exploded Wally wrathfully. "We'll jolly well pay you out for this, won't we, Jimmy?"

"What-ho! Wait till we get away!" said Jameson emphatically.

"Rescue, Third!" yelled Curly Gibson, at the top of his voice.

But there was no answering shout from the rank and file of the Third, who little knew the plight of their chosen leaders.

"If the prisoners make any more row we shall have to gag them," said Figgins sternly. "Now, what is the charge against the prisoners at the bar?"

"Step forward, first witness!" said Monty Lowther, pushing Tom Merry forward.

Tom Merry gravely related the circumstances of Wally & Co.'s unceremonious incursion, while the juniors round grinned. The unlucky fags listened in scowling silence.

"Does anyone here corroborate this witness's statement?" asked the judge importantly, when Tom Merry had been asked to stand down.

There was a yell from six throats at once.

"Yes."

"What-ho!"

"We all do!"

"Very well, then," said Figgins, looking portentously solemn. "What do the prisoners say in their defence?"

"Rats!" came the prompt and unanimous reply from the prisoners.

"If you please, your worship, I should like to address the court on behalf of the prisoners," said Monty Lowther, rising. "Proceed!" said the learned judge, in a hollow voice.

"In the first place," said Monty Lowther meekly, "the prisoners are but infants—mere babes, in fact, and I put it to your washup, is it likely that they should know how to behave themselves?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You funny ass, Lowther!" growled Wally. "Chuck all this rot, you blessed dummies, and let us go! I want my tea!"

"In the second place, your ludship," went on Lowther calmly. "I must ask you to make some allowance for the extraordinary idea possessed by these little boys of their own, and their insignificant little Form's importance, which is inexplicable to anybody but a fag."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In the third place, I must ask your Honour to bear in mind that these infants will grow out of their childish ways one day, and know better if they are properly spanked while still young—"

"You—you rotter!" shouted Wally, furiously struggling in vain to throw off his bonds.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"In conclusion, therefore," pursued the humorous Lowther, "I must ask you to let the prisoners off with a caution, and a severe spanking."

"Hear, hear!"

"You beasts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a broad grin on his face, the learned judge rose to deliver judgment.

"I hereby sentence the learned prisoners—I—I mean, the prisoners at the bar, to be laid over the knees of the execu-

tioners, and spanked with slippers until they are sore, and thence to be kicked out of the study with a caution."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You blessed rotters!" shrieked Wally furiously. "Just you try it on! You wouldn't dare—"

"Silence!" commanded the judge in awful tones. "Since the prisoners at the bar have behaved like a set of naughty ill-mannered kids, they must be punished as such—"

"You—you—"

"And I hereby appoint Manners, Herries, and Kerr as executioners!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yah!"

"Executioners!" exclaimed Figgins, with fine dramatic effect. "Do your duty."

"What-ho!" said the executioners.

Wally & Co. were seized by many hands instantly. They put up a stout struggle, especially Jameson, who was a big fellow much above the average size of the Third, but they were hopelessly hampered by their bonds, and in a very short time the heroes of the Third found themselves, in spite of their struggles, stretched across the knees of the "executioners" in the ignominious position prescribed by ancient custom as being the most convenient one for the administration of castigation by the slipper.

Tom Merry and Lowther had routed out some slippers from the cupboard, and these were quickly passed to the executioners, who were on the point of commencing to ply them, when there was a sudden interruption.

Knock!

There was a knock at the door, and a head was poked in, the head of Bernard Glyn.

"I say you chaps, are you coming? Why—hallo! What on earth—"

"You're just in time for the show, Glyn!" said Monty Lowther, with a wave of the hand. "Come in, if you can find room, and don't interrupt the performance."

"But what the dickens—" exclaimed Glyn, staring at the curious scene in amazement.

Tom Merry laughed, and explained in a word or two, and Glyn burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop that cackling, do!" hissed Wally, between his set teeth. "Get this rotten business over quickly, if you're going to, for goodness' sake! I'll promise faithfully to make it warm for you afterwards, that's all."

Glyn laughed.

"My hat! You chaps are in for some fun with the Third after this!" he chuckled. "I can't wait as I was just going to try and get another film on my moving-picture camera before the light gets bad. I may as well develop two lots of films together this evening. I should like to stay and see the show—it's funny! Ha, ha!"

Glyn was about to retreat, when Tom Merry, who had been looking very thoughtful, uttered an exclamation.

"My hat! Hold on a minute, Glyn! Have you got your blessed camera there?"

"Yes, it's all ready loaded, and I—"

"Would you be able to take a set of moving pictures indoors, in the study for instance?"

Glyn stared, and so did the rest of the juniors. The slippers were still held in suspense over the prostrate forms of Wally & Co.

"Yes, I could take some pictures in this study with my special sensitive films, for that matter," said Glyn, looking mystified. "But surely you don't mean— Oh, my only hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I do," said Tom Merry serenely. "Don't you chaps think this scene would make a ripping set of pictures for the St. Jim's Picture Palace?"

There was an instant terrific yell from all the chums together, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who gave a convulsive start.

"What-ho!"

"Gorgeous!"

"Oh, lovely!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And a great roar of laughter went up from the study.

CHAPTER 8.

Checkmate!

"STOP!" The ringing voice of Arthur Augustus rang out firmly and clearly, and there was a sudden silence of surprise in the study.

"Stop, deah boys! This must not go any furthah!"

"Eh?" exclaimed Blake. "What do you mean, you ass?"

"You must stop this wot at once, you fellahs. Pway welease my minah, Kerr!"

"What for?" demanded Kerr.

"Look here, you ass," said Figgins warmly. "What the dickens do you mean by interfering with the judgment of the court? Shut up!"

"Wats, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus calmly. "Pway cease this wot. I cannot allow it to go on."

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Herries. "What the dickens next, I wonder?"

"You see, it's like this, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, graciously condescending to explain. "I wegard it as the greatest possible indignity for a D'Arcy to be spanked unadah any circumstances, and I should absolutely wefuse to allow that feahful ass, Glyn, to wecord any such' indig. with his wotten movin'-pictchah camewah."

"Rats!" roared the chums, with one voice.

"Yes, rats!" repeated Glyn, cheerfully commencing to set up his patent camera on its stand in the open doorway. "This'll make a film that'll jolly well bring down the house!"

"You—you rotters!" roared Wally, struggling violently. "Will you let us go?"

"Not just yet, old son!" grinned Kerr. "Some other time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus strode forward.

"I insist upon your puttin' your wotten contwaption away immediately, Glyn!" he exclaimed. "Othahwise, I shall have no wescource but to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Good old Gus!" groaned Wally, who was thoroughly alarmed at the turn affairs were taking. He and his chums knew very well that if a film of themselves being spanked like small children were once shown to St. Jim's, they would never be able to hold up their heads again. It would be a blow to the dignity of the Third Form which Wally & Co. felt confident they would never hear the last of.

Jack Blake turned a serious look on to his elegant chum.

"Don't be an obstinate ass, Gussy! We don't want to have to spank you as well, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, I should absolutely wefuse to be spanked, and I wefuse to allow Wally to be spanked in fwont of that wotten camewah!"

"Ready now, you chaps?" inquired Glyn pleasantly. "Turn on the thrashing-machine when I give the word."

"What-ho!" grinned the executioners, fixing their eyes on the schoolboy inventor, and holding their slippers poised in mid-air with their right hands, while they easily checked the feeble struggles of the bound fags with their left.

"My only Aunt Jane!" groaned Wally. "Stop 'em, Gussy, for goodness' sake!"

"Stop, Glyn, you wottah!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, making a rush for the St. Jim's inventor and his precious camera. "I wefuse to allow—Ow! Wefuse me!"

Tom Merry and Blake seized the indignant and excited swell of St. Jim's and dragged him back. They pushed him into a corner and gently but firmly jammed him down in a sitting position on to the coal-locker.

"Now stay there and be quiet, Gussy!" said Blake, with an air of fatherly admonition. "All this excitement is not good for you, you know."

"You wuffians—"

"Go!" said Glyn, commencing to wind away at the handle of his camera at express speed.

Biff! Smack! Spank!

The three slippers became violently agitated, and the arms of the executioners rose and fell like clockwork, while little clouds of dust rose from the garments of Wally & Co.

"Stop it!" roared Wally.

"Yow! Beasts!" howled Jameson.

"Ow! Leggo!" shrieked Curly Gibson.

But the fags roared and wriggled in vain.

The judgment of the court was being carried out remorselessly, and Glyn's wonderful camera was as remorselessly engaged in making an enduring record thereof.

The protests of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were effectively stifled by his chums, and they died away at last in mere gurgles.

Spank! Smack! Biff!

The flagellators worked away with a will—almost as if they enjoyed the job, as Monty Lowther remarked, with a grin—while the grinning juniors urged them on with shouts of encouragement.

"Put your beef into it, Herries!" roared Jack Blake.

"Stick to it, Kerr! This'll do 'em a world of good!" shouted Figgins.

"Yes; don't be afraid of hurting 'em! Remember it hurts you more than it hurts them!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Spank, spank, spank!

Glyn ceased to grind the handle of his moving-picture camera at last, and the spankers desisted from their exer-

tions, not without a certain amount of reluctance. As Figgins remarked, the Third Form in general, and Wally & Co. in particular, had been asking for it for some time, in the opinion of the Shell and Fourth Forms.

"One more for luck!" grunted Herries.

Spank, spank, spank!

The final spanks were administered with the best will in the world, and the red-faced, furious, and gasping fags were allowed to resume a perpendicular position again at last.

"M-m-my only Aunt Jane!" spluttered Wally. "We'll just make you sit up for this!"

"M-m-my hat, yes!" gasped Jameson and Gibson in concert.

"We—we'll bust your rotten cinema-show up worse than we did the music-hall!" hissed Wally. "We—we'll—"

"You'll get some more spanking if you don't shut up and cut quick!" said Jack Blake genially.

"Splendid thing for a kid—spanking!" said Monty Lowther, blandly. "Wonder we didn't think of it before in dealing with the blessed Third Form fags!"

"Weally, Lowthab—"

"Hullo! You beginning again, Gussy?"

"We'll go now," said Wally darkly. "But just you wait, my sons, that's all!"

"Hold on a minute, Wally," said Tom Merry pleasantly.

"Just a word before you go, please."

"Oh, let the young beggars go now, Tom Merry!" expostulated Fatty Wynn. "I'm hungry!"

"Half a minute, you duffer! I haven't explained the wheeze, yet, to Wally. I'm not sure that you chaps all catch on yet, either."

"What d'you mean?" asked Wally gruffly.

"Why, it's like this," explained the captain of the Shell easily. "You three fags have been spanked, and spanked well, there's no getting over that fact."

"Hear, hear!"

"If you're going to rub that in—" hooted Wally.

"Don't get excited, kid! I'm merely going over the situation. You've been spanked, and we've got a first-class moving-picture of the spanking. Now, that film is bound to be a popular one if we show it in the St. Jim's Picture Palace."

"You beast! I—"

"Or, no doubt, some outside show would give us a good price for it," went on Tom Merry blandly.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"You rotter!" shrieked Wally. "You don't mean to say—"

"If you will only listen, kid, you'll hear what I am going to say!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "Now, we have got all this evidence of the pictures, as well as our own eyes, that you have been spanked like naughty little boys; but that does not say that we are going to use it. Suppose we keep all mum, and no one ever knows anything about it, except those now in this study?"

"Eh?"

"What's that?"

"Don't you catch on?" asked Tom Merry, looking round the study. "We'll hold all the evidence of the—indignity which has been put upon Wally & Co. over their heads, to be used only if they give trouble. If they don't worry us over this picture-palace business, we'll keep mum about what's happened, and keep the film dark. What do you ehaps say?"

There was a moment's pause.

The chums of the Fourth and the Shell looked at one another, and Wally & Co. looked at one another.

"Jolly good scheme!" said Blake and Figgins together at last, heartily.

"My idea from the first, wasn't it, Glyn?" said Tom Merry modestly.

"It was—it were," chuckled Glyn.

"We accept!" said D'Arcy minor shortly. "We won't trouble you any more over the show if you don't blab about this rotten business."

"Good! Then it's a bargain, Wally?" said Tom Merry heartily. "You chaps all agree?"

"What-ho!"

"Then come on, Jimmy and Curly, let's get out of this dog-kennel, for goodness' sake!"

And Wally & Co. stamped out of the study, shutting the door after them with a bang that echoed down the Shell passage. They were feeling baffled and not a little sore in body, but very much relieved in mind.

The Third need not know of the great humiliation of their redoubtable leaders after all! Wally & Co. knew that they could rely upon the words of all the fellows in the study implicitly, and they themselves were not likely to give the show away. As long as they did not interfere with Tom Merry's proposed picture-palace they were safe.

As the study door slammed behind the heroes of the Third

Form, Tom Merry rubbed his hands together softly and chuckled.

"I rather think that is checkmate to the Third this time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the studious of juniors turned upon their belated tea with appetites sharpened by the knowledge of how they had "done" the redoubtable Wally & Co. for once.

CHAPTER 9.

Like a Thief in the Night.

BERNARD GLYN closed his Latin grammar with a bang just as the quarter-past nine rang out from the old clock-tower.

"Come on, you chaps!" he remarked, with a yawn. "Nuff prep.'s as good as a feast, 'specially when it's irregular verbs. That was the quarter-past. Let's go down to the common-room."

"Right-ho!"

Noble and Clifton Dane closed their books at once. Bed-time came at half-past nine for the Fourth and Shell Forms at St. Jim's, and for the last quarter of an hour before bed the juniors were wont to forgather in the junior common-room for a last-Chat before retiring.

The Latin grammars were slung on to the bookshelf, and Noble went to turn out the gas.

"You didn't develop your roll of films this evening, after all, Bernard," remarked Dane.

"No; I thought I might as well take another lot and do the two together—so I did," said Glyn, with a grin. "I'll do 'em to-morrow evening, I think. By-the-by, are you chaps coming over to the Wayland Cinema to-morrow afternoon? I arranged with Tom Merry to go, so's we can pick up a few tips which will help us to run the St. Jim's Picture Palace."

"Rather! We'll come!" said Clifton Dane.

"What-ho!" said Noble. "But, I say, did you get a second lot of pictures, then?" inquired Noble, switching off the gas.

Glyn chuckled.

"Yes, rather!"

"What was the subject?"

"Oh—er—a little scene in Tom Merry's study, that's all!" grinned Glyn. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the joke?" asked Noble and Dane together, as the door of the study closed after the trio and they walked down the passage arm-in-arm.

"Oh, nothing much," chuckled Glyn.

And that was the most satisfactory reply his chums could manage to get out of him.

As the three chums passed the end of the Fourth Form passage, they might have noticed, had they not been so intent upon their own affairs, that one of the Fourth Form study doors was open a little way, and a pair of watchful eyes was glued to the opening, evidently keeping a sharp look-out for something. But the trio noticed nothing, and passed on towards the common-room.

