

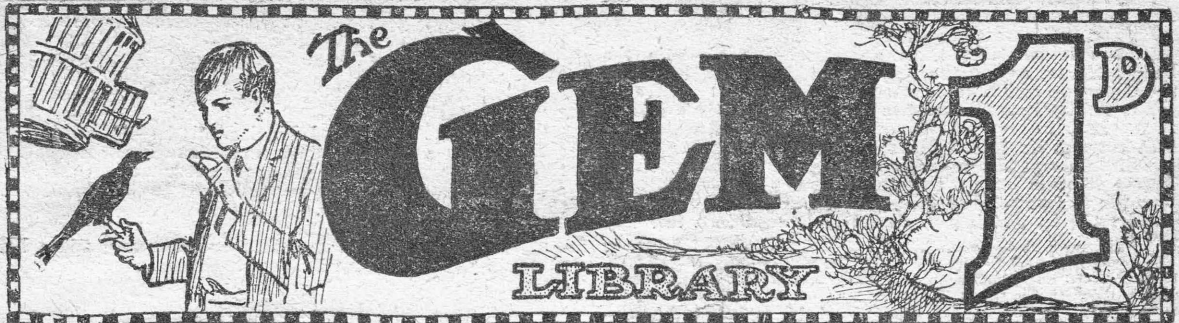
Next Thursday's
School Tale:

"D'ARCY'S LIBEL ACTION!"

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TOM MERRY'S LEGION OF HONOUR!

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Extremely Mysterious.

"TOM MERRY—"

"Sorry, can't stop!"

"Blake, old man—"

"Sorry, Figg, can't stop!"

"Dig—"

"Can't stop a minute, Figgins. Sorry!"

Figgins, of the Fourth, stood and stared.

He was astonished.

Morning lessons were over at St. Jim's, and the Shell and the Fourth Form had been dismissed at the same time. School House boys and New House boys crowded in the Form-room passage. Figgins, the great chief of the New House juniors, and Kerr and Wynn, the famous "Co.," were chatting in the passage when Tom Merry passed them, and Figgins hailed him.

But Tom Merry was evidently in a hurry, and so were Blake and Digby. They disappeared into the quadrangle, leaving Figgins staring.

"Those School House bounders seem to be in a mighty hurry to-day!" Figgins exclaimed. "I suppose there's something on. Something up against us, very likely."

"Perhaps it's a feed," suggested Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "If it is, I hope you fellows won't pick on an unjudicious moment like this for a House row. There are times when the two Houses ought to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, you know."

Figgins sniffed.

"Yes, at feeding times, I suppose," he said. "You fat bouncer! Hallo, here comes Gussy! We'll ask him what's going on."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House, came by with his elegant saunter. He did not look in a hurry; but then, he never did look in a hurry. Hurry was not in accordance with the graceful repose which D'Arcy assiduously cultivated.

"Gussy, old man!" called out Figgins, as he passed.

"Sowwy I can't stop, Figgay, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

"Look here!" exclaimed Figgins, exasperated. "What's going on?"

"I am, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went on, and disappeared into the quadrangle. Figgins looked red and wrathful, and Kerr and Fatty Wynn grinned.

"It's a jape of some sort," said Kerr. "They're going to hold a meeting, I suppose. Here comes Manners and Lowther."

Manners and Lowther, Tom Merry's special chums in the Shell, came along with linked arms, and an air as if the Form-room passage belonged to them. Figgins gave Lowther a dig in the ribs as he passed, and Lowther gasped.

"Ow, you ass!"

"Where are you fellows going?" demanded Figgins.

"Out!" said Manners.

"I mean, what have you got on?"

A
New Free
Correspondence
Exchange.

See page
27.

Next Thursday:

"D'ARCY'S LIBEL ACTION!" AND "THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!"

No. 233 (New Series), Vol. 6.

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"Clothes."

And Manners and Lowther walked away with that unsatisfactory response.

Figgins & Co. were very much puzzled.

It was evident that there was something afoot in the School House, among the juniors; and what could it be if not a jape up against the New House?

The rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's seldom slept. It had never yet been satisfactorily settled which was cock-house at St. Jim's. Both Houses claimed the title, and the dispute was likely to last as long as the school itself. But to do them justice, the juniors, if not the seniors, tried to settle the matter. If House rows and japes without end could settle it, certainly it should have been in a fair way to being settled.

And this plain proof that there was something "on" among Tom Merry & Co., naturally raised the suspicions of the heroes of the New House.

Three Shell fellows of the School House came along—Bernard Glyn, Clifton Dane, and Harry Noble—usually called Kangaroo. They were walking quickly towards the door, when Figgins stepped into their path.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed.

"Can't!" said Kangaroo. "We're in a hurry!"

"Sorry—can't stop!" said Glyn.

"Pressed for time!" said Clifton Dane, the Canadian.

"Look here, you silly asses," said Figgins wrathfully, "what does all this mean?"

Kangaroo & Co. exchanged a wink, and seized Figgins with great suddenness, and sat him down on the floor.

Then they hurried out of the House, leaving him sitting there and gasping.

"Oh!" gasped Figgins. "Ow!"

Kerr and Wynn helped their leader up. Figgins was in a state of great exasperation by this time.

"We'll jolly well know what's going on!" he exclaimed.

"Let's follow the next silly ass who comes by in a hurry."

"Good!"

"Here comes Reilly—"

Reilly, of the Fourth, had evidently been detained in the Form-room a few minutes. He came out, and ran down the passage in a hurry, and out into the quadrangle. And after him went Figgins & Co.

The Irish junior did not notice them. He hurried round the School House, and stopped at the door of the wood-shed, and knocked three times. Figgins & Co., keeping under cover of the big elm near the corner of the House, watched him curiously. There came a knock from the inside of the wood-shed door, and then Reilly knocked again twice.

Then the door was opened, and Reilly passed in. The door was immediately closed again, and all was as before.

"My only hat!" muttered Figgins. "It's a giddy secret society, I suppose, with giddy secret signs, and so on."

"Looks like it," said Kerr.

"Might be a secret feed."

"Oh, shut up, Fatty! Look here," said Figgins, with a grin. "If it's a secret society, and Reilly has just given the countersign, we're on to it—we can give the same sign that he gave. Come on!"

And the Co. chuckled.

The New House chums lost no time. Tom Merry & Co. were evidently engaged upon some extremely secret business in the wood-shed, and the New House juniors meant to know what it was all about. That it was something up against their House, they felt certain. Figgins & Co. hurried up to the door of the wood-shed, and gave three distinct knocks.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

There was the sound of a movement within. There were evidently a good many School House juniors in the wood-shed.

Knock!

It was the reply from within.

Figgins knocked twice again, as he had seen Reilly, of the Fourth, do.

Knock! Knock!

The door swung open.

Jack Blake, of the Fourth, was doorkeeper, and he swung the door open wide without a suspicion. Figgins & Co. pressed in. Then Blake gave a yell.

"Look out! New House cads!"

"Kick them out!"

"Yah! Spies!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Figgins. "Oh—"

There was a rush from within. Many hands seized the three New House juniors, and they were swung off their feet and hurled forth, and they bumped down on the ground with three loud distinct bumps.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

Then the door of the wood-shed was slammed, and a bolt shot into place. Figgins & Co. were shut out.

CHAPTER 2.

Figgins & Co. Drop In.

"GENTLEMEN!" said Tom Merry. Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell, and leader of the School House juniors in their many alarms and excursions against the juniors of the rival House, stood upon a bench in the midst of the spacious shed.

Nearly a dozen School House juniors were standing round him, and all of them were looking keenly interested.

"Gentlemen of the School House—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Adsum!" said Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!" said Monty Lowther, of the Shell, rapping upon the bench with a coke-hammer. "Order! Don't interrupt the honourable chairman!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Silence in class—I mean in court! Order!"

"Undah the circs—"

"Order!" roared Lowther.

Bang, bang, bang!

That interruption came from the door. Figgins & Co. were evidently not gone. As they could not get admission to the mysterious meeting, they were making their presence known in that way. The door of the wood-shed shook under their vigorous assault.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

Crash, crash!

"Bai Jove, we can't hear Tom Mewwy if they keep up that fearful wow!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pewwaps we had better go out and give them a fearful thwain!"

"Hold on!" said Blake. "I think I can shift them!"

He took a pea-shooter from his pocket, and stepped to the window. The window was on the same side as the door, and it was open. Blake leaned out of the window with the pea-shooter to his mouth.

"We'll stir 'em up, anyway!" Figgins was remarking. "I say— Oh! Ah! ah!"

Whiz, whiz-z-z-z!

"What was that?"

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Oh! My ear! I'm stung!"

"It was a wasp— Ow! Yow!"

"It's that fathead Blake with a pea-shooter!" roared Figgins, catching sight of the grinning School House junior at the window. "Ow! Go for him!"

Figgins & Co. rushed up to the window. Blake met them with a hot fire, and Lowther and Manners and Kangaroo chimed in with their pea-shooters behind him. Figgins & Co. backed away; it was a little too warm for them. They dodged the stinging peas, and ran round the wood-shed.

Blake turned from the window with a chuckle.

"Gentlemen, the rioters are dispersed, and order is restored," he said. "The proceedings can proceed."

And the proceedings proceeded.

"Gentlemen!" said Tom Merry.

"We've had that," said Herries, of the Fourth, with some show of impatience. "Would you mind coming to the point, Tom Merry? I've got to go and feed my dog, Towser."

"Order!"

"We've had that, too," said Herries. "For goodness' sake cut the cackle, and come to the giddy hosses!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I've called you together—"

"We know that!" murmured Glyn. "Come down to business!"

"On a most important matter—"

"Now we're getting warmer," said Digby.

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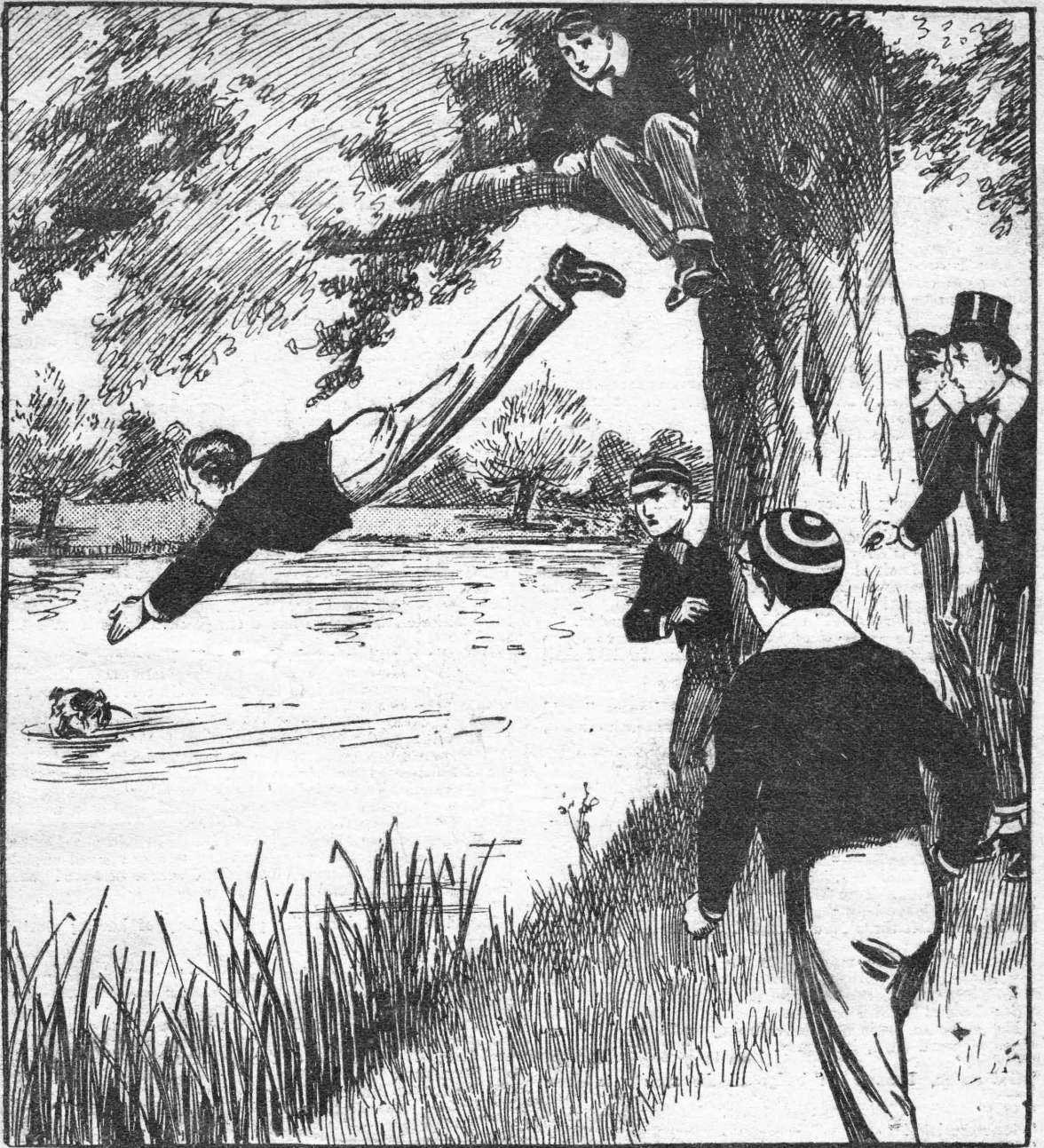
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(See column 2, page 27 of this issue.)

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There was a shout of alarm from the river-bank as Towser was whirled away into mid-stream. Redfern, without even waiting to tear off his jacket, put his hands together and dived off the branch. Splash! He shot under water and disappeared. (See Chapter 17.)

"We've got on to a stunning wheeze in our study," went on Tom Merry, with a gleam in his eyes. "Manners and Lowther and I have talked it over. It will take us leagues ahead of the New House—they've never thought of anything of the kind."

"Oh, good!"

"Yaas, wathah! I should wegard that as wippin'."

"Therefore I have called you together, as the leading spirits among the School House juniors—"

"Hear, hear!" said the meeting heartily.

"Faith, and ye're right!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I have called to suggest—"

Croak!

Tom Merry paused.

That loud croak had come from the roof of the wood-shed.

"It's all right," said Blake. "Go on!"

"Those blessed New House bounders have got on the roof," said Monty Lowther. "They can't get in that way—the trap's fastened."

"Yaas, wathah; go on, Tom Mewwy!"

"Get on with the washing, old man!"

"I've got to go and feed my bulldog—"

"Order!"

"Gentlemen, my suggestion is this—that we form—
Oh!"

Creak!

Crash!

"Yaroo!"

There was a terrific rending as the roof gave way, and three flying forms came whirling down upon the meeting. The weight of Figgins & Co.—especially Fatty Wynn—had been a little too much for the wood-shed roof.

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NEXT THURSDAY: "D'ARCY'S LIBEL ACTION!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 3.
"T. M. L. H.!"

"H!"
"Yawooh!"
It was a very sudden and very startling interruption.

Figgins & Co. sprawled in the midst of the meeting, and the meeting was scattered right and left.

Wild yells rose on all sides.
"Oh! Ow!"
"Help!"
"Yah!"
"Grooh!"
"Pway dwag that heavy wotiah off!" moaned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was reclining on his back, with Fatty Wynn across his chest. "I am bein' suffocated and cwushed, and my twousahs will be wined!"
"Ow!" groaned Fatty Wynn.
"Weally, Wynn—!"
"Grooh!"

The juniors sorted themselves out. Figgins & Co. had effected an entrance into the wood-shed, but not exactly in the way they had wished. They were in the grasp of the enraged School House fellows now.

"Bump the bounders!" gasped Blake. "We'll teach them to interrupt an important meeting—I mean not to interrupt one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Dwag this heavy wotter off, I am cwushed—!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn was dragged off the swell of the School House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy staggered to his feet, gasping.

"Bai Jove! Look at my clothes!" he gasped. "Taggles does not keep the floor of this wood-shed clean. My twousahs are muddy. Look!"

"Oh, blow your trousers!" said Monty Lowther crossly.
"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I shall have to go and change my clothes before dinnah, so I am afwaid I shall not be able to weman any longah."

"Hold on, Gussy—!"
"I am sowwy, deah boys; but it is quite imposs." said D'Arcy firmly. "I must weally change my bags befoah dinnah, you know."

And the swell of the Fourth unbolted the wood-shed door, and departed.

"Oh, never mind Gussy," said Tom Merry, "we'll leave him out of it! Gentlemen—"

"Sorry," said Herries, "I've got to go and feed my bulldog. It would be bad for Towser if his meals were left."

"Look here, Herries—!"
"Good-bye!" said Herries.

And he departed. Tom Merry was very red.

"Well, we'll leave both those silly asses out!" he exclaimed. "Look here, kick those New House bounders out, and we'll go on—"

Figgins & Co. were marched to the door in the grip of many hands. They struggled, but struggling did not avail them. They were kicked out, and the door was slammed.

"Gentlemen!" said Tom Merry.
"Not going to begin at the beginning again, surely!" exclaimed Bernard Glyn, in dismay.

"Order!"
"Gentlemen, I have the badge of the society to show you—"

"Eh?"
"What society?"

"You're getting a little mixed," grinned Blake.

"Oh, rats! Look here, look at this—it's the badge of the society that's going to be formed of School House juniors—all New House cads barred!"

Tom Merry held up a small object, which glistened in the light.

The meeting looked at it with great curiosity.

It was a small metal button, with a pin attached, to fasten it on to a jacket. Four letters were engraved upon it: "T. M. L. H."

"T. M. L. H.!" said Jack Blake, in wonder. "What on earth does that mean?"

"Too Many Lunatics Here!" suggested Kangaroo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
Tom Merry turned red.

"You ass!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "It's nothing of the kind!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"T. M. L. H.," said Digby thoughtfully. "I know—Tom Merry Likes Herrings!"

"You—you fathead!"
"Isn't that it?" exclaimed Digby, in astonishment.

"Of course it isn't, you ass!" roared Tom Merry.
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"Well, it can't be Tom Merry Loves Hoysters!" said Digby argumentatively.

"Faith, and I've got it!" exclaimed Reilly. "T. M. L. H.—Tom Merry Looks Horrid!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Shut up, you silly asses!" growled Lowther, rapping on the bench.

"I've got it!" yelled Glyn. "I've guessed it! T. M. L. H.—Take Monty Lowther Home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Shut up!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Isn't that it?"
"No, you silly fathead!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I'll tell you what it means, if you'll stop jawing for a second!" yelled Tom Merry. "T. M. L. H. means—"

"Turn Monty Lowther Hout!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Order!"