No sooner were they out of sight than the watching figure behind the Fourth Form study door uttered a muttered exclamation:

"Coast's clear now, I think!"

The figure of Levison, of the Fourth, slipped into the Fourth Form passage and walked quietly down the corridor, and turned into the Shell passage. One of Levison's hands was in his jacket-pocket, which bulged as with some rather bulky object. Levison kept right down the Shell passage, stepping softly, until he came to the end study, outside which he paused. The end study was the famous apartment occupied by the St. Jim's inventor and his chums.

Levison glanced coolly and keenly up and down the passage, and then he whipped open the study door and slipped inside. Evidently, Levison, of the Fourth, was keenly desirous that he should not be seen to enter the study of Glyn, of the Shell.

Once inside, the cad of St. Jim's drew from his pocket the object which had caused it to bulge, and which now resolved itself into an electric torch.

Switching on the glimmer of light, Levison hastened to Glyn's desk, and opened the drawer which contained all the papers concerning the St. Jim's inventor's latest masterpiece, with the exception of the one which he alleged had been stolen.

The drawer was still unlocked, proving that Glyn's misfortune had not taught him wisdom.

Levison whipped a blue paper out of his pocket, thrust it deep down under the pile of papers in the drawer, and closed the drawer softly. The next instant, his electric torch again in his pocket, he was standing just inside the door, with his head cocked on one side, listening. Then he peeped cautiously out, but bobbed back again hastily as a door at the other

end of the passage opened suddenly, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came out of their study.

Levison had no time to close the door, but left it ajar, standing behind it in the darkness, with his heart beating fast, in spite of his coolness. The footsteps came down the passage, and stopped just outside the study.

"Wonder if they've gone down?" came Monty Lowther's voice. "I'll just slip in and see."

Levison held his breath and flattened himself up against the wall in the darkness, as the study door was jerked open. Monty Lowther looked in.

"All in darkness! The boudners have finished their prep. and gone down," he remarked.

"Come on, then! Only ten minutes to bedtime!" said Tom Merry's voice impatiently.

"Right-ho!" And Lowther drew his head out of the study, and slammed the door.

Levison breathed a sigh of relief as the noisy footsteps of the Terrible Three died away down the passage.

"My hat!" he muttered. "That was a near shave!"

He waited for half a minute before peeping into the passage again. The coast was clear, and in a moment he had whipped out of the end study, and closed the door softly behind him. Half a minute later he entered his own study.

Mellish, of the Fourth, a youth of Levison's own kidney, who shared the same study, looked up as Levison came in.

"All serene?" he asked.

Levison nodded coolly.

"Yes; I shoved it back without a soul being any the wiser, though Lowther shoved his ugly head into the study when I was there."

"He didn't see you?" asked Mellish breathlessly.

Levison gave a quiet chuckle.

"No; I lay low, and he went out without smelling a rat. No one can have a shadow of evidence now."

"Good! And the copy—what are you going to do with that?"

Levison winked.

"I shall hide that and keep it. Glyn hasn't patented his wheeze yet, I know. I sha'n't apply for a patent from here, or send the drawing through the post at all. It's too risky. I was bowled out that way before."

"Yes, I remember," said Mellish, with a chuckle. "And a jolly good hiding you got from Railton, too."

"Shut up!" said Levison, scowling. "Don't harp on that, for goodness' sake, you fool! I shall take jolly good care not to make a mistake like that again. I shall keep this drawing till the vac., and see what my pater thinks of it, first."

"My hat! You're a deep beggar, Levison, and no mistake!" said Mellish, with half grudging admiration.

Levison grinned a sly grin that was not good to see in a boy of fifteen.

"Come on!" he said. "Let's get down and show ourselves in the common-room before bed."

"Right-ho!"

And the precious pair left their study, and went downstairs to join the crowd of juniors in the common-room.

CHAPTER 10.

Fire!

THE arrangement that Glyn had mentioned that he had made with Tom Merry was carried out next day, when a party of juniors set out after dinner on their bicycles for the little market town of Wayland, with intent to visit the Cinema, which was drawing large crowds of townfolk there daily.

There were six juniors in the party, and all had special permits from Kildare, the captain of the school. The six consisted of Tom Merry & Co. and the chums of the end study. An inter-House cricket match, the School House Fourth Formers versus the New House Fourth Formers, occupied the whole attention of a number of the juniors, who would otherwise have come.

As Tom Merry and Glyn explained, they regarded the visit to Wayland Cinema as a matter of business more than anything else. Otherwise they would hardly have missed the match of their own accord, for with the famous Figgins & Co., and Redfern & Co., the new firm who had shown themselves such mighty men of valour on the cricket-field, playing for the New House, against such stalwarts as Blake & Co., Lumley-Lumley, and Reilly on the School House side, the match was likely to be a closely fought out and exciting one.

As it was, however, the six juniors cycled rapidly down the high-road in the sunshine of the hot June afternoon, and at length jumped off their machines, hot and dusty, at the door of the little low lath-and-plaster building which formed the Wayland Cinema or Electric Palace, as some of the flaring posters outside had it.

Leaving their bicycles against the wall, the juniors entered the little building, to be welcomed by the manager with a low

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bow, and took their seats on the red, baize-covered forms in the darkened hall.

They had entered just at the finish of a film, and were just in time to see the despairing hero kill his sweetheart before turning his smoking revolver towards his own head.

"Nice, cheerful subject, isn't it?" whispered Monty Lowther, as the dismal tragedy flickered to an end in the screen. "Makes a chap fairly roar with laughter—I don't think!"

The juniors sat silent till the film came to an end. They did not like such morbid scenes presented with such terrible reality; and what healthy-minded boy could? But the next film depicted the adventures of an eccentric gentleman on a motor-cycle, over which, judging by its extremely erratic movements, and the number of awkward situations it got into it, its acrobat rider had little or no control. The audience yelled with laughter at the terrific antics of the eccentric gentleman, and Glyn particularly became greatly excited.

Glyn knew something about motor-cycles, with which he had had many an adventure, and he kept yelling excited directions to the rider on the screen, by following which the latter lively gentleman might conceivably have avoided the amazing mishaps and adventures which befell him in rapid succession, and which, indeed, he appeared to be making terrific efforts to avert, but invariably too late.

"Switch her off, man!" yelled Glyn, as the motor-cyclist, wobbling violently, approached the back of a donkey-cart piled high with crockery at a fearful speed, so that a collision appeared inevitable. "Shut your throttle, idiot, if your valve-lifter won't work! Oh, you fearful ass!"

The motor-cyclist struck the donkey cart with a fearful concussion apparently, and there was a perfect cascade of crockery on the screen. Then Glyn gave a shout of anguish.

"Look out, you utter dummy! Can't you see your carburetter's on fire? If you don't look out your blessed petrol tank will— Oh, my hat!"

Glyn finished with a groan as a huge tongue of flame burst from the wrecked motor-cycle, and the next second the picture had flicked off, and the screen was a blank.

Tom Merry & Co. laughed till the tears came, and many of the audience joined in. Glyn had been quite carried away by his technical enthusiasm. He blushed in the semi-darkness as he realised that he had been "making an ass of himself," as he himself termed it.

"You—you frabjous dummy!" gasped Tom Merry. "Blessed if you didn't forget the scene was only pictures, you dummy!"

"Perhaps I did!" growled Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You were roaring out orders like a sergeant-major on parade!" chuckled Noble. "Chap didn't seem to take much notice of them, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The next film thrown on the screen was one of the real Wild West thrilling sort, in which Red Indians are seen crawling through the long grass, sinuous as snakes, towards the log cabin of the unsuspecting rancher.

The spectators were held spellbound. Closer and closer to the doomed shanty creep the red men, when suddenly there is a spurt of flame from one of the windows, and one of the Redskins rolls over and lies still.

The shot is the signal for a general attack, and the spectators in the crowded Rylcombe Cinema sat spellbound at the amazing realism with which these stirring scenes were presented to their fascinated gaze by the wonderful cinematograph machine.

Suddenly, without any warning, the clicking of the machine stopped, and the picture remained stationary on the screen. The next instant a blinding sheet of flame leaped out from the operator's box—in the rear of the auditorium.

"Fire! Fire!"

On the instant the dread cry rang out from a hundred throats, and there was a mad

rush for the exits, men, women, and children scrambling over one another in desperate panic, shouting and screaming. The whole audience seemed to lose their heads simultaneously, and join in a deadly stampede.

"Fire! Fire!"

For a moment the six St. Jim's juniors stood transfixed, stunned by the suddenness of the catastrophe. Then their cool nerve and boy-scout training came to their aid, and stood them in good stead.

"The emergency door—quick!" gasped Tom Merry.

The mad stampede was all in the direction of the main exit, but Tom Merry and Noble sprang in one bound to the small door in the side wall marked "Emergency Exit."

They reached it together, and dragged at the handle. Tom Merry gave a groan of despair.

"Locked! The mad fools!"

He gazed round wildly. The fire had obtained a firm hold on the flimsy building, and was a roaring furnace now, which cut off the desperate crowd from the main exit.

Mad with fright, the mob, at least a hundred strong, swayed and struggled. Some few of the men, having gained the mastery over their first spasm of unreasoning panic, began to regain their nerve, and attempted to stem the trampling rush, in which fainting women and little children were being trodden, unheeded, under foot.

Manners and Lowther rushed to the rescue of two little girls who had been knocked over, and were in danger of being trampled to death, while the flow of the struggling tide of humanity began to set towards the locked emergency exit.

Suddenly Glyn seized one of the chairs which formed the more expensive seats in the house, and swung it above his head.

"Stand back there!" he roared. "Keep 'em back second, you chaps!"

Tom Merry and Noble, seeing Glyn's intention at a glance, hurled themselves, shoulder to shoulder, into the mob which was pressing round the door, and shouldered them off for a moment.

The sturdy Liverpool lad brought the heavy chair down upon the back of the door with a terrific crash.

"Stand back a moment!" he yelled. "I'll have the door open if you'll give me room!"

Crash, crash!

The lock gave way, and the door flew outwards, the panic-stricken mob rushing out, jamming and struggling and fighting to get out of the death-trap offered by the burning picture palace.

Glyn, Tom Merry, and Noble were borne out among the first with the struggling crowd, willy-nilly.

"Good man, Glyn!" gasped Tom Merry. "Where's the other three?"

"They'll be out in a minute, I suppose!" panted Glyn. "No danger now, really. They'll all be out in a tick!"

Slowly—much more slowly than if they had fled out in an orderly way—the terrified crowd, mostly women and children, fought their way out of the blazing building.

Manners and Lowther, each supporting a fainting child, were amongst the last to come out.

"Where's Dane?" asked Noble anxiously.

"Dane!" gasped Lowther. "Isn't he with you?"

"No!"

Noble and Tom Merry made a simultaneous dash for the door of the blazing building, from which dense clouds of smoke were pouring.

There was a sudden exclamation in a man's voice, and the manager of the picture-palace darted after them.

"Good heavens! Come back, you! Where are you—"

But the juniors, unheeding, dashed into the inferno, leaving the manager dancing about outside, wringing his hands.

"The young fools! They'll be killed! And I'm ruined! Oh, my Heaven!"

"Shut up, you cur!" exclaimed Glyn savagely. "If the emergency exit had been unlocked, as it ought to have been, there would have been no danger, you mad fool! You ought to be jolly well lynched for your criminal carelessness, you scoundrel!"

NEXT THURSDAY:

"THE NEW HOUSE RIVALS!"

A Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale of Figgins & Co., and Redfern & Co. at St. Jim's.]

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

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Tom Merry's fist crashed on Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's nose at the same moment as Jack Blake's smote him a terrific round-arm blow on the ear, and the unfortunate peacemaker let out a yell, and dropped as if he had been shot. "Good," remarked Glyn, churning away at his moving picture camera for dear life. "Gussy's given me a fine wind-up to a rattling good film!" (See Chapter 4.)

The wretched manager, scarcely heeding the Liverpool lad's bitter words, rushed off as the Wayland Fire Brigade arrived, and ran out their hose smartly, though there could be no hope of saving the building now.

Glyn, Manners, and Lowther stood at the door of the blazing building in an agony of anxiety for their chums.

"I can't stand this!" muttered Lowther at last, as the seconds passed slowly, and still the three juniors in the blazing building did not appear. "I'm going in!"

"Wait!" said Glyn. "We can be with their teeth, holding Lowther back by the arm. "We can do more good here at present. If they don't come out in a minute— Oh, here they are!"

"Thank Heaven!"

The three rushed forward as two figures appeared in the smoke of the doorway, and bundled them out into safety and the glorious fresh air. The figures were Noble and Clifton Dane. The Cornstalk was supporting his chum, who was all but insensible.

"Where's Tom Merry?" shouted Manners and Lowther together, in an agony of dread.

"He—he's coming with the kid!" gasped Noble. "Dane stayed to pick up a kid, but—but we found them b-both on the floor, laid out by the smoke and heat! I took Dane, and Tom Merry the kid."

"Anybody else in there, young gents?" panted a stout fireman, running up with two others. "Gent said as 'ow two boys 'ad—"

"Yes, yes; there's a boy in there now!" shrieked Lowther. "Come on! We must go in and get them—"

"Hold on, young gent!" exclaimed the fireman, seizing Lowther's arm. "It ain't no manner o' good, you know. The place is a blazin' furnace, and no one can be in there alive. Why— 'Allo!"

"Tom Merry!"

Once more a figure appeared through the smoke and flame of that miniature inferno—a figure so grimed and smoko blackened that the juniors scarcely recognised it as the usually neat Tom Merry of the Shell.

But Tom Merry it was, and as he appeared a great shout went up from the little crowd of spectators who had by now

assembled to watch the burning of the picture-palace, for Tom Merry had the limp form of a tiny child in his arms as he staggered out through the blinding smoke.

"Hurrah, hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

There was a rush of the juniors towards the hero of the Shell, but before them all was a young woman, whose torn clothes and smoke-blackened face showed that she was one of those who had escaped from the burning building.

"My child!" screamed the poor woman. "My baby!"

And she snatched the tiny tot from the reeling junior, with a muttered "God bless you, young sir!" and bore it away with a thankful heart.

Tom Merry flung himself down on the grass, and panted as if his lungs would burst. In the blinding smoke and scorching flame of the picture-palace he had stumbled with the child in his arms, when following Noble and Dane, and for an instant had almost thought that he would be unable to rise again, so thoroughly had the suffocating heat sapped his strength; but the thought of the tiny mite, whose life depended upon his efforts, had nerved him to a last supreme effort, and he had managed to totter to the door with his burden. Now, in safety once more, he was feeling the effect of the terrible time he had passed through, and his breath came in great sobs.

Manners dashed away, and returned in a moment with a can of water, which he dashed over his chum's face, while Noble performed a like office for Dane, and before long the two juniors began to feel better. The fire was burning itself out, being little checked by the jets of water which the fire-brigade were bringing to bear on it. The whole building was soon licked up by the flames, it seemed, in almost no time.