"T. M. L. H. means—" gasped Tom Merry. "It means, Tom Merry's Legion of Honour."

"What!"
"My hat!"

"Sure you don't mean Tom Merry's Legion of Horrors?" suggested Kangaroo. "I'm thinking of your study-mates."

"Why, you ass—" roared Manners.
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order!"
Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Gentlemen, it is a stunning scheme! It will completely take the shine out of the New House bounders. The Legion of Honour will consist of chosen spirits—"

"Then it will be a rummy concern," said Kangaroo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Oh, don't be funny!" said Tom Merry. "Chosen spirits from the best of the School House. No one will be eligible for admission unless he has distinguished himself in some way."

"That's a rather good idea," said Kangaroo, becoming serious. "How has a chap got to distinguish himself? Would it do to go out into the quad. with a fool's cap on, or with a false nose?"

"Ass! Every member of the Legion of Honour has got to do some noble deed, or a daring deed, or a generous action, or something of that sort, and when he has done it the committee of the Legion of Honour will decide whether he is suitable for admission. Every member of the Legion of Honour will be entitled to wear this badge as a distinction. I think the thing will catch on; and perhaps if the New House chaps are meek, we'll let them into the Legion. Why, if the idea catches on, my sons, it may spread outside St. Jim's, and number millions in the course of time!" said Tom Merry enthusiastically.

"Hurrah!"

"And we shall have the giddy glory of having started it—"

"Bravo!"

"Only keep it dark for the present, until we've got it fairly going," said Tom Merry warningly. "Those New House bounders would think nothing of bagging the wheeze, and working it off as their own. We fellows form the nucleus of the society. We'll meet in my study this evening and elect the committee, and draw up the rules."

"Good egg!"

A bell rang in the distance.

"Hallo! There's tiffin!" said Digby. "Come on!"

"Wait a tick—" said Lowther, rapping.

Digby shook his head.

"T. M. L. H.," he said solemnly.

"Eh? What do you mean?"

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"T. M. L. H. Tom Merry Looks Hungry!" said Digby. And he ran out of the wood-shed.

The rest of the meeting followed him. The scheme of a junior Legion of Honour in the School House was undoubtedly an excellent one; but dinner was a most important function to hungry juniors, and for the moment the great meeting and its important purpose were shelved.

But over dinner, and after dinner, Tom Merry & Co. discussed the matter with great keenness, always taking care to sink their voices, or to cease speaking, if any New House fellows came near.

And the curiosity of Figgins & Co. was excited to the highest pitch.

But the New House fellows could not get on the track. That something was afoot they knew, but they did not know what. There was equal curiosity among the School House fellows who were not in the secret. Mellish, of the Fourth, who generally knew everything that was going on, partly owing to his wonderful gift of finding himself in proximity to keyholes at opportune moments, was baffled this time. He was extremely curious to know about the matter, but he could not contrive to hear a whisper.

All that Mellish could discover was that a meeting was to be held in Tom Merry's study before tea that afternoon, and that was little enough. But the sneak of the School House resolved to put that little fragment of information to good use.

CHAPTER 4.

The Brotherhood of Death.

MR. LINTON, the master of the Shell at St. Jim's, was not given, as a rule, to taking very much interest in the proceedings of the Form outside the class-room. But this special afternoon he could not help noticing that there was something engaging the attention of some of his brightest pupils. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were absent-minded, and on one occasion Mr. Linton gave them fifty lines each for talking together.

And that did not cure them. They were thinking of something other than their Form work, it was quite clear.

"How many men were there in the Legion, Merry?" Mr. Linton demanded suddenly.

Mr. Linton had been giving valuable information on the subject of cohorts and legions in the ancient Roman army, and he fancied that the Terrible Three had not been paying attention. He was right. Tom Merry was thinking of a Legion quite other than those commanded by Cæsar in Gaul and Britain, and he answered too quickly.

"Twelve, sir!"

"What!"

"Twelve at first, sir, and—and——"

Tom Merry broke off.

The master of the Shell transfixed him with a basilisk glare.

"You—you say that there were twelve men in the Roman Legion, Merry!" he stuttered. "How dare you make an answer unworthy of the greatest dunce in the lowest Form?"

"I—I—I beg your pardon, sir!" stammered Tom Merry, realising what he had done. "I—I was thinking of something else, sir——"

"I thought so," said Mr. Linton drily. "You will take a hundred lines for thinking of something else during class."

"Oh, sir! Yes, sir!"

"And you will stay in after lessons to-day to write them out."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry, in dismay, remembering the meeting arranged in his study for selecting the committee of the Legion of Honour.

But there was no help for it; and when afternoon lessons were over, and the Shell filed out, Tom Merry remained at his desk with foolscap before him, and a pen in his hand, and a frown upon his face, and a hundred lines to do.

"Rotten!" said Monty Lowther, pausing by his chum's desk. "I'm sorry. I suppose I couldn't stay and do some of the lines for you under Linton's nose."

Tom Merry grinned.

"No, Monty. Get out. I'll join you presently."

"All right; we'll wait for you in the quad."

"Good!"

The Shell went out into the July sunshine in the quadrangle, and Tom Merry drove away at his lines. Jack Blake of the Fourth put his head in at the Form-room door ten minutes later, and D'Arcy looked in over his shoulder.

"Ain't you coming to the study?" demanded Blake.

"Lines to do."

"Bai Jove!" Pewwaps we had better hold the committee meetin' without you, deah boy," Arthur Augustus suggested thoughtfully.

Tom Merry glared.

"You silly ass——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"A meeting held without the chairman will be invalid."

"I am quite willin' to act as chairman," said D'Arcy firmly. "Come on, Blake. If Tom Mewwy goes and gets lines, he can't expect committees on important subjects to wait for him. Let's get to the meetin'."

Blake chuckled.

"Good!" he said. "There's a new rendering for the T. M. L. H.—Tom Merry Lingers Here! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry sniffed, and the chums of the Fourth departed. Arthur Augustus's idea of holding the meeting without the chairman found favour in the eyes of the Fourth-Form fellows, though Lowther and Manners sniffed and declined. Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy, however, proceeded to Tom Merry's study, and Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn and Reilly joined them. Just as the crowd of juniors came up to the corner of the passage, Blake glanced ahead, and saw a familiar figure disappear into the Shell study.

He paused with an exclamation.

"Dash it all, that's Mellish! He's not going to be in the Legion!"

"No fear!"

"Wathah not!"

"He's gone into Tom Merry's study," said Blake.

Kangaroo chuckled.

"He's been mighty inquisitive about it," he said. "He's been trying to find out what's on ever since the meeting in the wood-shed. He's going to hide himself in the study now and listen, you bet."

"Bai Jove, let's give him a feahful thwashin' as a warnin'——"

"Hold on!" grinned Kangaroo. "Let's pile a yarn on him instead, and pretend not to know that he's there. We can scare the silly ass out of his wits."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet, and come on!"

The juniors strode on to the study. There was no trace of Percy Mellish in Tom Merry's study when they entered it. They glanced carelessly round the study. He was not under the table, as the cloth was too short to hide him there, and the cupboard was locked. There was a screen in the corner of the room—a very old screen, that was sometimes used by the juniors in their amateur theatricals, and when unused was left standing in the study by way of adornment. The juniors winked at one another. It was pretty clear that the cad of the Fourth was hidden behind the screen. Kangaroo, who was often in Tom Merry's study, noticed that the screen was a little further out than usual. There was just room enough behind it for the cad of the Fourth to crouch unseen.

Kangaroo turned to the door, and locked it, and then handed round a number of black dominoes, which he took from the table drawer.

"Comrades," he said, "it is safest to lock the door when we are about to discuss a scheme involving breaking the law and staining our hands with blood."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You are called together," said Kangaroo, in deep and awe-inspiring tones, "to take the oath of allegiance to the Brotherhood of Death."

"We are ready," said Blake, in sepulchral tones.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The objects of the Brotherhood of Death are—are—are——"

"To take an oath," said Herries.

"And to swear allegiance to—the Brotherhood," said Digby. "All brotherhoods do that. We shall then cast lots to select the assassin."

"Bai Jove!"

"The Head is to be the first victim to fall!" said Kangaroo gloomily. "He is not a crowned head, but he is a head, so that is sufficient for Anarchistic purposes. By whose hand shall he die?"

"Weally, Kangy——"

"Silence! Do not interrupt the President of the Brotherhood of Death when sentence is being pronounced upon an offender!"

"Vewy well! I stand cowwected."

"We will draw lots for the task!" said Kangaroo. "The doer of the fell deed must fly from St. Jim's immediately it is over."

"In that case we shall require an aeroplane," said Blake thoughtfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Is laughter meet for such a time?" said Kangaroo sternly. "Let us cast lots for the fell deed."

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a minute or two of silence. The screen had been seen to move slightly, as if the hidden spy had made a

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movement, but there was no sound. Kangaroo broke the silence with a sudden exclamation.

"Ha! The lot falls to me!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I am ready to do the deed. Here is my weapon."

"Bai Jove!"

Kangaroo drew a pea-shooter from his pocket.

"Good shot?" asked Blake.

"Dead centre every time. I can send a bullet straight to the heart of the tyrant. Look! I will show you. I will put a bullet exactly through the centre of that screen, and you will see that I shall not miss my aim."