In less than ten minutes from the first dread cry of "Fire, fire!" the roof fell in amid a blazing shower of sparks, and the Wayland Electric Palace was no more. The six juniors, Tom Merry and Dane suffering but little from the ordeal through which they had passed, tramped dismally to Wayland Station, to wait for the next train back to Rylcombe, the station for St. Jim's.

Their bicycles, which they had left propped up against the wall of the picture-palace, had been utterly consumed by the fire, but the juniors were not thinking so much about the loss of their machines as about the great danger from which they, with the other patrons of the picture-palace, had so providentially escaped. In a few short minutes, the scene of laughter and gaiety inside the house of amusement had changed to one of horror and deadly peril, and certain it was that had it not been for the coolness and presence of mind of the St. Jim's juniors the fire would have been attended with loss of life.

Happily, that had been averted, but the terrible nature of the peril they had so narrowly escaped impressed the juniors deeply. For a long time they were silent, until, while waiting on Wayland Station, Monty Lowther looked down at his own torn and blackened clothes, and then at those of his companions, which were, for the most part, in a considerably worse state.

Lowther grinned feebly. He was sure to see the joke in anything.

"Well, my hat!" he remarked. "This is a pretty ending to an afternoon's outing, I must say! I wonder what they'll say at St. Jim's when we walk in, looking like a lot of Guy Fawkes who have escaped, half burnt, from their bonfires on November the fifth?"

The juniors looked at each other and grinned, in spite of themselves.

"We do look a bit disreputable, certainly," admitted Clifton Dane; "but it's a good job it's no worse."

"Yes; we're all safe, thank Heaven!" said Tom Merry fervently. "But it was exciting while it lasted, wasn't it?"

"A little too exciting for me!" remarked Noble grimly.

"Hear, hear!" said Glyn. "I'm glad I got a chance of telling that careless brute of a manager a little of what I thought of him. The ruffian ought to be imprisoned for crass carelessness!"

"Hear, hear!"

"This is where my patent moving-picture films come in!" said Glyn, with sudden enthusiasm. "They're non-inflammable, among other things. The fire to-day started with the films, of course; but there's no danger of anything like that happening at the St. Jim's Picture Palace."

"I should jolly well think not!" said Tom Merry, as the little local train steamed into the station. "Here's the train, thank goodness! I for one shall be jolly glad to get back to good old St. Jim's again!"

And there was a hearty chorus.

"Hear, hear!"

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DON'T "DOWN ON HIS LUCK!" The Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale appearing in this week's number of THE

CHAPTER 11.

Levison Meets His Match.

THE six dilapidated juniors entered St. Jim's as unobtrusively as possible, but it was not likely that their condition would pass altogether unobserved. Most of the school were playing or watching cricket in the playing-fields, but there were one or two "slackers" in the neighbourhood of the quad, who shouted out astonished questions; but the heroes of the Shell vouchsafed only the briefest of replies as they hurried on.

At the very entrance to the School House, however, as luck would have it, they encountered Mr. Railton, their House-master, face to face.

"My hat," groaned Tom Merry, "just our luck!"

Mr. Railton stopped dead at the sight of the six meek figures, and his brow grew very stern.

"Boys, what is the meaning of this?"

"If you please, sir—" began Tom Merry.

"You see, sir—" stammered Noble.

"It's like this, sir—" commenced Glyn eagerly.

Mr. Railton's frown deepened.

"Tom Merry, what have you to say? What explanation have you to offer of the disgraceful—positively disgraceful—state you are in?"

"If you please, sir," said Tom Merry, "we've been in a fire—the cinematograph show, at Wayland, sir."

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Railton, in a changed voice. "Are you injured, my boys? Is anyone injured?"

"No, sir, thank goodness," said Tom Merry. "But we had an exciting time while the fire lasted. The picture-palace is burnt to the ground, but everyone got out safely, sir."

"Thank Heaven for that!" said Mr. Railton. "And you are sure you are not injured in any way, my boys? Your face looks singed, Merry, and yours, too, Dane."

"It's nothing, sir. We're all right."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Mr. Railton, in genuine relief. "You boys have evidently had a very narrow escape. Dear me, what dreadfully dangerous affairs these cinematograph shows are, to be sure! You boys had better hurry up and make yourselves respectable again as quickly as possible, now."

"Yes, sir."

And Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to carry out their House-master's instructions with all possible despatch.

"Blessed if I feel much like cricket, after this," said Glyn, when he had changed and was looking himself once more. "I think I shall stay in and develop those moving-picture films I took yesterday."

"Good man!" said Tom Merry. "I'm jolly keen to see how they turn out. I shall stroll down to see how the Fourth Form kids are getting on in their match myself, I think. Anyone coming?"

"We'll come," said Manners and Lowther.

"Good! Let us know how the films turn out as soon as you have done them, Glyn, old man."

"Right-ho!"

And Tom Merry & Co. made their way down to the Fourth Form cricket-ground, while Glyn & Co. repaired to their own study.

As Glyn crossed over to his desk, his face grew gloomy as he remembered again the paper that he had missed.

He dragged open his drawer savagely.

"No good looking through it again, though!" he muttered. "I'll bowl that villain out in the end, all the same!"

"What the dickens are you muttering about, old man?" demanded Noble. "You're looking about as amiable as a demon in a pantomime, too!"

"I was thinking of that paper of mine that cad Levison has stolen!" growled Glyn.

"Oh, that?"

"Why not have another look through the drawer for it?" suggested Clifton Dane, in his quiet voice. "There seems a heap of papers there, and perhaps the missing one's underneath somewhere."

"Rot!" exclaimed the schoolboy inventor angrily. "I've been all through, and I know jolly well—Hallo, why—what—where—"

"What's up?"

"My only Aunt Sempronia's summer chapeau! Here it is!"

"What? Your aunt's chapeau?" inquired Noble.

"No, ass, the paper!" roared Glyn excitedly. "The blessed missing paper! Blessed if it mustn't have been here all the time, but I don't understand it!"

"You overlooked it, you duffer, that's all!"

"I don't believe I did. I could swear it was not there when I looked before," said Glyn, mystified.

Noble snorted.

"Oh, rats!"

"Let me look at the paper a minute, will you, Glyn?" asked Dane thoughtfully.

"Here you are."

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Clifton Dane examined the paper closely. "I'd like to look at this under my microscope," he announced quietly. "You go and do your developing, and leave this with me for a bit."

"All right," said Glyn. "But why this Sexton Blake hisnay?"

"Oh, something's just crossed my mind, that's all," said Dane, with a smile. "I'll tell you all about it when you come back from your developing."

Glyn grunted, but went off to the dark-room, with all his apparatus, well pleased at having recovered the missing paper, but somewhat puzzled to account for its temporary disappearance, and for his chum's mysterious behaviour.

Meanwhile, Dane had fetched his microscope, and was carefully examining the plan of Glyn's invention with a strange expression upon his face.

Noble watched him impatiently for a few minutes, and then glanced out of the open window through which floated the subdued murmur of many voices, and the merry click of bat and ball, enticing sounds enough to the cricket-loving Constalk.

"Oh, come on down to the playing-fields! Leave that blessed microscope alone, for goodness' sake!" he exclaimed at last.

"No, I won't come just yet, old man, but you run along, by all means!" said Dane, with a smile.

"Right-ho, then, I'm off!"

And Noble promptly suited the action to the word, and made a bolt for the sunshine outside.

Dane continued to study the plan on Glyn's paper under the microscope for some minutes, and then he put the instrument aside.

"I thought so," he murmured to himself.

When Glyn burst into his study an hour later, he found Clifton Dane still there, waiting for him.

"Look here!" yelled the schoolboy inventor excitedly. "Just look for a moment, Dane! I believe I've made a discovery!"

"So have I!" murmured Dane. "But what's up?"

"Why, just look here! The film of that fight between Tom Merry and Blake has come out rippingly, and it shows somebody at the window of my study in the background."

"What?"

"Look! See that figure at the window, looking out into the quad, to see what the row was, I suppose. Who is it?"

Dane gazed at the figure, small but distinct, which appeared in one of the windows of the old school which formed the background to the "spoo" fight.

Sure enough, the window was the one belonging to the end study in the Shell passage, and there was no mistaking the figure.

"Levison!" exclaimed Dane, without hesitation.

It was undoubtedly Levison, of the Fourth!

The face and the attitude gave him away at once. But what was Levison, of the Fourth, doing in Glyn's study when Glyn and his chums were absent?

"It's as clear as daylight!" shouted Glyn. "That cad was in here, nosing round after my plans, while we were all out. I remember we passed him on the stairs as we went out, too."

"He found the plan all right, too," said Dane quietly. "You didn't overlook it in your search, after all, Bernard. It was taken and put back again."

"How do you know?" gasped Glyn.

"Because it's been traced," said Dane. "A tracing of it has been made very carefully, but you can see the marks plainly enough under the microscope."

"My hat!"

Glyn seized the microscope, and applied his eye to it, holding the plan beneath the lens.

"You're right!" he exclaimed, in a concentrated voice.

"It's as plain as daylight. That awful villain, Levison, has taken a copy of it! My hat!"

Glyn started up with a grim expression on his good-looking face, and strode to the door.

"Where are you off to?" said Dane, looking a little alarmed at his chum's expression.

"To see Levison!" said the Liverpool lad, between his clenched teeth.

Levison was at home, smoking a cigarette, when Glyn burst into his study without any warning.

Glyn marched straight up to him as he started to his feet in alarm.

"I've come for the tracing you've made of the plan of my new moving-picture camera!" said the schoolboy inventor, speaking calmly with an effort.

The cad of the Fourth, for all his usual coolness, turned pale at this direct attack.

"I—I—what?" he stuttered.

"Give me that tracing, you hound!" roared Glyn, seizing

the wretched Fourth-Former by the scruff of the neck, and shaking him as a terrier does a rat. "Don't you dare to deny having it. I've got a photo of you looking out of my study window while Blake was sparring with Tom Merry! Give me the paper before I thrash you within an inch of your miserable life!"

Then his nerve failed the cad of the Fourth utterly.

"I—I—didn't mean—Ow! Oh! It's—it's under the carpet over there in the corner!" he gasped.

Glyn hurled him forward on to his knees on the floor, and ran over to the corner indicated. There, sure enough, he found a large square of paper hidden under the carpet. One glance told him that it contained complete information of his invention, with copies of the drawings.

"You thieving hound!" roared Glyn, thrusting the paper in his pocket and turning on the wretched Levison with blazing eyes. "I've a jolly good mind to get you kicked out of the school by telling Dr. Holmes of the whole thing!"

"You—you wouldn't sneak, Glyn!" muttered Levison, with dry lips.

"It would serve you jolly well right, you miserable cad! But I'll see that it's taken out of you somehow. By Jove, I will! You can take your choice of taking a jolly good hiding from me with this!"—and Glyn caught up a fives bat from the open cupboard—"here and now, or of my going straight to Kildare and laying the whole matter before him."

Levison felt that the game was up, and he was fairly cornered. The suddenness of Glyn's attack upon him, just when he felt secure from every chance of discovery, had shaken his usually cool nerve, and he almost shuddered at the set, grim expression of the St. Jim's inventor as he stood swinging the fives bat.

But to let the matter go before the captain of the school was impossible.

"Which is it to be—quick!" demanded Glyn sternly.

"I—I—I'll take the thrashing!" stuttered Levison desperately.

"Then bend over the table, sharp! Come along!"

Glyn was in deadly earnest, and Levison had no choice but to obey. The wily cad of the Fourth had more than met his match at last.

The justly-angry inventor proceeded to give Levison the thrashing of a life-time. The fives bat rose and fell like a flail, with all the force of Glyn's muscular arm behind it. The cad of the Fourth had plenty of pluck, and he summoned it all to his aid now, but it could not prevent moans of pain and anguish from passing his lips. By the time Glyn desisted, Levison was in an almost fainting condition.

"There!" said Glyn, throwing down the bat and feeling somewhat mollified. "That'll be a lesson to you, I hope, Levison. You've only got what you deserve, as you know jolly well. You're an utter cad, and not fit for any decent fellow to touch, but you've taken your licking, and this matter need go no farther, as far as I'm concerned."

And Glyn stamped out of the study, and slammed the door, leaving the cad of the Fourth savage and sore, in a limp heap on the floor.

"Got the tracing?" asked Dane, as Glyn re-entered the end study flushed and triumphant.

"Yes; and I've settled with Levison," said the Liverpool lad grimly. "So the matter can now be considered closed."

Dane looked at his chum curiously, but made no comment. Exactly what passed between Glyn and Levison in the latter's study that afternoon never became public property, but the school in general took it for granted that they had adjusted their differences in a mutually-satisfactory manner.

CHAPTER 12.

A Plot Afoot.

WHEN Tom Merry & Co. took anything up, they generally did so very energetically, and so it was with the picture-palace idea. They very quickly set about the formation of an "operating party," whose business it would be to obtain suitable films—suitable, that is, in their opinion—for the St. Jim's Picture Palace. There was considerable competition for places in the operating party, which was finally extended to include all the fellows who were "in the know," including Bernard Glyn, who was, of course, the operator himself, and Noble, who was his right-hand man in the manipulation of the wonderful moving-picture camera.

It was decided that the first venture of the operating party should be on a quite modest scale, and after a somewhat lengthy discussion, Tom Merry and Jack Blake were deputed to carry out the first little affair, which was to be a "costume piece," since they had both fared somewhat roughly in the "great fight scene."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy shook his head a great deal over the selection committee's choice, declaring that what was really required was a person of tact and judgment. Where-

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upon Blake remarked blandly that it was all right, then, since two fellows of undoubted tact and judgment had been selected in the persons of Tom Merry and himself; but D'Arcy only shook his head the more.

However, the next afternoon, anyone who had happened to keep careful watch upon certain juniors of the Fourth and Shell Forms would have been witness of behaviour which could only have been considered most mysterious.

First of all, Glyn, carrying his wonderful new camera as inconspicuously as possible, strolled in a leisurely manner down towards the great gates which gave out upon the high-road to Rylcombe. But Glyn did not go out of the gates. When just opposite the porter's lodge, he gave a quick look round, and skipped into the laurels on the opposite side of the gate, camera and all; at which point of vantage, Noble presently joined him, bringing with him various bulky parcels.

"Got the films?" whispered Glyn.

"Yes."

"And the tripod?"

"Here it is?"

"Good! Then give me a hand in setting her up, but mum's the word. We don't want to bring old Taggy out before we're ready for him."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Quiet, then, you ass!"

As the two conspirators began stealthily to set up the camera in the laurels in such a manner that it was all but screened from the outside, while the lens commanded an uninterrupted view of the gates and the porter's lodge, Tom Merry and Blake strolled by, chatting pleasantly.

Tom Merry was carrying a good-sized basket, which he seemed to handle with unusual solicitude.

As the two juniors came abreast of the porter's lodge, the stout oaken door of that edifice opened, and the figure of the porter himself appeared.

"Afternoon, Taggy!" exclaimed Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Nice afternoon for the time of year, isn't it?" Taggles adopted a leaning attitude against his doorpost, so as to get the full benefit of the warm afternoon sun, and grunted:

"Which it ain't so bad, Master Merry, only that everything is gettin' that dried hup."

"Hincludin' your throat, Taggy!" put in Blake genially.

Taggles glared.

As a matter of fact, the dryness of his throat—a chronic ailment with him—had troubled Taggles even more than usual that afternoon, and he had had frequent recourse to his favourite remedy for the same, consisting of a good deal of gin mixed with a very little water.

But this fact only seemed to increase the indignation of Taggles at Blake's little remark. The porter glared at the juniors with a far from amicable expression in his rather bleary little eyes.

"Which I ain't a-goin' to stand 'ere and listen to any o' your himperence, Master Blake, and so I tells yer. Nice goin's hon, I must say, fer a man as 'asn't 'ad a drop o' gin all day, to stand 'ere and—"

"Gin!" exclaimed Blake, in well-feigned astonishment.

"Bless the man, what's he talking about? Who said a word about gin, Taggy?"

Taggles gasped, and Tom Merry and Blake winked at one another.

The porter suddenly realised that he had given himself away somewhat.

"Oh, lor'!" he muttered. "O' course not! Not that you— you actooly mentioned the word gin, Master Blake, but, you see, me bein' a strict teetotaler—"

"Oh, of course!" said Blake gravely, with a nod. "We all know you're a strict teetotaler, Taggy—you've often told us so yourself—except when you've got the toothache, of course," he added, as an afterthought. "Then a drop of whisky will—"

"Whisky!" shouted Taggles. "Never! Never 'ave I—"

"But you told Figgins that you kept whisky for the toothache, that time when he came to—er—borrow some for D'Arcy's cousin from Canada—cousin No. 1, I mean!" said Tom Merry, in apparent bewilderment. "Perhaps—"

"Ho!" said Taggles, feeling that he was getting into deep water. "Ho, did I, Master Merry?"

"Yes, you did, Taggy. Perhaps you meant—"

"Ho!" said Taggles, with great emphasis, and appearing to derive peculiar comfort from that expressive monosyllable. "Perhaps I did, Master Merry, and p'r'aps I didn't! Ho!"

And with that lucid statement the porter retired into his lodge, and slammed the door to with a slam which was heard the length and breadth of the old quad.

Tom Merry and Blake walked out of the gate chuckling.

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And Glyn and Noble, who had heard everything from their place of concealment, also chuckled long and joyously.

"That's got Taggy's rag out already!" murmured Noble.

"He'll just be in a nice mood when the time comes!"

"Ha, ha! Rather!"

Meanwhile, Tom Merry and Blake proceeded, chuckling, down the Rylcombe Road some distance, and then turned off suddenly, and dived through the hedge into the wood the other side. For some minutes they proceeded through the thick underwood, in which, with their Boy Scout training, they were able to move almost noiselessly.

At last Tom Merry threw down the basket he was carrying at the foot of a great hollow-trunked oak, which stood in a pleasant glade by the side of a rippling brook.

"Here's the place!"

"Good! Now for the transformation scene!" grinned Blake.

"What-ho!"

The two juniors proceeded to unpack the basket, taking therefrom the most extraordinary assortment of garments possible to imagine—pairs of ragged trousers, a couple of coats, either of which would have disgraced an ordinary scarecrow, boots which could hardly be distinguished as such, so full of holes were they, a couple of gaudy handkerchiefs, a ragged cap, and a bowler hat which, as Jack Blake remarked, from its appearance might have belonged to Noah.

Besides these fearful and wonderful garments, Tom Merry laid out on the sward a make-up box, and a couple of wigs, and various other articles usually associated with the theatrical profession.

Blake chuckled as he commenced to divest himself of his well-cut Etons.

"Now for Mouching Mike and Lounging Larry, Tommy!"

"We shall have to buck up," said Tom Merry, picking up a hand-mirror which was also among the contents of that wonderful basket, and setting to work on his face with a stick of grease-paint. "I caught a glimpse of Glyn's camera in the laurels when we were chipping Taggles, and if we keep him waiting too long he may get restive and give the show away. He's such an impatient beggar, you know."

"My hat, yes! Or old Taggy may be called away for something."

"If he is, we can easily get one of the chaps to fetch him when we start making a shindy."

"Yes, perhaps we can, but— Hallo!"

"Who's that, I wonder?"

There was a crashing in the bushes, evidently made by someone who was approaching the very spot where the juniors were engaged upon the "transformation scene." The crashing grew louder while Tom Merry and Blake watched anxiously for the appearance of the intruder, whom they ardently hoped would prove to be no one who would interfere with their little scheme.

Suddenly there was an extra loud crash and a thud, and the juniors looked at one another questioningly.

"Bai Jove!"

The exclamation floated through the thickets, and Tom Merry and Blake gave a simultaneous sigh of relief.

"Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! How uttably wotten!"

The voice was heard again, raised in a plaintive tone, and the two juniors, each in a state of more or less undress, pushed through the bushes towards the sound.

"Gussy!" called Blake in a suppressed voice. "Where are you, you ass? What's up?"

"Heah I am, deah boys!"

The swell of St. Jim's rose from the bushes almost under their feet. His elegant Eton suit was plastered with mud and leaves all down the front, and he held a very dishevelled topper in his hand.

The juniors stared at him in amazement.

"Ow! I'm in a weally howwid state, deah boys, and I apologise for meetin' you like this."

"What have you been doing to yourself, ass?" demanded Blake, leading the way to the glade.

"I wufeso to be called an ass!"

"Oh scat!"

"I twipped ovah a wotten woot or somethin', and—"

"A rotten what?" demanded Tom Merry and Blake, with one voice.

"A woot!"

"What on earth's a woot?" said Tom Merry, puzzled.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Oh, a root!" said Tom laughing, as a fit of inspiration came to him. "Excuse our denseness, Gussy, but it's your elegant accent, you know."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! I twipped ovah some beastly woot or othah, and fell down in a howwid, squashy bit of ground. I'm in a feahful fluttah!"

"You're certainly in a bit of a mess, anyway!" grinned

Blake. "But what the dickens did you want to come charging through the wood like a bull of Bashan for, when we've been doing all we could to be quiet?"

"I wefuse to be compawed with a bull of Bashan!"

"Oh, rats! What are you here at all for?"

"I came to find you, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus with dignity.

"What for?" howled Blake.

"Pway do not get excited, Blake. You'll have a cwowd comin' woud in a minute, if you make such a wow!"

"You—you—"

"I came to tell you to hurry up," continued Arthur Augustus calmly. "Glyn is gettin' impatient, and all the fellahs are waitin' about—in hidin', of course, to see the fun."

"We'll come when we're ready," growled Blake. "And not before!"

"But when will you be weady, deah boys?" persisted the swell of St. Jim's.

"As soon as the silly ass that is worrying us buzzes off!" put in Tom Merry sweetly.

Arthur Augustus screwed his monocle into his eye, and favoured the hero of the Shell with a stony stare, which that cheerful youth, being occupied in donning a pair of ragged check trousers, quite failed to observe.

"If you are wefewin' to me, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, chuck it, Gussy!" roared the exasperated Blake, who was struggling to brace up the dilapidated pair of nether garments which he had selected high enough to prevent the ends of them from flapping on the ground, and impeding his progress. "Come over here, and help me with these beastly braces!"

"Certainly, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus gracefully, stepping to his chum's assistance. "But, good gwacious, what a feahful colour!"

"What are?" growled Blake.

"The bwaces, deah boy!"

"You—you dummy!" hooted Blake. "I am supposed to be dressing up to represent a tramp, not a blessed fashion-plate!"

"Yaas, but even a twamp would dwaw the line at purple bwaces with pink stwipes!"

"Oh, come on, for goodness' sake! Give me a hand to pull 'em up tighter!"

"If you pull them any tightah, your twousers will be up undah your armpits, deah boy!" objected Arthur Augustus.

Blake gave a roar.

"Are you going to help, you ass, or are you going to clear off?"

"Of course, I am quite willin' to help, deah boy, but I stwongly object to bein' called an ass, you know!"

"Oh, come on, or we shall be fooling about here all day!" growled Tom Merry. "Buck up, Gussy, and do the valet act for once, there's a good chap."

And Arthur Augustus good-naturedly ceased his objections, and lent a hand in transforming two healthy and handsome schoolboys into a couple of the most disreputable-looking tramps imaginable.

CHAPTER 13.

Poor Old Taggles!

"WHICH you can clear hoff! We don't want your sort in 'ere, so 'op it!"

Thus Taggles, the worthy school porter of St. Jim's, to the pair of dusty and villainous-looking, somewhat undersized tramps, who had halted in Rylcombe Road, and were now staring in at the gates of St. Jim's, as if hesitating whether to enter or not.

"Clear hoff—d'ye hear!" repeated Taggles, in rising wrath.

The porter could see that the two gentlemen of the road were hesitating as to their course of action, and his remarks were intended to hasten their decision. The surly porter was feeling more than usually ill-tempered that afternoon, and he was in no mood to be bothered with tramps.

"Just you 'op it!" he roared. "Clear out immejit!"

But the two tramps did not seem in a hurry to obey Taggles's polite injunctions. On the contrary, they looked at each other and made a move towards the gate, evidently intending to enter.

"This 'ere's the place, 'Erbert!"

"What-ho, Alf! Hin we goes!"

Taggles seemed hardly able to believe his eyes. He grew purple in the face and made a dash for his lodge.

The two tramps grinned, and a few subdued chuckles came from the laurels, which evidently concealed a good number of spectators of the little scene. From the same direction, too, came the sound of a faint clicking.

Bernard Glyn's moving-picture camera was evidently in action.

In a few seconds, Taggles reappeared with a stout stick, which he flourished in a very businesslike way, as he dashed out of his lodge.

"Get hout of it, will yer?" he roared, making for the two tramps, who were calmly lounging in at the gates. "I'll teach yer to come hin 'ere with yer impudence! Gerrouit!"

The tramps halted, and regarded the infuriated porter coolly, with their hands in their pockets, whereat Taggles seemed a little taken aback.

"Oo're you?" inquired the tramp who had been addressed by his companion as Alf.

"'Oo am I?" yelled Taggles, flourishing the stick again. "I'll show you 'oo I am, fast enough, yer goodfernothin' warmints! Get hout of it!"

"Steady on with that stick, old cock!" remarked 'Erbert, eyeing the raging porter warily. "We're comin' in 'ere!"

"My 'at! 'Ere's nice goins hon!" gasped Taggles. "Ho! So yer comin' hin, hare yer? I don't think!"

Taggles was not naturally a brave man, but the coolness of the two tramps exasperated him out of his usual caution, and besides, he had a stout stick, while the intruders were unarmed.

Taggles made a rush at the tramps, his stick whirling in the air, and a savage expression on his countenance, which clearly indicated his intention of annihilating his antagonists.

But the two tramps did not appear to be in the least alarmed.

As Taggles made his bull-like rush, they dodged coolly past him, one on each side, thus placing the raging porter between them and the gates.

The way into the quad, was now actually open to the intruders, but they did not seem inclined to take advantage of the free passage thus left them just yet.

They turned again to face Taggles, who had pulled up clumsily, and was now glaring at them in a towering fury.

Taggles was fat and very much out of condition, but he seemed to be surprised and hurt at the easy manner in which the two agile gentlemen of the road had avoided his terrific onslaught.

As he stood there, puffing and glaring, and uncertain what to do next, Alf coolly wagged his head at him.

"Not so fast, cocky!" said the tramp, in a hoarse voice. "You'll be 'urting yerself, if yer go a-wavin' that stick about so free! We're a-goin' up to the 'ouse!"

And Alf jerked a grimy thumb in the direction of the School House, which rose in a stately pile on the other side of the green quad.

"Yer wot?" howled Taggles.

"We're goin' hup to the 'ouse to see the 'Ead!" answered Alf calmly.

Taggles nearly fainted.

"Good 'eavens!" he gasped faintly.

"Gentleman like 'im's sure to 'and out a bob or two to a couple of poor coves down on their luck," put in 'Erbert. Taggles seemed to recover himself all of a sudden.

"You impudent ragamuffins!" he roared, dashing at them again with his stick, beating the air like a flail.

"Clear hoff, or—"

The tramps dodged aside again. Taggles singled out Alf for the object of his special attention, aiming a swipe at him with the heavy stick which would certainly have brained the vagrant had it reached its mark. Alf skipped nimbly aside just in time, and the infuriated porter made a terrific effort to turn aside from his lumbering rush, with the result that he stumbled and fell to earth, with a concussion which knocked most of the breath out of his body for the time being, and which, as Monty Lowther afterwards declared was the case, seemed to shake the whole quad.

"Groo! Oh! 'Elp! Ow!"

The porter's stick had flown out of his hand with his fall, and with a grin and a wink to his associate, 'Erbert leisurely picked it up and sauntered over to where Taggles lay on the ground, groaning and gasping.

'Erbert poked him in the ribs with the end of the stick.

"Fell over yer own feet, didn't yer, old gin-face?" inquired he, sympathetically.

This remark caused Alf to double up with merriment; but the porter's eyes started almost out of his head as he heard it.

Stimulated by the fury of his rage, and also by sundry other pokes with the stick, Taggles scrambled to his hands and knees, and then to his feet, his face purple and his fists clenched.

"Lemme honly get at yer!" he gasped, throwing all caution to the winds, and making a wild rush at the tramp with the stick.

The tramp dodged, and dodged again, while Taggles, beside himself with fury, and encouraged by the fact that the enemy fled before him, in spite of having the advantage

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of the stick on their side, tore wildly in pursuit. Gasping and blowing like a porpoise, he chased first one and then the other of his nimble opponents. Round and round they dodged, keeping always within the bounds of a comparatively small circle—a fact which Taggles, in his fury, failed to notice.

The spectacle of the chase was ludicrous in the extreme. A more undignified figure than Taggles presented could hardly be imagined, as his fat figure pounded along in the fruitless chase, his hat gone, his clothes dusty, the perspiration streaming down his beetroot-hued face. Ever and anon, one or other of the tramps would allow their infuriated pursuer to get almost within touching distance, only to dart away again just as Taggles made a vicious grab.

From within the laurels, sounds of irrepressible chuckles proceeded—quite loud enough for Taggles to have heard, had his mind not been exclusively occupied by the single purpose of catching one or other of his enemies. The faint, but steady, clicking which was also audible, also passed unnoticed by the porter; but it told Alf and 'Erbert—otherwise Tom Merry and Jack Blake—that Glyn's wonderful camera was not missing anything that went on.

Taggles was almost exhausted; but, in his blind fury, was still sticking doggedly to the pursuit, when 'Erbert's quick ears told him that the clicking sound had ceased, indicating that Bernard Glyn's films had run out.

'Erbert seemed to hang back for a moment, and the pursuing porter's grasp was all but upon him, when the tramp wriggled aside like an eel, at the same time thrusting the stick he still carried down between the porter's feet.