The chums almost exploded. There was the very audible sound of a movement behind the screen in the corner. The concealed cad of the Fourth had heard every word.

"You count, Blake," said Kangaroo. "At the word three I will fire, and you will see I shall get it just in the centre."

"Right-ho! One!"

Kangaroo raised the pea-shooter,

"Two!"

"Right!"

"Three! Fi—"

Before Blake could utter the word "fire," the screen was thrown violently over, and Percy Mellish leaped out into view.

"Hold on!" he shrieked. "Don't shoot! I—I—oh! Help! Mercy! Murder! Oh!"

CHAPTER 5.

The Honourable Members.

"**H**A, ha, ha!"

The juniors burst into a roar of laughter.

Mellish was as pale as death, and trembling in every limb. Not having the slightest suspicion that the chums of the School House knew that he was behind the screen, he had been at first amazed and then terrified by what he had heard. And the threatened pistol practice at the screen that concealed him had brought him promptly into view.

"Oh, don't!" shrieked Mellish. "Don't shoot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mellish blinked at the juniors. The wild roar of laughter reassured him a little. He looked at Kangaroo, and saw that the weapon he held in his hand was no deadlier than a pea-shooter. Then he understood, and his face flushed with rage and shame.

"You—you rotters!" he gasped. "You were only rotting!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You knew I was there!" yelled Mellish.

"We knew you were listening, my son, and we gave you something to listen to," chuckled Jack Blake. "How did you like it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a thump at the door. The Terrible Three had arrived for the meeting. Kangaroo unlocked the door.

"Done!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Have you bouncers started the meeting. Hallo! What is Mellish doing here?"

Mellish tried to squeeze out of the study, but the Terrible Three grasped him in the doorway and stopped him.

"He came to listen," said Kangaroo, laughing. "We gave him something to listen to. Kick him out!"

Mellish dodged into the passage, and ran. Kangaroo explained the little jape on Mellish, and Tom Merry chuckled. The Terrible Three came in, and the study door was closed.

"Now, then," said Tom Merry. "About the committee—"

The door was opened.

Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth, looked in, and nodded cheerfully to the juniors.

"What's on?" he asked.

"Oh, buzz off! No admittance except on business."

"But what's all the giddy mystery for?"

"For us," said Monty Lowther politely; and he pushed the Fourth-Former out, and closed the door, and this time the key was turned in the lock.

"Now," said Tom Merry, taking a book out of the table drawer, and opening it, "this is the book of membership. I've got it all ready. Every fellow who joins the Legion has got to sign his name here, and adopt the motto of the Legion—'Honour Bright.'"

"Good egg!"

"What's the subscription?" asked Herries.

"No subscription," said Tom Merry promptly. "Money's not wanted. It's just a Legion—the Legion of Honour, and members have the right to wear the legionary badge. No need to have a whole set of rules to sign, like some giddy

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leagues. 'Honour Bright' is enough. A chap who lives up to that will be all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Every fellow who joins the Legion has got to justify his membership, by proving himself worthy, within a certain date after joining," said Tom Merry. "Any old thing will do, so long as it's a good deed—a brave action, or an act of kindness, or a big score for your side at cricket, or a win on the river—anything that's to a chap's credit will count. And the committee will decide, and the editor's—I mean, the committee's decision will be final."

"Well, it sounds to me all right," said Blake thoughtfully. "It's a score over the New House bouncers, anyway. They've never thought of anything of the kind. I suppose a chap who downs Figgins & Co. will be eligible for the honours of membership?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Yes, rather!"

"Good egg! I suppose you were thinking of asking me to be president?"

"No fear!" said Tom Merry emphatically.

"Weally, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reprovingly. "I weally think there is a more suitable person present."

"Yes, rather!" said Kangaroo. "You are thinking of a Cornstalk about my size, Gussy?"

"I am not thinkin' of anythin' of the sort—"

"Of course not," said Reilly. "Faith, and Gussy is thinkin' of me all the time!"

"Weally, Weilly—"

"Sure, I'm thinkin' of myself, anyway, intirely," said Reilly cheerfully. "It's an illigant president I should make."

"Oh, cheese it," said Bernard Glyn, "you want a business man to run a Legion, and you can't do better than have a chap from Liverpool."

"Rats!" said Clifton Dane. "If the thing is to have any go, it will have to be run by a Colonial, and it's between Kangy and me."

"Wats!"

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Peace, my children, peace! I—"

Crash!

"My hat! Who's there?" roared Blake, as the door shook under a heavy assault from the passage.

"I am!" roared back the voice of Crooke, of the Shell.

"What's the giddy secret about?"

"Buzz off!"

"Rats! We're not going to be left out."

"Open the door, Tommy!" yelled Gore of the Shell.

"Let us in!" shrieked Bishop.

Thump! thump! thump!

There was evidently a big crowd collecting in the Shell passage. The juniors of the School House were curious as to the mysterious meeting being held by Tom Merry & Co., and they meant to know what they were all about.

"Might let some of them into the wheeze!" Blake suggested.

"We've got enough to begin," said Tom Merry. "There are eleven of us. Eleven is a good number to start a League of any kind; and we can let the others in afterwards. Not till we get all the badges from Rylcombe, and put 'em on. If a hint of this gets out, Figgins & Co. will bag the idea, and we shall be done. They can't do that after we've appeared in public with our badges on."

"Hear, hear!"

"Put your names down here—"

Bang! Bump! Bang!

"I guess you'd better open this door!" yelled Lumley-Lumley. "We're not being kept out of this."

"Oh, go and eat coke."

Bump! bump! Bang!

The juniors signed their names in the book of membership, thereby becoming members of Tom Merry's Legion of Honour, and entitling themselves to the initials "T. M. L. H." after their names. Meanwhile, the exasperated juniors in the passage were thumping on the door. The juniors in the study were growing exasperated, too.

"Now, about the president!" said Blake.

"That's settled!" said Tom Merry. "I'm president."

"Oh, come off!" said Blake with a snort. "You know jolly well it ought to be a Fourth Form chap!"

"Why ought it?" demanded Manners.

"Because—because—well, it ought, you know. What's the good of arguing about a thing that's perfectly obvious? I propose myself as president!"

"I oppose it!" said Manners.

"Vote—vote!" shouted Herries. "Buck up, because I've got to go and feed my bulldog."

"Blow your silly bulldog!"
 "Look here, Manners—"
 "Put it to the vote," said Blake warmly. "Every fellow write down the name of the chap he votes for, and then show up the papers on the table here."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 The juniors were busy with pencils and slips of paper for the next few minutes. Then the slips were shown up. Each name appeared precisely once—in the handwriting of its owner. There was a general grin. Each of the members had voted for himself for President of the Legion.
 "That won't do!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Vote again, and voting for oneself is barred."
 "That is all very well for you chaps, deah boys, but it prevents me from voting for the most appropwiate candidate."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Weally, you fellows—"
 "Bang! bang! bang!"
 "Buck up and vote," exclaimed Tom Merry, "and then we'll wade out and smash up those noisy bounders in the passage!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 The juniors voted again. Four votes came out for Tom Merry, four for Blake, and three for Kangaroo.
 "We tie!" said Tom Merry. "If you care to step out—"

"I was just going to suggest the same thing to you," said Blake blandly.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Leave it to be settled by the fortune of war," said Kangaroo. "Chap who downs the New House first becomes President of the Legion."
 "Yaas, wathah! That's a wathah good ideah!"
 "I'm agreeable!" said Tom Merry. "Let it go at that. We shall have the badges down to-morrow morning, and we can parade in the quad. with them on. Now, let's get out and wipe up the passage with those bounders."
 "Hear, hear!"

The noise in the passage was deafening by this time. A crowd of the juniors were hammering at the study door, while several kept watch towards the stairs to herald the approach of masters or prefects who might be drawn to the spot by the disturbance.

Bang, bang! Crash!
 "Open this door!" roared the voice of D'Arcy minor—the famous Wally of the Third Form.
 Tom Merry unlocked the door quietly. He threw it suddenly open, and Lumley-Lumley and several other fellows who were shoving at the door rolled into the study.
 "Charge!" roared Tom Merry.

And the Legion charged.
 They rushed right through their assailants, sending them whirling to the right and left, and with loud howls the enemy fled, and Tom Merry and Co. were left in triumphant possession of the passage.

CHAPTER 6.

Wally Knows!

MY only Aunt Jane!"
 D'Arcy minor uttered that emphatic exclamation as he burst breathlessly into the Third Form room.

The besiegers of Tom Merry's study had fled in all directions when the Legion charged, and Wally had not stopped till he was safe in the Form-room.

"The rotters!" gasped Wally. "Frayne, you ass, come and dust me down! I've been rolled along the rotten linoleum in the rotten passage by the Shell rotters."

Joe Frayne grinned, and rose from his form. Frayne was being detained in the Form-room over an imposition, which he had to get done before evening preparation. The little waif of St. Jim's had been looking somewhat dismal when Wally came in. Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, was not a kind man, and he was sometimes hard upon Frayne, the fag who had been rescued from the London streets and placed at St. Jim's by Tom Merry's uncle. Joe Frayne wrestled nobly with Latin conjugations and declensions, but he found them tough enemies.

But he grinned as he obligingly left his work to dust Wally's jacket and trousers with an exercise book.