Taggles tripped and staggered wildly, and the next moment crashed to earth for the second time, rolling over and over until he finally came to rest in a sitting position. There he sat, a most pitiable object, and gasped and gasped. Taggles was utterly done!

"M-m-my heye!" he managed to gasp out—"m-m-my heye!"

Suddenly there was a rush of feet, and Taggles found himself surrounded by a crowd of juniors, who had sprung, as it seemed to the bewildered porter, from nowhere. He had his back to the shrubbery, so that naturally he had not observed the rush therefrom of the delighted spectators of the little episode.

There was a yell from a score of voices.

"What's up, Taggles?"

"What are you sitting there for?"

"Has there been an earthquake, or what?"

"What's the matter?"

"My—m-m-my heye!" stuttered the porter. "Them tramps. There they hare! Turn 'em hout! Go for 'em! My heye!"

"Those two tramps?" yelled Noble, a flash of comprehension apparently suddenly enlightening him. "Kick 'em out! They've been assaulting Taggy!"

"Hurrah!"

"Rush 'em!"

"Go for 'em!"

"Kick 'em out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors made a pell-mell rush at the two tramps, who apparently at once relinquished their intention of going to see the Head, and made a rush for the gates.

They were hustled out, amidst a yelling, laughing crowd of juniors, who, in fact, escorted them down the road and out of sight, somewhat to the satisfaction of the unfortunate Taggles.

As the stiff and weary porter saw the yelling crowd hustling down the road, the two tramps in the midst, and a cloud of dust rising up behind, he even grinned a little. He thought he could safely leave the two "imperent tramps" to the tender mercies of the juniors.

Taggles rose from the ground gingerly, with many a stifled groan, retrieved his stick and battered hat, and limped into his lodge.

"My heye," he muttered—"my heye! Nice goin's hon, hindeed! Never in all my born days 'ave I seed sich impence, nor yet 'eard of sich neither! My heye!"

And Taggles shut the door of his lodge with a resounding slam.

It is impossible to imagine what the feelings of the porter would have been had he known what was going on amidst the group which had disappeared down the Rylcombe Road in a cloud of dust.

The juniors were yelling—not with the yells of battle, but of laughter. They shrieked hysterically, and Tom Merry and Blake—alias Alf and 'Erbert—were patted on the back so often that they began to protest.

"Chuck it, you duffers!" gasped Tom Merry breathlessly. "It was funny, but you needn't bang all a chap's breath out

of his body! Let's get into the wood. I want to get out of these togs."

"Same here," chimed in Blake. "The next ass who hits my back will get one in the jaw!"

"Oh, my aunt, it was gorgeous!" almost wept Monty Lowther. "If Taggy only knew, he'd have fifty fits right off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It'll make a ripping film!" chuckled Noble. "Though Glyn was cackling so much he could hardly turn the blessed handle fast enough!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It—it was spiffing!" gasped Clifton Dane. "But—poor old Taggles!"

There was a yell.

"Poor old Taggles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Taggy!"

And the juniors, as they plunged through the wood, and subsequently helped Tom Merry and Jack Blake—the heroes of the hour—to return to their normal appearance, broke out into frequent hysterical chuckles and exclamations of "Poor old Taggy!"

CHAPTER 14. Great Preparations.

THE next few days were busy ones indeed for Tom Merry and his chums of the Shell and the Fourth. The operating party had been successful in getting a number of moving pictures, which were sure, as Blake remarked gleefully, to "bring down the house" when exhibited to the school in the St. Jim's Picture Palace.

No one was safe from this prowling band of operators, who got into trouble more than once with their schoolfellows for taking pictures at what were considered inopportune moments. The operators, however, put up with rebuffs and even hard knocks for the good of the cause, and went on their way unabashed and not a whit disheartened, until they had got a collection of films which were, to say the least of them, unique.

Glyn went about with a smile that would not come off, while all the juniors who were in the plot—the school in general only dimly suspected what was toward as yet—chuckled together at frequent intervals.

In the meantime, the story of the fire at the Wayland cinematograph theatre had become public property, and the talk of the district. It had come out, too, that but for the presence of mind of Tom Merry and his chums there would undoubtedly have been terrible loss of life.

The six Shell fellows became the heroes of the hour at St. Jim's. Dr. Holmes himself, the revered headmaster, informed them in public before the whole school that he was proud of them, and St. Jim's cheered his words to the echo. Kildare shook hands with them, remarking with enthusiasm that they were plucky young beggars, and many of the masters and Sixth-Formers acted similarly.

The climax came to their glory when six illuminated addresses, together with six magnificent bicycles, with free wheels and three-speed gears, and every possible luxury of fitment, arrived for the six heroes of the Shell from the mayor and council of Wayland, to replace the machines which had been destroyed in the blaze.

Tom Merry & Co., with their blushing honours thick upon them, steadily went about their preparations for opening the great St. Jim's Picture Palace.

There was a tremendous lot of work to be done, and a number of difficulties to be overcome. Tom Merry had hard work to get the Head's consent to the affair at all, who at first refused to sanction any such thing, with the example of the ill-fated Wayland Cinema before him to emphasise the dangers of cinematograph shows.

Glyn, however, convinced the good old doctor that undue danger of fire would be absent in this case, by taking a section of his patent film into the Head's study, and applying a match to it before his eyes. Instead of flaring up, the film refused to burn at all, merely smouldering dully, whereat Dr. Holmes admitted himself convinced, and furthermore congratulated the St. Jim's inventor on having made a valuable discovery.

Then there was the wood-shed to be got into order, and Taggles to be induced by flattery and bribes to lend his aid to the scheme, although he shook his head over it a great deal, remembering the fate of the St. Jim's Empire.

But at last order began to arise out of chaos, and things began to wear a more ship-shape air. The wood-shed had been converted into quite a smart hall by means of gay hangings, and plenty of paper decorations and bunting.

Glyn laid down the extra wiring necessary to convey electricity from the main building sufficient to provide the auditorium with brilliant illumination, just as he had done before.

In short, the preparations progressed apace, until one fine day St. Jim's came out of morning school to find a gigantic poster flaring down at them from the school notice-board, all the other—and, of course, less important notices by masters or prefects—being completely overshadowed. The poster ran in this wise:

THE ST. JIM'S PICTURE PALACE
will positively open

THIS EVENING AT SIX O'CLOCK,
when there will be presented

A MAGNIFICENT PROGRAMME OF
EXCEPTIONAL INTEREST,

illustrating

TOPICAL EVENTS AT ST. JIM'S,

by means of

THE NEW PATENT GLYN CINEMATOGRAPH
MACHINE,

which is now

EXHIBITED TO THE PUBLIC FOR THE
FIRST TIME.

ROLL UP IN YOUR THOUSANDS!

Seats from 6d. to 2s.

All proceeds will be devoted to the Junior Cricket Club funds.

All fags are requested to wash their necks.
Refreshments free to those who bring their own.

COME AND SEE YOURSELF

at

THE ST. JIM'S PICTURE PALACE!

To say that this startling announcement surprised St. Jim's would be putting it mildly. It created a perfect furore. Seniors and juniors alike read it with equal interest, and an excited crowd seethed round the notice-board.

Wally D'Arcy, among others, read the notice and grunted. Jameson and Gibson, of the Third, grunted, too, when they saw it. They elbowed their way out of the noisy, excited crowd, and joined Wally in the quad.

"Rotten fuss to make about a blessed kid's picture-show, that's what I say!" growled Wally. "Blessed if I know what all those silly duffers are so excited about!"

"A lot of rot, that's what I call it!" said Jameson.

"Absolutely!" agreed Curly Gibson.

"Hallo, D'Arcy minor! Half a shake! I want to speak to you!"

A shrill, excited voice hailed Wally from the rear, and Hobbs, of the Third, one of the leading spirits of the fags' Form, dashed out of the School House door and ran across the quad, to them.

Hobbs's eyes were sparkling with mischief, and he was evidently labouring under great excitement.

"Seen-that blessed poster?" he gasped, as he dashed up.

"D'you think we're blind, you young ass?"

Hobbs stared at Wally in astonishment for a moment.

"All right; don't get your rag out, D'Arcy minor!" said Hobbs. "What I want to know is, what are we going to do about it?"

"Nothing!" said Wally crisply. And Jameson and Gibson nodded, to imply that they were in full agreement with their chum.

Hobbs could hardly believe his ears.

"Nothing!" he yelled. "What the dickens do you mean? Why, it's the chance of a lifetime to get in one at those stuck-up Fourth and Shell duffers! Have you forgotten how we mucked up their blessed Empire for them?"

"Oh, seat!" said Wally. "Shut up and buzz off, Hobby! You make me tired."

"But—but," shouted Hobbs, in utter amazement, "do you mean to say you're not going to do anything, D'Arcy minor?"

"Yes, I do, ass!"

"But—but what for? Why?"

"Because I don't choose."

"Well, this is a caution, I must say!" gasped Hobbs. "Blessed if I understand your little game, D'Arcy minor, but I jolly well know one thing. The Third jolly well aren't going to lose their chance of giving Tom Merry & Co. a dig in the ribs. We can bust up the whole blessed show for 'em without your help, for that matter."

"You'd better not try," remarked Wally grimly.

"Why, what d'you mean, you blessed ass?" Hobbs's voice rose to a shriek. "Do you mean to say—"

"I mean to say that if anybody in the Third tries to make trouble for this blessed cinematograph show, there'll be ructions," said D'Arcy minor determinedly.

"Rats!" roared Hobbs. "I jolly well—"

Wally glanced at Jameson and Gibson, and in a moment the angry Hobbs found himself grasped by three pairs of hands.

"You'll what?" said Wally sweetly.

"Ow! Lemme go, you beasts!" roared Hobbs furiously.

"Bump him!"

Bump!

Hobbs gave a fiendish yell as he met the hard ground with a heavy concussion

"Ow! Oh!"

Bump!

"Yow! Help!"

Bump!

"Yaroooh! Stoppit! I—I give in!" groaned the unfortunate fag.

Wally & Co. released their victim at last.

"Good!" said Wally blandly. "Then it was a mistake what you said just now, Hobby? You aren't going to try and bust up the Picture Palace, after all?"

"Yow! No!"

"I'm jolly glad to hear it!" said Wally heartily. "And you might as well tell the rest of the chaps from me that that little game's off. If I hear any more of it, there'll be trouble like you've run up against. See?"

"Yes, ass—I mean yes, D'Arcy minor," stuttered Hobbs.

"Good again!" said Wally, with his sweetest smile. "Tata, Hobby!"

And Wally & Co. strolled away, leaving Hobbs in considerable doubt as to whether he was on his head or his heels.

Had he known of the bargain which Tom Merry had made with Wally & Co., perhaps he would not have been quite so mystified!

CHAPTER 15.

The St. Jim's Picture Palace.

"MY hat!" said Tom Merry, rubbing his hands together. "We've drawn 'em this time, and no mistake!"

"What-ho!" said Jack Blake, with emphasis. "We have, my son. The St. Jim's Picture Palace is a howling success!" Blake's elegant phrase was certainly justified.

It was as yet only a quarter to six, but a steady stream of youthful humanity was pouring in at the door of the transformed wood-shed, above which flared a big electric lamp, rigged up by the indefatigable inventor, which served to illuminate the board whereon the words, "St. Jim's Picture Palace," were painted in huge letters. Digby and Manners were kept busy tearing off the tickets from their fat rolls, as the stream of patrons rolled in. As yet most of the bookings were in the cheaper seats, the sixpenny and shilling ones; but Tom Merry & Co. had no fear but that the high and mighty seniors would come in at the last moment and take possession of the eighteenpenny and two-shilling seats, as befitted their dignity. A couple of rows in the front of the house were specially reserved for Sixth-Formers and masters, several of the latter having announced their intention of being present.

Tom Merry strolled down the gangway to the end of the room, where Glyn and his wonderful machine were ensconced behind a metal screen, a section of which was cut away to allow the rays of the brilliant white light to fall upon the white screen at the other end of the room.

"How are things going on, old man—all right?" inquired the hero of the Shell, addressing the St. Jim's inventor, who was in his shirt-sleeves and very busy.

Noble, who was assisting him, appeared very busy also.

"Pretty well!" granted Glyn. "I'm just going to turn the light on to test it. How's that?"

Glyn was using an oxygen cylinder to supply the powerful light necessary, and he turned it on as he spoke. There was a sudden hissing sound, and a dazzling beam of white light shot out through the aperture on the metal screen.

"My hat, what a ripping light!"

"I think it's good enough!"

Glyn turned off the light, and the hissing ceased, and there was a buzz of voices from the hall, which was beginning to be pretty full now.

"Chaps are rolling in like one o'clock!" remarked Tom Merry.

"Are they?"

"Yes; it's more than half full."

"Good!"

"Do you think you'll be ready to time, old man?" inquired Tom Merry anxiously.

"I shall if I don't get a lot of asses buzzing round and jawing!" grunted Glyn.

Tom Merry laughed cheerfully, and took the hint.

"Right-ho! I'll leave you and Noble to it!"

And Tom Merry strolled away, to gloat over the steadily-increasing pile of "takings."

It was evident by now that all St. Jim's was coming. Some of the fellows had openly scoffed at the poster on the notice-board, many had designated it as "all rot," and many others had expressed their conviction that the whole affair would be a hopeless "muck up." But one and all had made up

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By MARTIN CLIFFORD.
Please Order Your Copy Early.

their minds to come, and the funds of the Junior Cricket Club seemed likely to benefit thereby. By the time six o'clock struck from the old tower, every boy in the school was crammed into the wood-shed, and Mr. Railton, Mr. Linton, master of the Shell, Mr. Lathom, of the Fourth, and even Mr. Selby, the somewhat affable gentleman whose happy lot it was to impart instruction to the heroes of the Third, all occupied seats in the front row.

Tom Merry & Co., Figgins, and his chums of the New House, with Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen—otherwise the New Firm, and also Clifton Dane, Lumley-Lumley, and Dick Brooke, had seats together at the very back of the hall, where they would be at hand in case any help was required behind the scenes. There certainly were, as Lowther remarked, quite enough of them to assist.

Lumley-Lumley had charge of a gramophone, which discoursed more or less sweet music at any time when nothing else was going on. This had been lately arranged in order to render unnecessary the cornet solos which Herries had first offered to give, but which had been politely but firmly declined.

Lumley's gramophone was in the midst of a lively march when the blinding glare of light was again thrown upon the white screen, and Glyn's voice was heard adjuring Lowther to switch off the lights.

There was a shout from the audience.

"Go it!"

"Buck up!"

"Cut the cackle and come to the hosses!"

Click, click, click, click!

The cinematograph started at last.

There was a yell as the first living picture fell upon the screen.

"Fatty Wynn!"

"Good old Falstaff!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With lifelike distinctness, the wonderful machine depicted the Welsh member of the famous New House Co. sitting in the familiar tuckshop of St. Jim's in the act of devouring jam-tarts at express speed.