"Not too hard, you young ass," said Wally. "Ow! Not too hard, fathad!"

"Orlright, Wally."

"Those silly asses have got some game on," growled Wally. "I'm jolly well going to know what it is. It's all very well keeping the New House bounders out of it, but they can't keep School House chaps out. If it's a House jape, we want to be in it, don't we?"

"Yes," said Frayne, dusting away vigorously, and making

clouds fly from Wally's garments. "There you are! Will that do?"

"Yes, that'll do," grunted Wally. "You've nearly choked me, anyway. Have you finished those disgusting declensions?"

"No," said Joe, with a sigh, "not quite!"

"Well, buck up, then. I want your opinion on this," said Wally. "I'm blessed if I know what it means, but I'm going to find out."

He held up a metal badge. It was the one Tom Merry had shown to the prospective members of the Legion of Honour at the meeting in the wood-shed.

Joe Frayne gazed at it in astonishment.
 "T. M. L. H.!" he said, reading the letters engraved upon it. "What does that mean, Wally?"

Wally grunted.

"Blessed if I know. It's something to do with their wheeze. That's all I know."

"Where did you get it?"

"Grabbed it," said Wally cheerfully. "Tom Merry dropped it when he was bumping me along the passage, and I grabbed it and bunked."

"Oh!" said Frayne.

"Of course, I'm not going to bone it," said Wally testily. "But I guessed it had something to do with the wheeze, you see, and I'm going to find out."

"T. M. L. H.," said Joe thoughtfully. "I suppose the letters stand for something, Wally."

"What a head-piece you've got!" said D'Arcy minor sarcastically. "I suppose they do. The question is, what do they stand for? It must be the title of some new club they're getting up, I should think."

"The H might stand for Harriers," suggested Frayne.

Wally brightened up.

"My only Aunt Jane! So it might. Harriers, of course. L. H.—League of Harriers. That's it, as sure as a gun!"

Wally hurried out of the Form-room, and Joe Frayne returned to his Latin declensions. In the passage Wally met his chums of the Third, Jameson and Curly Gibson. They had been looking for him. Both of them had been in the besieging crowd outside Tom Merry's study, and both looked somewhat dusty and rumped.

"I've got it!" Wally announced triumphantly.

Jameson grunted.

"So have I, if you mean a thick ear!" he growled.

"Rats! I've got the giddy secret!" Wally held up the badge. "Look at that! Do you know what those letters stand for?"

Jameson and Curly looked at the badge with interest.

"T. M. L. H.," said Jameson. "Blessed if I do. Is it a puzzle?"

"It's the title of some new club those bounders are starting, and trying to keep us out of," said Wally impressively. "The T. M. stand for Tom Merry, of course."

"Of course," assented Curly.

"And the L is League, of course."

"Looks like it."

"And the H—that must mean Harriers if it means anything."

"Good!"

"Tom Merry's League of Harriers!" said Wally triumphantly. "They're going to start the harriers again; that's what it means. And they've got the awful cheek to think that they can leave the Third out."

"Cheek!" said Jameson.

"I should say so! They're keeping it dark, but we've got on to it," said Wally chuckling. "We'll go and see the bounders, and put it to them straight. If they let us into the game, we'll keep it dark, and if they don't, we'll shout it out all over the school."

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on, then! They're in the common-room, I think."

And Wally & Co. hurried off to the junior common-room. Tom Merry and his comrades were there now, or nearly all of them. The Terrible Three were playing chess, Tom Merry against Manners and Lowther, and—naturally enough under the circumstances—Tom Merry was getting the best of it. Wally & Co. walked up to the chess-table, and the chums of the Shell grinned.

"Run away, kids," said Monty Lowther. "Don't bother now."

"Look here," said Wally.

He held up the badge. Tom Merry uttered an exclamation.

"My hat! That belongs to me! Where did you get it, you young rascal?"

Wally grinned.

"You dropped it, and I picked it up," he said. "All's fair in war. You can have it if you like; but I've found out the secret."

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NEXT THURSDAY: "D'ARCY'S LIBEL ACTION!"

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Hush!"
 "Shush!"
 The Terrible Three looked alarmed. Fellows were gathering round the chess-table now, to hear what the fags of the Third had to say. Wally & Co. were grinning triumphantly. They felt that they held the trump card.
 "You kids have got the secret?" asked Lumley-Lumley.
 "Yes, rather."
 "What is it? I guess we want to know?"
 "Out with it, Wally!" shouted Croke of the Shell.
 "That depends," said Wally serenely. "If we're admitted to the society we keep the secret, though, under the circumstances I don't see what there is to keep secrets about. But there's our terms. If we're inside we keep the secret; if we're not, we don't. That's fair."
 "Fair as a die!" said Curly Gibson.
 "Weally, Wally," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "I object vewy much to your makin' terms in this way."
 "Oh, don't you begin, Gussy."
 "You young wascal—"
 "You can go and eat coke," said Tom Merry. "I don't believe you've guessed the secret at all; and, anyway, it will be out to-morrow."
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "T. M. L. H.," said Wally.
 "Shut up!" said Herries.
 "Rats! I'll tell the whole giddy House what it means if I want to," said Wally independently. "It all depends on you fellows. Not that we want to join your rotten Shell societies, but we're not going to be left out. See?"
 "Rats!"
 "Well, if you want the whole school to know about your dodge for reviving the harriers—"
 "The what?" yelled Tom Merry.
 "The harriers," said Wally. "I know—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Tom Merry & Co. roared. It was evident that the fags of the Third, in spite of their great assurance, were very much on the wrong tack.
 "Look here, you silly asses—" began Wally wrathfully, with an uneasy inward feeling that perhaps he had been a little too sure.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Do you want us to give you away?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Tell us, Wally!" shouted Gore. "Out with it. What do the letters stand for?"
 "Tom Merry's League of Harriers!" shouted Wally.
 "My hat!"
 Tom Merry roared.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Ain't that right?" shrieked Wally.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bai Jove! You are a young ass, Wallay! It doesn't mean anythin' of the sort, deah boy!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 Wally glared wrathfully at the Terrible Three. It was evident that he was upon the wrong tack, and that the chums of the Shell did not object to his disclosures. Wally seized the chess-table, and hurled it among the Shell fellows, and fled. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther roared as pieces and pawns came over them in a shower, and they jumped up to execute summary vengeance upon Wally.
 But the heroes of the Third had fled.
 "The young villain!" gasped Manners. "The game's mucked up now. But you were mate in two, Tommy, so it doesn't matter."
 "Mate in rats!" said Tom Merry. "I had you mate in three, you mean."
 "Well, you ass—"
 "Well, you fathead—"
 "Look here, Manners!"
 "Look here, Tom Merry—"
 "I tell you—"
 "I tell you—"
 "Fathead!"
 "Ass!"
 And the point was never really settled

CHAPTER 7.

From Information Received.

THE curiosity upon the subject of the mysterious "T. M. L. H." was growing keener and keener among the juniors of St. Jim's. It was almost at boiling-point the next morning. So far, all the fellows knew of the wheeze was that it was represented by the letters T. M. L. H., but what T. M. L. H. might stand for, nobody knew. Wally's guess was evidently wide of the mark, and other guesses

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that were incessantly made did not come anywhere near the facts.

Even Mellish was in the dark about it, and Mellish generally found methods for finding out things.

But after morning school that day, the consignment of badges arrived from Rylcombe, and then the members of the Legion appeared with the badges on.

Eleven juniors paraded the quadrangle solemnly with the badges pinned to their jackets, bearing the mysterious symbols, T. M. L. H.

A big crowd gathered to stare at them. The members of the Legion of Honour rather enjoyed the importance they had so suddenly attained, and they were in no hurry to explain.

Seniors as well as juniors were curious on the subject, and Knox, the bully of the Sixth, undertook to make the juniors explain what it all meant. If Kildare or Darrel had asked them, the juniors would have answered cheerfully at once; but they did not like Knox, and he did not have a courteous way of inquiring, either. The bully of the Sixth stopped them in the quadrangle, with a frowning brow.

"What does this foolery mean?" Knox demanded.

The juniors stared at him.

"What foolery?" asked Tom Merry sweetly. "If you're alluding to your own remarks, Knox, I don't know what you mean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox scowled.

"I don't want any of your cheek!" he growled. "What are you wearing those badges for?"

"They suit our complexions," explained Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does T. M. L. H. mean?" roared Knox.

"Taggles May Leave Home," said Monty Lowther.

"What?"

"Can't do more than answer your question," said Lowther blandly. "It means that, as well as a lot more things. That will do for you. But if you don't like it, I can give you another rendering. Try My Lovely Ham! How do you like that?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox turned purple.

"You young rotters!" he shouted. "Will you answer my question?"

"I've answered it," said Monty Lowther. "But I'll give you another answer if you like: T. M. L. H.—Take My Last Hegg."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The angry prefect looked as if he would charge at the Legion for a moment; but he realised that it would probably have damaging results for himself, and he refrained, and stamped away in a very bad temper.

Tom Merry & Co. chuckled.

Knox went into the School House with a scowling brow. Jerrold Lumley-Lumley followed him in, and looked in at the door of his study. Knox scowled at him.

"What do you want, you young rotter?" he growled.

"I—I say, Knox," said Lumley-Lumley hesitatingly. "I—I—"

He paused.

Knox picked up a cricket-stump.