The audience yelled and clapped their hands in uproarious delight, while Fatty Wynn started up in his place with a red face.

"Look here, Tom Merry, you ass! How the dickens—"

"What do you suppose we stood you all those blessed tarts for the other day?" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly, anticipating the fat Fourth-Former's protests.

"I—I thought—" stammered Fatty Wynn. "I—I didn't know—I didn't see the blessed camera!"

"The blessed camera saw you all right!" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought you beasts were just standing me the tarts for—"

"For love!" finished Monty Lowther, interrupting the flow of the Welsh junior's indignation.

"Not much, my son! Why, that film cost us more money than all the rest put together! Those tarts were twopenny ones, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The house rocked with laughter, and the applause was terrific when Fatty Wynn, still munching away as if for a wager, flickered off the screen.

There was a short interval, during which the gramophone ground out a popular tune, while Glyn and Noble worked feverishly to get the next film ready.

This depicted the First Eleven cricket match which had been played the previous Saturday against an M.C.C. team, and there was a cheer as the well-known athletic figure of Kildare, the popular captain, was seen at the wickets, Darrel being at the other end.

"Good old Kildare!"

"Well hit, sir!"

"Go it—run!"

Mr. Railton, in the front row, turned to Kildare with a smile.

"It really is splendid, is it not, Kildare? I have never seen a better cinematograph show!"

"It's wonderful, sir!" said Kildare enthusiastically.

After the cricket match, Glyn put on the film of the Tom Merry v. Blake sparring match, and there was a roar from the audience, which increased in volume as the fight went on, and the combatants showed signs of becoming heated and excited. Tom Merry and Blake themselves laughed as much as anybody. Not many of the excited spectators noticed the figure which appeared at one of the windows in the background for a moment, and looked out upon the scene in the quad. below, but Tom Merry & Co., who knew how Levison's guilt in the matter of the stolen plans had been proved, were on the look out for it.

"Look, there's Levison!" whispered Blake excitedly.

"You can recognise him easily enough!"

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"Rather! The cad didn't know how he was giving himself away!"

"The rotter couldn't deny his rotten trick after this!"

This film proved immensely popular with the juniors in the hall, many of whom had the satisfaction of seeing themselves in the crowd that surged round the excited combatants in the screen. Glyn had to promise to show it again later.

The next film showed Herries of the Fourth feeding the great bulldog, which was as the apple of his eye.

Until comparatively recently, Towser had never been very popular at St. Jim's, but after having been the means of saving Tom Merry from certain death at the hands of a Hindu fanatic, Towser had come to be looked on with far more favourable eyes, and the film was accorded quite an ovation.

Herries blushed modestly in the darkness.

"I must say that's the best film you've got by a jolly long sight!" he remarked.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Herries turned upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with a truculent snort.

"If you've got anything to say against Towser, Gussy—"

"Well, you must admit that Towser has got no respect whatever for a fellah's twousahs, Hewwies!" protested Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, rats!" snorted Herries. And the chums chuckled.

The next film called forth murmurs of indignation, mingled with many chuckles, from the juniors present, at what they recognised to be a sly dig at their common enemy. It showed a typical animated scene at the school boathouses by the Ryll, on a sunny afternoon. The central figures were two or three Third-Formers, who were getting a boat out, preparatory to going for an hour's "tubbing."

Just as they were about to launch, however, the burly figure of Knox, the most unpopular prefect in the school, strode into the picture, and, seizing one of the fags, who was recognised as little Joe Frayne, the ex-ragamuffin, by the ear, marched him roughly off, willy-nilly, to cox the senior's boat. As he saw this little example of the bullying methods for which he was famous, depicted on the screen with almost uncanny distinctness and naturalness, Knox rose from his seat in the front of the hall with an angry exclamation.

Instantly there was an angry shout.

"Sit down, you ass!"

"Get out, you rotter!"

"You young villains!" gasped Knox, white with fury.

"Rats! Sit down!" roared the audience.

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Railton tactfully.

"Silence!" roared Kildare.

Sefton, Knox's crony, pulled the angry Sixth Former down into his seat again, and the juniors chuckled joyously.

They knew that Knox could do nothing with the masters and prefects there, and they knew that he must be inwardly squirming with rage and mortification.

Even the anxious and perspiring Glyn grinned cheerfully to Noble as he churned away manfully at his clicking apparatus.

"That's a nasty knock for Knox—eh, Noble?"

"What-ho!" chuckled Noble. "It's a fair show-up for him, and no mistake!"

A ringing cheer greeted the next set of pictures, which clicked and flickered on to the screen. They represented Mr. Railton, the popular School House master, at the nets, and the young master smiled modestly as he saw himself hitting the balls which the Sixth Formers were bowling at him all round the wicket with great impartiality.

Mr. Railton was a fine bat, and his display was a masterly one, and the school cheered him to the echo. Some chuckles were heard to mingle with the cheers when the master's balls were finally whipped off by a terrific ball from Kildare, and Mr. Railton himself laughed heartily.

"Railton's a sport!" remarked Blake to D'Arcy. "But that ball of old Kildare's would have bowled many a county batsman, I'll bet!"

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed the swell of St. Jim's. "It was a wippin' ball, dear boy, I dare say it would have come vewy neah to bowlin' me, you know!"

"Why, you conceited ass—"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Noble having by this time rewound the film of Tom Merry's fight with Blake, this was put on again next, to be received with uproarious applause, as before.

It was followed by a film showing Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co.—all New House fellows—at work in the gym. One or two critical remarks were heard anent Figgy's calves, which were noted for their slimmness, but the six juniors, not excluding Fatty Wynn, put up a very good gymnastic display indeed, the conclusion of which was greeted with hearty rounds of applause.

The eighth film was a long and highly humorous one, that almost sent the spectators into convulsions. It was the one showing Taggles, the school porter, attempting to keep the two tramps out of the school precincts, as was, of course, his bounden duty. Taggles, however, was neither a very brave nor very active man, while the tramps—in whom many of the patrons of the St. Jim's Picture Palace traced a certain resemblance to Tom Merry and Jack Blake—were as active and elusive as a waggon-load of monkeys, and the porter's clumsy and furious attempts to head them off appeared ludicrous in the extreme. It is doubtful whether Taggles himself, had he been present, would have appreciated the humour of the pictures, since he had been quite unaware at the time that the two beggars he had been at such pains to exclude from the sacred precincts were two juniors, made up and acting the part for the express benefit of the concealed moving-picture camera. Had he been aware of this simple fact he would hardly have exerted himself so violently, since Taggles had a rooted aversion, as a rule, to exertion in any form, except such as was required to convey a glass of gin-and-water to his lips. But be that as it might, Taggles' efforts on this occasion were the cause of great mirth to the patrons of the St. Jim's Picture Palace, who laughed themselves almost into a state of exhaustion.

The concluding film of the entertainment was, as Blake remarked, the gem of the whole collection, showing as it did none other than the one and only Arthur Augustus trying on a new waistcoat before a mirror.

This film, of course, simply brought down the house, and D'Arcy's furious protests were drowned in shrieks of merriment. He had, of course, been quite unaware that his every movement was being relentlessly recorded by the tell-tale camera when he was trying the waistcoat on. Consequently, his anxious expression as he squirmed and twisted and plumed himself before the glass, trying the effect of the garment from every possible point of view, fairly made St. Jim's roar. Masters, Sixth Formers, seniors and juniors roared in concert.

When the film ended the house roared and stamped its applause with a din that threatened literally to bring down the house.

Tom Merry, flushed and triumphant at the success of his grand scheme, made his way to the platform on which the white screen was erected at the end of the room, and clamoured up on to it.

Just as he reached his elevated position the door opened, and a sudden hush came upon the noisy assembly. None other than Dr. Holmes, the revered Head of St. Jim's himself, stood in the doorway! Dr. Holmes's brow was furrowed into a frown, until he saw Mr. Railton and the other masters, when it cleared at once. Dr. Holmes had every confidence in the young Housemaster, who was virtually his right-hand man.

"Oh, ah! It's all right, Mr. Railton. I was not aware that you were here, that is all" said Dr. Holmes mildly. "I

merely came to investigate the cause of this—er—little disturbance. However—"

"I am sorry, sir," said Mr. Railton at once. "I am afraid the excellence of the entertainment we have just witnessed has caused us to permit an unwarrantable amount of noise."

"If that is the case, I will say no more," said Dr. Holmes, smiling. "I am very pleased to hear the entertainment has been a success. As you know, I should have been present myself had I not been engaged up till a few minutes ago. Were you about to address a few remarks to your schoolfellows, Merry?" continued the kind old doctor, turning his glasses upon Tom Merry, who was still standing on the platform with flushed cheeks. "I understand that you are responsible for this very successful entertainment?"

"It was my idea, sir, certainly," said Tom Merry, "but it's Glyn who's really responsible for the success of the whole thing, sir—Glyn and his inventions."

"Indeed! I congratulate you, Glyn, my boy!" said Dr. Holmes, beaming upon the triumphant and perspiring inventor of St. Jim's, who just popped up from behind the iron screen.

"Thank you, sir!"

"There is just one thing I should like to say to the fellows, sir," said Tom Merry eagerly, "and that is about the result of the entertainment. It was got up, if you remember, sir, for the benefit of the Junior Cricket Club funds."

"And a very deserving object, no doubt," said Dr. Holmes with a smile.

"Yes, sir. I should like to tell the fellows that I shall be able to hand over ten pounds twelve shillings and sixpence to the club, sir, as a result of to-night's entertainment."

There was triumph in Tom Merry's tones as he made this announcement. Had he not fulfilled his boast that he would raise the ten pounds for the club inside a fortnight?

"Hurrah!"

A ringing cheer greeted Tom Merry's words, and the hero of the Shell slipped down from the platform, flushed and happy.

"Well, well," said Dr. Holmes, with a kind smile, as he turned to leave the wood-shed with Mr. Railton and the other masters, "I am delighted to hear you have done so well for the club, Merry. I am sure, from the enthusiasm, that all those who were fortunate enough to have witnessed your entertainment to-night are agreed that a great success has been scored by"—and here the Head glanced at the board above the door and smiled again—"by the St. Jim's Picture-Palace."

THE END.

(Another splendid, long complete school tale next Thursday, entitled: "The New House Rivals," by Martin Clifford. Order your copy of "The GEM" Library in advance. Price One Penny.)

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SEE PAGE 28.

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.**

The Professor's Peril—The Native's Sacrifice.

Down dropped the noosed rope; but, as ill luck would have it, the mastodon swerved, and the rope fell upon one of the great tusks, the noose closing tight upon it. The jerk which followed very nearly pulled Lance down to share the professor's fate, and he let go of the rope in a hurry.

By this time the gate had been reached, and the mastodons were charging through it and plunging into the moat. This they had soon crossed. Some charged madly towards the wood, while others made for the lake. The brute on which Von Haagel rode was amongst the latter.

"Let's ope the brute don't dive dahn wiv 'im!" Jackson said, in horror.

"Get another rope, sir!" Morgan cried quickly.

The rope was fetched, and by that time the mastodon had plunged into the lake and was swimming vigorously out from the shore. Lance was about to make a noose with the rope, when Crooks took it from his hands, tied one round his body, and the other end to the bulwarks.

"Going over!" he said shortly.

Before he could be stopped, Crooks had begun to lower himself down, only stopping when his feet were touching the water.

"Run aboard him!" he cried to Morgan.

Wings of Gold increased her speed, and Crooks's feet struck against the back of the mastodon. Then he dropped just behind the professor.

"Mein goot cooky," the professor gasped, turning rather a white face towards his rescuer, "you should not yourself have risked. I could ride this mit ease."

"Bein' clever, perhaps you might," agreed the cook quietly, as he unfastened the rope from round his body.

"Likewise, we not understandin' the names of them specimens of yourn wouldn't be no use alone. I don't know 'em, you do; so up you go! Why not?"

Crooks, with all the dexterity of a sailor, knotted the rope securely under the professor's arms, and gave the signal for him to be hauled up. This was quickly accomplished, and the rope was lowered to Crooks, who, without waiting to be hauled up, swarmed up hand over hand and reached the deck.

"Mein dear Crooks," Von Haagel said hoarsely, gripping the man by the hand, "you have me saved mit bluck. I shall not it forget."

"Better, sir," said Crooks carelessly. "Little things was invented to be forgotten. This bein' one of them, should be forgotten, too—which is pure logic. Why not?"

Now that all the crew of the airship was safe, it was possible to observe how Big Ben and his men had fared since the flight of the mastodons. To their delight, Lance and Fordham could see the enemy, greatly diminished in numbers, running for the woods, pursued by a flight of arrows.

"Run her back, Teddy," said Lance. "We may as well be in at the death."

Wings of Gold swept round and darted back to the city. The wall was passed, and the men on board the aeronef caught a glimpse of the dead mastodons, a hundred or so natives dancing round them. On every side lay dead and dying, some of whom were now being borne into the huts.

"Make for the centre pyramid," Fordham put in, between his teeth. "This is too much like a slaughter-house."

Inside five minutes the airship had descended in the centre of the City of Triangles, amid the shouting of the inhabitants. As her crew descended, Big Ben and Hercules rushed forward and shook them by the hand, while the

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other natives fell down before them, burying their heads in the dust.

"Mighty entertaining!" Fordham remarked, with a grin. "Don't know that it would be quite such a bad game, living here."

"Too exciting for me," Lance answered grimly. "I think I'd rather go to Brighton for a few days."

"Well, let's hope we have the chance soon. We've done the right thing by these beggars, and now we've got to get out. I wonder when we start? I'll ask Morgan."

"When's the Blue Peter to be hoisted, Teddy?"

"Why not to-morrow?" the engineer answered, with a sparkle in his eyes. "If we all buckle to we can get the screw on her to-night, lay in a stock of provisions, and take our course at dawn."

"Good for you, Teddy!" Lance cried. "To work!"

Much to the amazement of the natives, who were busy feasting after the victory, the crew of the airship set to work; and, as Morgan had prophesied, by the evening she was ready for her homeward trip. Crooks had obtained a supply of food from the natives, so that nothing was left undone.

"My word," said Lance, as he at last laid down his hammer, "sha'n't I sleep to-night?"

"Not much chance of that yet," said Fordham, with a sigh. "There's something in the wind that's pretty well bound to keep us awake. Wonder what it is?"

A number of natives were dragging great piles of wood to an open space near by, throwing one on top of another until the heap had reached the height of fifty feet. Then one native, carrying a light cord with him, mounted to the top. He drew in the cord to which the rope had been attached, and by the aid of the latter drew up a long pole, which he planted securely in the centre of the pile.

Evening had drawn in, and the light was dim. They peered forward eagerly as the man on top of the pile began to haul up something dark and apparently heavy.

"Best go below, gentlemen," Crooks said, in a strangely hoarse voice, touching Lance softly on the arm.

"What for?" the latter cried in amazement. "Supper ready, or what?"

"There are some things," Crooks answered, speaking in a low voice, "which ain't particular good for the sight, which, being so, should be avoided."

"What do you mean?" Fordham demanded sharply. "It's only a kind of South Pole Guy Fawkes celebration, isn't it?"

"Something of the kind, sir," Crooks answered, after a pause, his voice husky and low. "But there are guys and guys, sir. Some is made of paper and string, others is flesh and blood. The burnin' of the latter ain't none too pleasin', and, therefore, should be—"

"Flesh and blood!" Lance gasped, the tremor in his voice showing the horror with which the words had filled him. "You mean they are going to burn the—"

"Chief of the enemy," said Crooks quietly, "him being a prisoner."

"We must stop it!" said Fordham hoarsely. He looked round, and saw that Jackson, Morgan, and Von Haagel had gone below. "Don't tell the others."

"Can't be done, sir!" Crooks said shortly. "They won't give him up, being savages what can't even speak English."

"You must try!" Lance said sharply. "You've done wonders, cookey. Try just once more."

Already the captured priest had been lashed to the stake, and the other man was clambering down. Torches were showing here and there, and it was evident that in a very short time the pyre would be set alight. Crooks, without another word, descended the ladder and hurried to the spot where stood Big Ben and Hercules.

Lance and Fordham, watching him eagerly, saw him gesticulating wildly, pointing at the still figure on the top of the pyre. They also saw that Big Ben and Hercules shook their heads determinedly in reply, and that the natives gathered round looked threatening. For fully five minutes Crooks gesticulated, but at the end of that time he walked slowly back to Wings of Gold, and there could be no doubt that he had been unsuccessful.

"No good, sir!" he said hoarsely, as he clambered on deck. "He's got to burn, and—"

"He has not!" Lance said fiercely. "We will call Morgan up, get the engines going, and snatch the man from death."

"Wouldn't work, sir," Crooks said quietly. "They've got dozens more prisoners, an' if this one don't burn t' other will, which ain't no partic'lar gain 'cept to the chap up there. He's got to die, but not burn. Why not?"

"Ay, why not?" Fordham asked quickly, echoing the man's words.

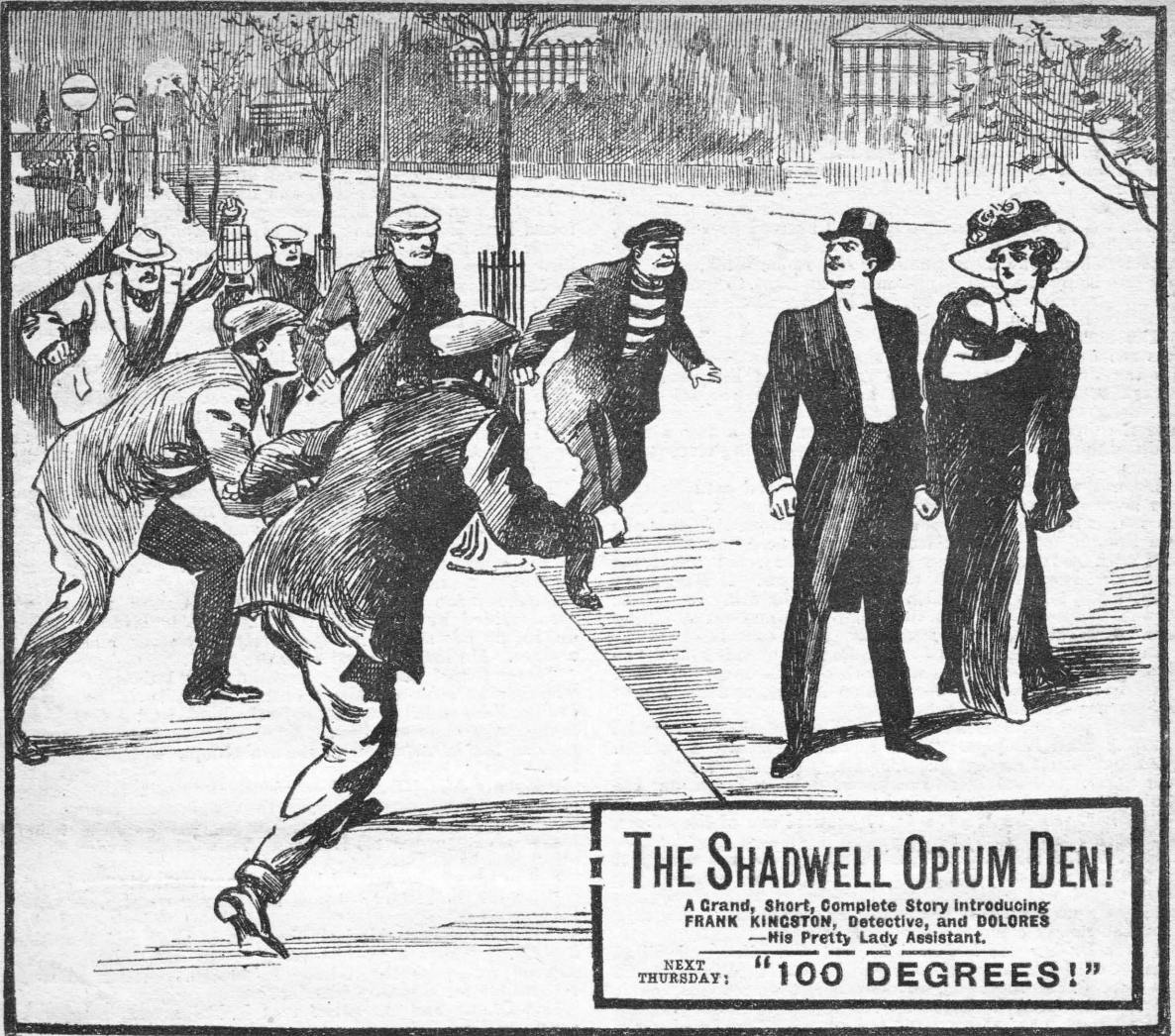
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The Splendid, Long, Complete School Tale appearing in this week's number of THE

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THE SHADWELL OPIUM DEN!

A Grand, Short, Complete Story introducing
FRANK KINGSTON, Detective, and DOLORES
—His Pretty Lady Assistant.

NEXT THURSDAY: "100 DEGREES!"

CHAPTER 1.

On the Embankment—The Attack—The Opium Den at Shadwell.

FATHER THAMES looked singularly clear and peaceful. The water was smooth, and scarcely gave a sound save when it eddied round a moored barge or the piles of an old warehouse on the South side. Overhead the early June sky was studded with twinkling stars and brilliant planets. The moon had not yet risen. A gentle, warm breeze blew along the Embankment, and the thousand lights stretching in a wide semi-circle were reflected in the river without a break.

"It is quite a fairyland of its own, Frank," said a pretty girl in evening-dress, who was strolling along on the arm of a tall, well-built man, with calm, immobile features, and sleepy-looking eyes. "It was a splendid idea of yours to bring me to the Embankment for a walk. There's the Cyril. Look!"

The pair were Frank Kingston, the celebrated private detective, and Miss Kathleen O'Brien, his fiancée. They had been to a theatre, and as the night was so enchanting, Kingston had insisted on Dolores walking home by way of the Thames Embankment. She lived at the Hotel Cyril, and its twinkling lights could now be seen across a broad stretch of gardens.

"Yes, I don't think I've ever seen London look so well," replied Kingston languidly. "By Jove, we've pretty nearly got the place to ourselves! Except for those few people in the distance, and these few loungers here, there's no one in sight. Now, if we cut straight across the road here, it will lead to the Cyril direct."

The loungers Kingston referred to were three or four men standing against the parapet of the river, smoking and talking. One of them looked at the detective keenly, and turned quickly to his companions.

Boom!
Big Ben commenced striking, and Kingston glanced at his watch in surprise.

"Twelve o'clock!" he exclaimed. "It's later than I thought, Dolores. We shall have to—"
"Look, Frank! Oh, quick!"

Frank Kingston twirled round, still as calm as ever, and saw that the group of loungers, reinforced by a couple of other men, were approaching in a body, and one or two held murderous-looking life-preservers in their hands. It was impossible to misinterpret their intention, for, the instant Kingston turned, one of them uttered an exclamation.

"On 'im, mates!" he said in a low voice. "No bunglin'!"
The ruffians were so quick that Kingston had not even time to put up his hands in self-defence. Under ordinary circumstances, he would have drawn his revolver, but at present he was attired in evening-dress clothes, and carried no weapon. Dolores stood by watching with fast-beating heart.

The first blow aimed at Kingston's head missed its mark by an inch, and by that time the detective had prepared himself for the fray. One of the footpads received a blow under the chin that fairly lifted him off his feet, and sent him crashing to the ground. But his companions did not even pause; they were all great, hulking fellows, who could take hard knocks without feeling them.

Kingston stood firm as a rock, but, even possessed of such marvellous strength as he was, the odds were too uneven. The fight was short and sharp. He was grappling desperately with three of his assailants when one of them, armed with a life-preserver, stepped behind and raised his weapon.

Dolores stepped forward bravely, but before she could interfere, the club descended with considerable force upon Kingston's head. Without a sound he doubled up and fell to the ground.

"You scoundrels!" she cried, gazing at Kingston's still form in horror. "Help! Help!"

"Silence the girl, you fools!" snarled out one of the men. "We've got our man all right. Hurry up, she'll get somebody here in half a minute!"

But even while the man was talking his companions were forcing a drugged pad over Dolores' mouth. The stuff was not chloroform, for its action was much swifter. With scarcely a sound Dolores became unconscious, and she was dragged to a seat and placed upon it.

A hundred yards away two or three men could be seen hurrying towards the spot, but Kingston's attackers were prepared. In practically no time the detective's inanimate form was raised on to the stone parapet and lowered into the river, or, rather, into a boat which was waiting immediately beneath. Then, one after another, the ruffians followed, the last one being the man Kingston had knocked to the ground. He was considerably hurt, but had his wits about him enough to follow his companions.

The boat was pushed out into the river immediately, and was swiftly rowed away in the shadow of the Embankment. By the time Dolores had been reached, and had recovered herself sufficiently to tell what had occurred—the effects of the drug soon wore off—the boat had entirely disappeared, and nothing could be seen on the river save a tug with a train of lighters in its wake, and a swiftly-moving river-police launch, too far away to be hailed.

Dolores was in a terrible state, for she had actually seen her lover stunned and carried off before her eyes. She only knew that he had been lowered over the parapet. At first she had thought, on being told of the occurrence, that Kingston had been consigned to the river; but her relief was great when she knew that such was not the case. If Kingston's captors had taken the trouble to convey him away in a boat, it was fairly evident that they had no intention of killing him. This, at least, was some amount of consolation.

In the meantime, the boat containing the unconscious detective was swiftly making its way with the tide down the river. Already it had passed under London Bridge, and the Tower Bridge was looming up ahead.

"Easy job, considerin'," remarked one of the men, as he leisurely filled his pipe. "The guv'll be pleased, I reckon. We didn't count on that girl, though. Still, she didn't do no real harm. Smart idea, yer know, doin' the job on the Embankment an' gettin' away by river!"

"Crikey, the chap's got a fist!" growled one of the others, nursing his jaw.

Most of the others were foreigners, and did not take part in the conversation. But they were all feeling satisfied, for their object was achieved, and they knew that there was practically no chance of the police tracing them. For now they had nearly come to their journey's end.

Tower Bridge was left behind, and the dim and silent reaches of the Thames were ahead. At last, Wapping, on one side, and Rotherhithe, on the other, were reached, and a few minutes later the boat edged towards the shore at Shadwell. Here everything was murky and begrimed—very different to the brilliance of the river at Westminster.

"Ease her in gently, now, mates!"
The boat slid under some huge slime-covered, wooden piles, and came to a stop, gently rocking, against a short flight of stone steps. A soft whistle sounded, and a door opened, allowing a shaft of dim light to escape.

CHAPTER 2.

Within the Opium Den—A Surprise—Kingston on the Scent.

"**T**HAT you, Carsley?" inquired a wheezy voice from the doorway.

"Who'd you think it was?" answered the man who seemed to be in charge of the boat. "We've got him, old 'un, as quiet as a dead chicken, an' about as lively. Help us to carry him in."

A thin, little old man appeared, and he was dressed in loose cotton garments, the colour of which had long since been covered up by dirt. It needed only a glance to see that he was a Chinaman, although he had been in England so long that he spoke almost perfect English. Loo Chung was his name, and he was the owner of the grimy riverside house.

He held a lantern, and by its feeble light the ruffians in the boat lifted the unconscious and helpless detective, and bore him into the building. Loo Chung's parchment-like face wrinkled into a grin as he looked at Frank Kingston.

"Velly good!" he murmured. "But you are sure the police did not see you? No? That is all light then. We will take him upstairs so that Mr. Smith can see how well his instructions have been called out!"

But the unconscious prisoner was not quite so unconscious as his captors supposed. As a matter of fact, Kingston was quite wide awake, although he took care that not a sign of his consciousness was revealed.

The blow he had received had been a glancing one, and

although he had been rendered helpless for a considerable time, the cool breeze had served to give him back his senses. Kingston had been lying in the boat at the time, and, with remarkable swiftness, he had grasped the fact that he was a prisoner, and that it would be the wisest course to feign insensibility.

His head was throbbing painfully, but he did not mind that in the least; his interest had been aroused. Why had he been brought to this place? Who were his captors? He listened to all that was said, and made no sign.

Through an evil-smelling passage he was conveyed, then he found himself in a dimly illuminated room. A heavy, sickly odour assailed his nostrils, and through his half-closed eyelids he saw a bare apartment filled with a bluish haze. Round the walls were rows of bunks, and in these lay prostrate figures, mostly Chinamen, lascars, and foreign sailors. They were smoking opium through tiny brass-bowled pipes with reed stems.

Kingston knew the nature of his surroundings in a moment. Even if he had not recognised the smell of the drug, he would have known from the prostrate figures and the little brass pipes. He wondered still more, but gave no sign.

"Lay him down here," said Loo Chung, indicating an empty bunk. "I go to fetch Mr. Smith. He will be pleased—velly pleased!"

The Chinese proprietor of the opium-den disappeared through a doorway, leaving the two men who had carried Kingston in to look round them and converse in low tones. Except for their talk, and a grunt now and then from one of the smokers, the apartment was silent. A dingy lamp burned on a bracket against the wall.

Suddenly the door opened, and Loo Chung reappeared, accompanied by a tall, thin Englishman, evidently well-to-do, for he was attired in expensively-cut clothes, and smoked a cigar. He looked round eagerly.

"Over there? Good!" he exclaimed. "I thought the job wouldn't be such a difficult one. Yes, this is him right enough," he added, bending over the bunk, and giving Frank Kingston a close scrutiny. The detective did not move a muscle, but he managed to catch a glimpse of the tall man's face.

Suddenly Mr. "Smith"—obviously it was a false name—started, and his cigar dropped to the floor. He grasped Kingston roughly, and turned him so that the light fell to better advantage on his features. Then an oath escaped the tall man's lips.