"Do you want me to give you a whaling, the same as I did yesterday?" he inquired.

Lumley-Lumley's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"Thanks, no," he said. "Look here, Knox, I can tell you something, if—if you won't regard it as sneaking, or mention it to anybody."

Knox put down the stump.

"About Tom Merry and those other young rotters?" he asked.

"I guess so."

"You know what T. M. L. H. means?" asked Knox.

"I guess I can tell you."

"What does it mean?"

Lumley-Lumley glanced very mysteriously out into the passage, and closed the door, and came towards the prefect on tiptoe. Knox could not fail to be impressed by his manner. It was evident that the Outsider of St. Jim's had something of the greatest importance to communicate.

"You won't let anybody know I've told you, Knox?" asked Lumley-Lumley, with a troubled and hesitating look.

"Of course not."

"Honour bright?"

"Yes, yes!"

"You see, I guess you ought to know, as a prefect, so that you can interfere if you think fit," said Lumley-Lumley. "If you report the matter to the Head, as I suppose you will, you promise not to mention my name as having given you the information. If the fellows knew I had sneaked, I should have a rotten time."

Knox's eyes gleamed.

"You can rely on me," he said. "What is it? I'll keep your name dark, and I can tell you that I can make it worth your while in a good many ways to keep me posted in what goes on in the Lower School."

"I guess so. But I'm pretty nervous about telling you this, I reckon."

"I will protect you, if necessary," said Knox. "You can rely on me, and I'll keep your share in the matter a secret. What are those young villains up to? Is it some scheme against the prefects? If it is, I shall be able to get Kildare down on them."

"I guess you're right."

"What is it, then? What does T. M. L. H. mean?" asked Knox eagerly.

"It's a secret society!" said Lumley-Lumley, sinking his voice to a deep whisper. "Of course, I don't reckon they really mean to commit murder."

"What?"

"But it's founded on those lines, you know. And there's never any telling what kids may do when they start playing the goat in that way," said Lumley-Lumley, with owl-like gravity. "If they don't mean mischief, what does Tom Merry carry a pistol in his pocket for?"

Knox jumped.

"A— a pistol!" he gasped.

"Yes."

"Have you seen it?"

"I guess so."

"Good heavens!" said Knox. "I know this kind of thing has happened— young fools forming secret criminal societies, through reading newspaper reports of such things. But—"

"If you know what they call their society—"

"What is it? What does T. M. L. H. stand for?"

"The Murderers' League of Hate!" said Lumley-Lumley solemnly.

"Good heavens!"

"You never know what this kind of thing will lead to," said Lumley-Lumley, with a wise shake of the head. "That's why I considered it my duty to report the matter to you. Things of this kind ought to be stopped before it gets the young duffers into mischief."

Knox's eyes glittered.

"You're sure about the pistol, Lumley?"

"I guess so. You can see it through the cloth if you look at Tom Merry's jacket."

Knox strode to the door.

"I say, don't mention my name!" exclaimed Lumley-Lumley in alarm. "I don't want to be called a sneak, you know."

"That's all right," said Knox. "But I'm going to have that young criminal up before the Head before he has time to do any harm."

And he strode from the study. Tom Merry & Co. were on the steps of the School House, surrounded by an inquisitive crowd, when the prefect strode out. Knox dropped his hand on Tom Merry's shoulder.

"Come with me, you young rascal!" he said.

Tom Merry started back.

Knox's hand slid over his jacket, and he felt, beyond a doubt, the hard outline of a pistol in the inside pocket of the junior's jacket. That was proof enough.

"What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Follow me."

"Follow me, follow me 'ome!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are to come with me to the Head at once!" said Knox savagely. "All of you—all the boys who are wearing that badge. I know what it means now."

"But—I say—Knox—"

"Follow me at once!" shouted the prefect.

"Oh, all serene!"

And the Legion followed the excited prefect into the house, wondering. They left the crowd in a buzz behind them.

CHAPTER 8.

A Knock for Knox.

DR. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, was seated in his study, chatting with Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, when there came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" said the Head.

Knox opened the door and strode in. His excited face drew a glance of surprise from the Head and the School House master. But they looked more surprised still when eleven juniors, of the Shell and the Fourth, meekly followed the prefect into the study. Dr. Holmes rose to his feet.

"Bless my soul," he exclaimed, "what is the meaning of this—this invasion? I trust that nothing is wrong, Knox?"

"Something is very wrong, sir, and I considered it my duty to report it to you, and to bring these juniors before you, sir," said Knox.

"Dear me!"

"May I make a remark, sir—"

"Silence, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, sir, certainly. But I have not the slightest ideal why Knox has brought us here in this wiculous mannah!"

"Same here, sir," said Blake.

Knox smiled unpleasantly.

"You will soon know," he said.

"This is very extraordinary, Knox," said the Head, a little severely. "You have brought eleven boys to me, and they are certainly eleven of the best boys in the House. I cannot forget, Knox, that you have sometimes made quite frivolous complaints against some of these juniors before."

"Hear, hear!" murmured Tom Merry.

Knox flushed.

"This is a very serious matter, sir, and I hope to make it clear that you have been deceived in the character of these boys, sir."

"I do not think you will make that clear very easily, Knox," said the Head, with a slight curl of the lip. "However, you may proceed."

"Would you approve, sir, of a secret society being formed among the juniors of this House, on the lines of a criminal organisation as reported in the daily newspapers, sir?"

"Bless my soul, certainly not!"

"Stay," said Mr. Railton. "There are many societies in the junior Forms, I think—the Fourth Form dramatic society, and the cricket club, and the hobby club, and the debating society. All these are very harmless, Knox."

"Indeed, they are," said Dr. Holmes.

Knox could not repress a sneer.

"This is not a society of that sort, sir," he said. "What do you think of a society among the juniors known as the Murderers' League of Hate?"

The two masters started violently.

"What?"

"Absurd!"

"Absurd or not, sir, these boys have made a club, of society, with that title," said the prefect. "I have received the information from a junior, whose name I have promised not to mention."

"You should not encourage sneaking and tale-bearing among the juniors, Knox," said the School House master.

"Decidedly not," said the Head.

"I do not, sir; but this is a special case. The junior in question was alarmed by the wickedness he had discovered, and he thought it his duty to give information. These boys have formed a league called the Murderers' League of Hate—"

"Bai Jove!"

"And their leader, Tom Merry, has already obtained a pistol, which he carries upon his person," said Knox.

"Bless my soul!"

"Under the circumstances, sir, I think you will say that I have done right in bringing such a matter to your notice," said Knox.

"Certainly not, Knox—most decidedly, if the facts are as you have stated them," said Dr. Holmes. "But I feel convinced that these juniors are too sensible and too healthy-minded to allow foolish newspapers to impress them in this way. Indeed, it is forbidden at this school for juniors to read the newspapers without express permission from their Form-masters, and I cannot think that they have disobeyed this rule."

"Certainly not, sir," said Tom Merry.

"I have certainly wead nothin' in the papahs exceptin' the county cwicket weports and the South African matches," said Arthur Augustus. "I disappwove entirely of the way newpapahs are conducted."

The Head smiled.

"Then you deny this statement made against you, my boys?"

"Certainly, sir,"

"Yaas, wathah! Knox must be off his wockah, sir."

"Right off," said Bernard Glyn. "I don't know where he got his information from, sir, but somebody's been stuffing him."

"Stuffing him up to the chin, sir," said Clifton Dane.

"It's all rot from beginning to end."

"Yaas, wathah! Uttah wot, sir!"

Knox gave a sneering smile.

"I expected them to deny it, sir," he said. "They will all do that, of course. But I have two incontrovertible proofs which they cannot deny. One is, that Tom Merry, at this very moment, is carrying a pistol in his pocket; and the other is, that they wear badges inscribed with the initials of their society. Tell Merry to turn up what he has in his inside pocket, sir."

Dr. Holmes turned a stern glance upon the captain of the Shell.

"Is it true, Merry, that you have a pistol there?"

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"Yes, sir."

"Merry! You dare to carry a deadly weapon about you in this school!" the Head exclaimed, in utter amazement.

"It is not very deadly, sir."

"Place it on the table before me."

"Certainly, sir."

Tom Merry drew the deadly weapon out of his inside pocket and placed it upon the table before the Head. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Railton looked at it and smiled. It certainly was a pistol, and made of polished and shining metal, but it was only made to discharge peas by means of a spring, and could not be considered deadly.

Knox gave a jump as he looked at the pea-pistol.

"Well," said Dr. Holmes, with a smile, "I do not see any harm in that weapon, Knox. It is certainly not so dangerous as a catapult, and no worse than a pea-shooter. Have you any more convincing proofs to give?"

Knox breathed hard through his nose. In his intense dislike of Tom Merry & Co., and his eagerness to catch them on the hop, as it were, he had swallowed whole the information laid against them, and had taken for proofs what would hardly have satisfied a prefect more keen to do justice than to gratify a personal dislike.

But after all, there were the initials on the badges. They could not be denied. There they were, under the very eyes of the doctor.

"Yes, sir," said Knox. "Look at the badges these boys are wearing."

Dr. Holmes put up his glasses and looked at the badges.

"Very nicely designed!" he said.

Knox bit his lips.

"You see the letters inscribed on them, sir?"

"Yes. 'T. M. L. H.'"

"They are the initials of their secret society, sir—the Murderers' League of Hate, as they call it," said Knox triumphantly.