"You fools!" he snarled harshly—"you blundering fools!" "What's the matter?" asked Loo Chung quickly. "Anything wrong?"

"Wrong! Why, this isn't the man at all!" said the other fiercely. "He's a perfect stranger to me, although he slightly resembles the fellow I wanted. What idiot is responsible for this silly blunder?"

Loo Chung and the other men looked at one another in consternation. A lively talk followed, but nothing could alter the fact that Kingston was not the man Mr. Smith had wanted. Kingston himself heard everything, and he was considerably surprised. But he was glad he had feigned unconsciousness; the ruse had enabled him to get on the scent of some scoundrelly undertaking, although he had no idea as to its nature.

"The man is still senseless," said the tall, well-dressed man. "We do not want him here. Take his watch and money, and leave him on some deserted wharf. When he recovers he will know absolutely nothing, and will naturally think he had been attacked for the sake of his valuables."

"Velly good plan," murmured Loo Chung.

It was had Kingston really been unconscious. Having found the prisoner to be the wrong man, it would be the wisest plan to take him some distance off and leave him. So, half an hour later, the detective found himself lying against a dilapidated wharf at Limehouse. He allowed the boat which had brought him to get well away, then he rose and made his way to a main street.

He was feeling quite satisfied, in spite of the loss of his watch and loose money. His head was better now. He had taken note of everything, and knew that he could find his way to the river entrance of Loo Chung's den. Kingston felt confident that some scoundrelly work was to be carried out; and his being captured by mistake would make no difference.

Kingston went straight to the Cyril. Here he learnt that Dolores had come in worried and pale, and had at once communicated with Scotland Yard. He quickly wrote a note, and requested that it should be taken up at once.

"That will set her mind at rest," he thought, as he walked down the deserted Strand. "Poor little girl! She must have been dreading all manner of fates for me!"

In a few minutes Kingston was within his rooms at No. 100, Charing Cross, and he went straight to bed. The next day he made many inquiries, but he still remained in ignorance as to who "Mr. Smith" was and what game he was playing.

Dolores was thankful that no harm had come to her famous lover, and asked him what he intended doing.

"At present I am not in a position to say," replied Kingston. "I know absolutely nothing, and to watch the opium-den would be useless. I can only wait and see how the thing develops. Besides, I have other work to attend to that cannot be delayed."

So the famous detective continued working on a case that he had started on several days since. For the time being the other matter slipped from his mind, until, late that night, he received a telephone-call from the inspector in charge at Scotland Yard.

"Rather curious occurrence," said the inspector. "News just come to hand that another gentleman has been knocked down on the Embankment and carried off by boat—just the same as you were last night."

"By Jove, it certainly seems remarkable!" replied Kingston, and after a few minutes' conversation, he hung the receiver up. The inspector thought that Kingston had merely been robbed, but the detective knew better. It was clear to him that the right man had been captured, and was probably in the power of Loo Chung, at Shadwell.

"There is only one thing to do," decided Frank Kingston, without hesitation. "I'm the only man who knows the true state of affairs, and I must pay a visit to the opium-den without loss of time. There's some shady work going on, and I mean to find out what it is!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Chinese Sailor—A Brisk Fight—The Police Raid.

DOWN the Thames a light boat glided, and in it was seated a dirty-looking Chinaman, attired in the garb of a sailor. He looked furtively from side to side as he rowed, but everything was still and dingy.

The boat was in the neighbourhood of Shadwell, gliding along in the shadow of the wharves. Suddenly it altered its course and shot under some old piles, and came to a standstill.

"This is the place, right enough," murmured the Chinaman calmly. "Now, I wonder whether the ruse will work? If it doesn't, Tim will be along presently with the police-boat."

Frank Kingston—for of course the supposed Chinaman was he—quietly moored the boat to the stone steps, and then gave a peculiar whistle. Almost immediately the door above was opened, and Kingston slouched forward.

A Chinese boy held a lantern up close to the new-comer's face, and scrutinised it carefully. Then, with a muttered sentence in Chinese, he allowed Kingston to pass up the passage and into the opium-den. Everything looked the same as it had done the previous night, and Loo Chung, after receiving payment, placed a little pill of opium into one of the pipes, lighted it at a brazier, and handed it to the detective.

Kingston took it, glanced swiftly round, and then clapped his hand over the old Chinaman's mouth. Loo struggled desperately, but he was helpless in Kingston's iron grip. In less than a minute he lay huddled up in one of the bunks, unconscious, Kingston having administered a tiny pin-prick of Professor Polgrave's remarkable drug.

"Now, it's a question whether I've done any good in coming here," murmured the detective to himself. "The next few minutes will tell me, I suppose."

Kingston realised that he was in no safe position, for there was no telling how many people there were in the building. Possibly it contained a whole gang of cut-throats, but Kingston was in no way daunted. On the contrary, he was rather enjoying the adventure.

Round him most of the occupants of the bunks were lying too stupefied to know what was going on. But one fellow was watching with open eyes, smoking his drug complacently. Apparently he was too accustomed to brawls to take any notice—or, at least, to raise any alarm.

"This is the door."

Kingston recognised the door of the room from which Mr. Smith had emerged, and after listening for a moment, he quietly turned the handle and entered. His hand had been upon his revolver, but he removed it when he saw that the room was unoccupied.

Unoccupied, at all events, by enemies. It was a small room, and a little lamp stood upon a table, shedding an uncertain light around. It revealed the figure of a man, in evening-dress, who lay upon a couch, apparently asleep. Kingston crept forward. A glance told him that the man was under the influence of opium. He was clean-shaven, and resembled, to some little degree, the great detective.

"This is the kidnapped man, right enough," Kingston told himself. "Upon my word, I scarcely imagined my task would be so light! But I had better not crow too soon. I have yet to get both him and myself out—"

He twirled round as the door suddenly opened and "Mr. Smith" appeared. The tall man came straight in, never dreaming that the room was already occupied. A growl of anger left his lips.

"What the dickens are you doing in here, you Chinese skunk?" he roared. "Out of it! By gad, I'll kick you—"

"On the contrary, you will remain just where you are," said Kingston, in a calm, even voice. "You will oblige me by putting up your hands."

And the new-comer found himself staring straight down the barrel of a wicked-looking Browning revolver. Most certainly he possessed pluck, for, without attempting to do as he was ordered, he sprang forward. The revolver was knocked from Kingston's hand and crashed through the glass door of a small bookcase.

The next second Kingston and "Smith" were reeling to and fro in a tight embrace. The detective had been taken unawares, and he found that his assailant was possessed of great strength—even greater than usual now, for he was wild with rage.

But Kingston's marvellous muscles soon began to tell.

For perhaps fifteen seconds the fight lasted, then "Smith" collapsed under a driving blow, and fell at Kingston's feet. A commotion could be heard outside, but the detective calmly placed a whistle to his lips and blew a shrill blast.

"Tim will be there by now," he murmured.

The commotion outside became more pronounced as the whistle sounded, and a moment later the door burst open, and a crowd of evil-looking ruffians looked in. Had they set upon Kingston, there would not have been much chance for him, for they would not have been very particular about using revolvers or knives.

And they would have set upon him had there not been a warning shout from the opium-den. Kingston did not distinguish what was said, but the crowd turned, with one accord, and rushed to escape.

The next moment half a dozen stalwart river-policemen came into view.

Five minutes later the opium-den was cleared, many of the ruffians having escaped. Another room had been used as a gambling-saloon, and the river-police were satisfied. Tim Curtis, Kingston's young assistant, had brought them to the house, having been instructed by his master. The detective had told him to bring a boatload of police outside the old house and wait for the whistle.

"Mr. Smith" was taken in charge of the police, and the stupefied man in evening-dress was searched. A visiting-card told that he was Mr. James Blakeney.

"You see, Mr. Kingston," said the rescued man, some time later, "the whole thing was a plot to get money out of me; and had you not come to my assistance, the scoundrel would have been successful."

"Mr. Smith, he called himself—" began Kingston.

"That was false, of course," said Mr. Blakeney. "In reality, he is my cousin, Roger Blakeney—an utterly bad lot. For years I have been in the habit of lending him sums of money; but at last, finding out by accident that he was a despicable scoundrel, I swore I would not give him another farthing."

"A week ago he came to me and demanded a thousand pounds. I refused point-blank, and he swore never to see me again. Yesterday I received a note purporting to come from a great friend of mine, who I thought was in America. He said he was in great trouble, and asked me to meet him on the Embankment, opposite the Hotel Cyril, at midnight. Being of a very trusting disposition I was easily taken in. I kept the appointment—or, rather, I arrived five minutes after you had been taken a prisoner. But I knew nothing of that, and in the morning I got another note—forged like the first—to say that my friend had been delayed, and would be at the appointed place to-night."

"Of course, even if you had heard of the attack upon me, you would not have connected it with your cousin?" said Frank Kingston.

"No. Roger could easily have obtained the money but for the accident of your being attacked by mistake," said the other. "It was his plan, I imagine, to get me under the influence of opium, and then make me sign a cheque for a large sum. In my stupefied state I should have done so, and he would have got the money before I recovered myself. Loo Chung was probably in his pay, and would have seen that I was ejected from his house without giving its whereabouts away. Thanks to you, Mr. Kingston, the rascally scheme has failed."

"Don't forget Tim," smiled the great detective. "Without that youngster's assistance I should have been utterly at the mercy of the ruffians who were about to attack me."

THE END.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 226.

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"THE NEW HOUSE RIVALS!"

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



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"THE NEW HOUSE RIVALS"

is a story that will make a hit, and my readers are advised to make a point of ordering next Thursday's issue of "The Gem" Library well in advance.

Gordon Gay Carries the Day!

In calling in the aid of my readers to help in the difficult and delicate task of deciding upon a serial story which will prove a popular and worthy successor to "Wings of Gold"—now, unfortunately, nearing its close, I hoped at best to be enabled to form some rough idea of the type of story that would appeal most strongly to the majority of my chums. The result of my appeal in these columns for my readers' opinions, however, has been nothing short of amazing, the verdict, unmistakable and decisive, being in favour of a new "Gordon Gay" serial by an overwhelming majority. Thousands of my chums sent in their opinions in letters or on postcards, with the astounding result that they are almost unanimous in demanding a new tale of the popular juniors of Rylcombe Grammar School! Well, so be it. This singular unanimity of opinion is most gratifying to me since it simplifies matters so much. I can now set to work and make arrangements for the new serial with an easy mind, and with the comfortable assurance that I am giving my readers just what they most want. By the time these words appear in print preparations for the grand new serial will be well under way, and I can promise my readers something entirely out of the ordinary run of school stories. Schoolboy fun and "japes" and humorous incidents will be there galore, combined with excitement and thrilling adventure—the absorbing interest of life at a great public school presented in an absolutely new and original fashion. From my experience as editor of the two most successful school story-books ever published, I can safely predict that our grand new Gordon Gay story promises to be THE serial of the year. Look out for it very shortly; it will commence in "Gem" No. 228—that is, not next week's, but in the following issue. My chums will be well advised to make special arrangements for this grand number by asking their newsagents in advance to reserve it for them, otherwise some of my regular readers will run the risk of being disappointed in the rush there will be for it.

Don't forget—Gordon Gay, Frank Monk & Co., in a Grand New Serial in "Gem" Number Two Hundred and Twenty-Eight!

Replies in Brief.

"Robina Crusoe" (Southampton).—If you write to H. Glaisher, 32, Charing Cross, S.W., I have no doubt that you will be able to obtain the book you require. If this fails, you will be able to get it by ordering it of any newsagent. With regard to your second query, I must tell you that binding-cases for "The Gem" Library are not issued from this office. If you take your books to a binder he will supply a suitable cover.

W. T. A. (Cosham).—In reply to your welcome letter I have to tell you that the idea you suggest is under consideration.

Back Numbers Offered and Wanted.

A. Walker, 336, Claremont Road, Moss Side, Manchester, wishes to obtain the first six numbers of "The Magnet" Library, and Nos. 188 and 195 of "The Gem."

Miss M. Taylor, 20, Warneth Hall Road, Oldham, Lancs., wishes to obtain No. 137 of "The Gem" Library ("Lumley-Lumley, Hero.")

How to Duplicate Patterns for Fretwork.

The following simple and effective method of duplicating fretwork designs will commend itself to all my fretworking readers as being infinitely more accurate and satisfactory than the common one of placing a sheet of paper over the cut-out design, and rubbing over with charcoal.

Having cut out the design which you require to duplicate in the usual way with a sharp penknife, you next take a little printers' ink, and roll it out on a sheet of glass or metal, or other smooth surface, with a squeegee, until it takes the form of a smooth paste. Then lay the cut-out design on the smooth surface of the ink-patch, and go over it with the squeegee backwards and forwards until both sides of the pattern are thoroughly coated with the ink. Now for the paper which is to receive the impression of the inked pattern. This should, for choice, be a clean, plain white, but the pattern will readily be distinguished, of course, on sheets of newspaper, or other paper with printed matter on. The white paper, however, allows of a much clearer impression.

A sheet of the paper, of whichever sort you decide to use, should be folded double, like a piece of notepaper, and the inky pattern, after being carefully picked out of its bed of ink with the point of a penknife, laid carefully between the folded sheets. The whole is then placed upon the table, or any convenient place offering a rigid, even surface, and pressed down hard with the hand.

When the sheets are opened, two clear impressions will have been made on the paper, if the process has been carefully conducted, as described. The pattern is then inked again, and the process repeated until the required number of impressions has been taken. One pattern, if carefully treated, will yield a hundred or more prints in this way, with very little trouble. The value of this will be obvious to those followers of the fascinating hobby of fretworking who require to duplicate small designs which may occur a number of times in one large pattern.

The cost of the process is small, the materials required, as has been shown, consisting of the following: paper, a small quantity of printers' ink, a piece of glass or metal to act as the plate on which to prepare the ink, a penknife, and a small squeegee, which latter item most of my readers who are photographers will already possess. Thus very little expense need be incurred in carrying out the entire process; in fact, most of my readers will probably be able to rout out everything requisite from somewhere, without having to buy anything at all, with the possible exception of the printers' ink. If difficult to obtain, this may be made at home as follows: Heat a quart of old linseed oil gradually in an iron pot until boiling point is reached. Allow the oil to boil until it is sufficiently thick and "gluey" to draw out into threads half an inch or more in length when poured on to a cold surface. When the required consistency has been reached, gradually stir about 1lb. of crumbled amber resin into the oil, until the resin has thoroughly melted. Then add about ¼lb. of sliced curd soap, and stir continually. When the froth which will have formed on this mixture has subsided, bring the concoction, gradually and with constant stirring, to boiling point on the fire again. Add 1oz. of indigo, ½lb. of mineral lampblack, and ¼lb. of good ordinary lampblack while the liquid is still warm, and mix well together. The manufacture of printers' ink should be undertaken out of doors, as the boiling mixture gives off a very unpleasant odour.

THE EDITOR.

TWICE ROUND THE GLOBE!

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BY SIDNEY DREW



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