Dr. Holmes looked startled. It was indeed a strange coincidence, to say the least of it. He looked hard at Tom Merry & Co. The juniors were smiling.

"What does that mean, Merry?" the Head asked sternly.

Tom Merry grinned.

"I don't know who gave that information to Knox, sir," he said; "but whoever it was, he was pulling his leg. Those initials can be made to stand for lots of things. They really stand for Tom Merry's Legion of Honour."

"What!" gasped Knox.

"It's a new wheeze, sir," said Tom Merry modestly. "Chaps who play the game, sir, and so on, are admitted to the society. The motto is 'Honour Bright.' We've only been keeping it secret for a bit, till we got the badges out, in case the New House bouncers—ahem!—I mean, the New House chaps should bag the wheeze, sir."

"Yaas, wathah! Knox is an ass, sir!"

"It's not true! They're not speaking the truth, sir!" gasped Knox, utterly dismayed as he beheld his house of cards, as it were, falling round him in this way. "I don't believe them, sir! I don't believe a word of it!"

"I am sorry for that, Knox," said the Head drily, "because I believe every word of it. It is all, evidently, quite true."

Knox's jaw dropped.

"Oh, sir!"

"I am afraid you are very suspicious, Knox, and very much inclined to believe the absurdest stories," said the Head. "The explanation these juniors have given is perfectly satisfactory. I may say, too, that I consider a Legion of Honour an excellent idea for a boyish society—a very excellent idea indeed! You may go, my boys. Knox, you have wasted my time and given these boys trouble for nothing. Kindly be a little more careful on another occasion."

And the Legion of Honour filed out of the study. They gave Knox a cheerful grin in the passage, but Knox did not respond to it. He strode away, with a brow like thunder, and went to look for Jerrold Lumley-Lumley. But that humorous youth was keeping very carefully out of the way of the enraged prefect, and Knox did not succeed in finding him.

CHAPTER 9.

Figgins & Co. Mean Business.

FIGGINS, of the Fourth, gave an emphatic grunt.

"Well, it's out at last!" he growled.

Kerr nodded.

"Yes; and we never guessed it. And, owing to that ass Knox, it's been taken before the Head, and the Head has approved; and those School House bouncers have roped in lots of kudos from that."

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"We shall have to put a spoke in their wheel!" growled Figgins. "We're not going to let them score! What do you think, Fatty?"

"Too much sugar," said Fatty Wynn, with a shake of the head.

"What?" exclaimed Figgins, in astonishment.

"Too much sugar."

"What are you talking about, you fat duffer?"

Fatty Wynn looked up from his cake in surprise.

"About this cake," he said. "I thought at the time we were putting in too much sugar, but Kerr said—"

"Oh, you ass! Look here, we're talking about that giddy Legion of Honour in the School House. Blessed if I know how Tom Merry thought of it. It's a ripping idea! And do you know, they're going to make president the chap who distinguishes himself by dowsing us—Us!"

"They won't get their president in a hurry, then," said Kerr. "We're not going to be downed! And I've got an idea."

"What's that?"

"A rival Legion."

Figgins shook his head.

"No good, Kerr, old man. They'll simply say that we've plagiarised from them. A rival Legion would fall flat."

"Yes, if we ran it seriously; but I mean a comic Legion," said Kerr. "We can have a banner, and buttons plastered all over us, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We can call it the Button Brigade, or something of that sort," grinned Kerr. "It will turn the cackle against the School House. The fags will jump at the idea."

"Good egg!" said Figgins heartily. "Let's call some of the chaps in, and we'll work it out."

"Right-ho!"

"Put that cake away, Fatty."

"I'm putting it away, Figgy."

"Ass! I mean put it away in the cupboard!" roared Figgins. "We've got business to attend to. We've got to down the School House."

Fatty Wynn took a fresh mouthful.

"It's all right, Figgy. I can talk while I eat. When you're going to think anything out, you know, it's always best to lay a solid foundation. And I get jolly hungry in this July weather, you know."

"Br-r-r-r!"

The faithful followers of Figgins & Co., in their little wars with the School House, gathered willingly enough in the study.

Many of them were feeling sore over the score the School House juniors had made with the Legion of Honour, and they were very keen to get on to a scheme which would have the effect of putting the Terrible Three in their place.

Pratt, of the Fourth, and Thompson, of the Shell, and Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, and several other fellows came along.

Fatty Wynn considered operations on the cake. It was a very large cake, and Fatty Wynn was a very large eater, so they were well matched, and the cake was likely to last as long as the council of war.

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen had on an expression of great and generous patience and forbearance. They were the rival leaders of the New House juniors, but they were willing to follow the lead of Figgins & Co. if Figgins & Co. had anywhere to lead them. But they felt that they were making a generous concession in this, and they looked it.

"We want you fellows to back us up," Figgins remarked.

"Go ahead!" said Redfern airily. "I could suggest a better idea!"

"What's that?"

"For you fellows to back us up!" said Redfern innocently.

"Exactly!" said Lawrence and Owen together.

"Oh, don't play the giddy ox!" said Figgins warmly.

"You fellows are new boys in this school, and it's your place to back up us old hands."

"Rats!"

"Look here, Reddy—"

"All serene!" said Redfern. "I only said rats on general principles. I'm ready to back you up if you can pull Tom Merry & Co. down off their perch. That's fair."

"Good!" said Figgins. "We're going to work up a rival Legion, and make them look a lot of asses. Do leave off munching that cake, Fatty!"

"I can't swallow it without masticating it, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn, in a tone of surprised remonstrance.

"Leave off eating for a few minutes, then!" roared Figgins.

"Oh, don't ask impossibilities!" said Redfern. "Take it out in the passage on the mat, Fatty, and worry it there!"



Bolsover brought the hammer down upon the lock with a terrific crash. The lock was not built to stand such an attack. The door gave half an inch and then jammed again. Bolsover shoved at it in vain. "He's barricaded it," yelled Snoop. "He's got the study table under the handle!" And meanwhile the mysterious new boy was working desperately at his fresh make-up. *(The above incident is taken from the splendid, long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "UNDER SUSPICION!" which is contained in our popular companion paper "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.)*

"Look here, Redfern, if you want a thick ear—"
 "Blessed if I see how we're going to down the School House at this rate," said Redfern. "Let's get on with the washing!"

Kerr was at the table, with a camel-hair brush in his hand, with which he was scrawling on a sheet of paper. He held up the paper, and the juniors read the initials that were daubed upon it in big letters:

"T. M. L. H."

Under it, in small letters, was the explanation:

"Tom Merry's Lunatics' Home!"

Redfern grinned.

"Good! That will make 'em sit up!"

"We've got to get a dozen fags, and shove these badges on 'em!" said Kerr, chuckling. "They can parade in front of the School House when Tom Merry & Co. come out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we'll all be hanging on, in case there's a House row over it—as I expect there will be."

"Good egg! We'll call up the forces!"

"And mind you keep an eye on me for the word of command!" said Figgins impressively.

Redfern cocked one eye thoughtfully at Figgins.

"Well, I don't know about that," he remarked.

"Wouldn't it be better for you to keep one eye on me?"

"Look here, Reddy—"

"Look here, Figgy—"

"Oh, shut up, both of you!" said Kerr impatiently.

"Don't spoil a good jape by ragging one another now. Let's get to bizney!"

"Well, Reddy says—"

"Figgy says—"

"Shut up!" roared Kerr. "Get on with the washing!"

"Good! I'm ready, if Fatty's finished eating!" said Redfern cheerily.

"I'm finished," said Fatty Wynn, with a sigh. "I've got a rather good idea, you chaps. Before we carry out that wheeze—it's a jolly good wheeze—suppose we—"

"Well?" demanded Figgins.

"Well?" demanded Figgins.

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"Suppose we go round to the tuckshop and have some ginger-pop? Eating cake always makes me feel thirsty."

Figgins and Kerr did not reply to Fatty Wynn's suggestion in words. They rushed at him and seized him, and bumped him on the floor of the study. The fat Fourth-Former roared:

"Ow! Yaro-o-o-oh!"

"Now, ring off!" gasped Figgins.

"Ow! You ass, Figgy——"

"Dry up! Now then, you chaps, let's get this wheeze going!" said Figgins, somewhat heatedly. "If Fatty Wynn says another word, shove him out of the study!"

"Oh, I say, Figgy—— Oh!"

Whizzzzzz!

Fatty Wynn spun out into the passage, and the door slammed after him. It was evident that Figgins & Co. were in deadly earnest, and that such trifles as cake and ginger-pop were not to be allowed to interrupt their schemes for "downing" the School House juniors.

Fatty Wynn picked himself up in the passage in a state of great astonishment, and gasped for breath.

"Ow!" he murmured. "The asses! Yow! The fat-heads! I'm jolly well going to have that ginger-pop, all the same!"

And he went and had it, while in Figgins's study the scheme was elaborated with many chuckles for covering the T. M. L. H. with confusion.

CHAPTER 10.
The Japers Japed.

"MY hat!" Monty Lowther uttered that sudden exclamation.

He was standing at the window of the study in the Shell passage in the School House, and a loud roar of voices from the quadrangle had drawn him there to look out.

Manners was developing films in his daylight developing tank, and did not take the trouble to look round at Lowther's exclamation. When so engaged he would probably not have looked round if an earthquake had travelled to St. Jim's. But Tom Merry looked up from the Latin lines he was writing out.

"What's the row, Monty?"

"Those New House asses!"

"What's the game?"

"Looks like a procession!"

Tom Merry joined his chum at the study window.

There was a big crowd in the quadrangle, in the blazing July sunshine. Tom Merry knitted his brows as he heard the roars of laughter, and saw the procession advancing from the direction of the New House.

A dozen fags were walking in solemn procession, with faces preternaturally grave, and with huge placards, daubed in red ink, pinned on their chests.

The placards bore the inscription:

"T. M. L. H."

"Tom Merry's Lunatics' Home!"

"T. M. L. H."

The fellows in the quadrangle were yelling with laughter. The ridiculous procession "processed" past the School House with great gravity. Figgins & Co. and Redfern & Co., and a big crowd of New House juniors, followed, grinning.

"The rotters!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully. "They're making fun of the Legion of Honour! Look here, Manners!"

"Oh, blow!" said Manners.

"Come here, you ass!"

"I'm developing."

There was a yell from the quad, as Tom Merry and Lowther were seen looking out of the window. Outside the School House Blake & Co. were standing, looking very red. The absurd procession halted under Tom Merry's study window.

"Here we are!" sang out Jameson.

"Tom Merry's Lunatics' Home!" roared Pratt.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gentlemen," said Thompson, of the Shell, "we are a new society! Anybody who takes a Tom Merry Lunatic Home is eligible for membership!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We are raising subscriptions to buy a set of strait jackets for Tom Merry's lunatics!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! The wottahs!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. Kangaroo, of the Shell, dashed into the study. His face was wildly excited.

"Do you see them?" he yelled.

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"Yes, rather!"

"It's got to be stopped, and stopped now, or the whole school will be cackling at the giddy Legion of Honour!"

"Let's call up the fellows and charge them!" exclaimed Lowther. "Come on, Manners!"

"Bosh!" said Manners. "I'm developing!"

"Look here——"

"Can't; I'm developing!"

"We've got to do something!" shouted Clifton Dane, dashing into the study. "Look here! I've got it!"

"What have you got?"

"Look!"

Dane held up a large garden squirt, the property of Taggles, the porter.

"They're parading just under this window!" he said, with a grin. "Get a bucket of water, and shove some red ink in it, and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can have some pyro, if you like," said Manners, without looking up. "Don't come near me! There's a bottle on the shelf."

"Good egg!"

Lowther dashed out of the study, and returned in a few seconds with a pail half-full of water. Pyro and red ink were dashed into it liberally. It was no time, as Lowther remarked, to think of expense.

Tom Merry took the big squirt, and filled it with the terrible mixture. Then he stepped to the open window, keeping the squirt out of sight.

"Put the pail close here!" he muttered.

"Right-ho!"

"I think we'll make 'em sorry they came over here to be funny!"

Tom Merry leaned out of the window, still keeping the squirt concealed. There was a yell from the jokers of the New House.

"Here he is!"

"Here's Tommy, the Chief Lunatic!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come and take your lunatics home!"

Tom Merry did not reply. He brought the huge squirt suddenly forward, and levelled it. Before the New House procession knew what was coming, the muzzle was bearing full upon them, and there was a whizz—squissssh!

Squish!

"Ow!"

"Ah!"

"Yowwwp!"

"Gerroooh!"

The beautifully-coloured fluid fell out in a shower as it descended upon the procession. The placards were spotted all over with mixed colour, and so were the procession. There was a chorus of yells.

"Quick, Tommy, before they cut!" gasped Lowther.

"What-ho!"

Tom Merry drew in a fresh charge into the squirt, and whizzed it out of the window. It splashed the procession from end to end. They gouged liquid from their eyes and noses, and roared—and so did the School House fellows, upon whom stray drops fell thickly.

"Bai Jove!" shrieked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You uttah asses! You are spoilin' my jacket! You are wuinin' my collar! Ow!"

"All for the good of the cause!" chuckled Jack Blake, retreating into the shelter of the porch. "Go for 'em, Tommy! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Retreat!" yelled Figgins. "Ow! Ooooooch!"

A fresh jet from the squirt caught Figgins fairly in the face, and he staggered back gasping.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lowther. "It will be some time before Figgins gets that colour out! Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Tommy!"

Whiz! Squish!

The procession had broken up by now.

The processionists, drenched with water and pyro and red ink, retreated in wild confusion across the quadrangle, with dragged placards and wild yells and gasps.

Kerr shook a frantic fist up at the study window, but only for a moment. A fresh charge caught him on the nose, and splashed over his face, and he retreated puffing and gasping.

Fatty Wynn was caught on the ear as he fled. Figgins & Co., with a beautifully-rainbowed set of complexions, dashed off, and the rest of the New House juniors followed them out of range of the squirt.

The laugh was on the side of the School House now. Tom Merry leaned out of the study window and brandished the squirt.

"Come on!" he shouted. "I've got some more here!"

"Ow!"

"Groooh!"

"Beast!"

"Yowow!"

And Figgins & Co. retreated in wild disorder across the quadrangle. They left the School House crowd almost in hysterics.

CHAPTER 11. Friends in Need.

MR. RATCLIFF, the Housemaster of the New House, was looking out of his study window. He saw the retreat of the New House juniors, and he was at the House door by the time the discomfited heroes of the New House reached it.

Figgins & Co., looking extraordinarily weird with their new complexions, came in, gasping, and met their Housemaster face to face.

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff, his sour face pink with anger. "Stop!"

Figgins groaned.

"Ratty, by gum!"

Mr. Ratcliff glared.

"Figgins! Kerr! Wynn! How dare you get yourselves into this state?"

"We—we didn't do it, sir!" gasped Kerr.

"Ah!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "You have, then, been the victims of a trick—a practical joke! Tell me the name of the boy who did this, immediately!"

Figgins & Co. looked at him. Mr. Ratcliff was not a pleasant man, and it seemed to the juniors that he was always trying to get them to sneak about one another. In the School House two or three of the masters had seen what had happened, and they had only smiled about it. Not so Mr. Ratcliff. That gentleman was always looking for trouble.

"Do you hear me, Figgins?" rapped out the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir," said Figgins, "I hear you!"

"Tell me at once who committed this outrage!"

"It—it wasn't an outrage, sir," Figgins explained laboriously. "It was only a jape, sir."

"A what?"

"A—a—a joke, sir."

"Indeed! Do you think it is a joke to come into the House in that disgraceful state?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff. "Go and clean yourselves at once, and then come down to my study."

"Ye-e-es, sir."

And Figgins & Co. went disconsolately up to the Fourth-Form dormitory to clean themselves—a task which was not easy, and did not result very successfully.

When they came down, and presented themselves before Mr. Ratcliff in his study, their faces still had a peculiarly mottled expression, and Mr. Ratcliff's eyes glittered as they rested upon the juniors' countenances.

"Is that what you call cleaning yourselves?" he demanded.

"We've done our best, sir," said Figgins.

"It won't all come off, sir," said Kerr.

"We've rubbed awfully hard, sir," said Fatty Wynn dismally.

Mr. Ratcliff sniffed.

"Very well! Understand me; if you lay a complaint against the boy who has treated you in this manner, I will see that he is properly punished; but otherwise I shall regard this as impertinence on your part."

Figg's lip curled.

"We don't want to complain of anybody, sir," he said.

"Very well, you will take five hundred lines each!"

"Oh, sir!"

"And you will go to the Form-room at once, and write them out, and bring them to me by eight o'clock," said Mr. Ratcliff. "If you do not bring them to me by then, I shall double them. Go!"

"Yes, sir."

Figgins & Co. left the study in dismay.

"The awful old bouncer!" murmured Figgins, in the passage. "He knows jolly well we can't get five hundred lines each done by eight o'clock, unless we grind away like machines. He wants us to sneak about Tom Merry."

"Awful cad!" said Fatty Wynn. "What about tea?"

"There won't be any time for tea, ass!"

"Jolly lucky I had that cake, after all, then."

Figgins & Co. went on their way not rejoicing. Redfern met them in the quadrangle, and grinned.

"You look lovely," he remarked. "Was Ratty ratty?"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Figgins crossly.

"But I say— Oh!"

The exasperated Co. seized Redfern, and sat him down violently in the quad., and walked on. They went into the Form-room, and got out paper and pens, and started dismally enough upon their lines. It was a miserable ending to their little jape upon Tom Merry's Legion of Honour.

They were grinding away at the lines in the Form-room when Tom Merry & Co. looked in. The School House fellows grinned at Figgins & Co.'s mottled expressions.

"That a new thing in make-up?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Oh, get off!"

"What are you doing lines for?" asked Tom Merry.

"Old Ratty!"

Tom Merry looked concerned.

"Not because of that little jape?"

"Yes, you ass! All your fault!"

"Well, it was all your own fault; you shouldn't jape the cock-house at St. Jim's," said Manners, with a shake of the head.

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry came into the Form-room.

"How many lines?" he asked.

"Five hundred each, to be handed in at eight, or doubled," growled Kerr.

"Phew!"

"Buzz off, and let's get 'em done. We don't want to be kept in for a half-holiday; and that's what Ratty will do if he gets half a chance."

"And I'm getting hungry," said Fatty Wynn pathetically.

"Gentlemen!" said Tom Merry, looking at Manners and Lowther! "This is where we come in!"

"It's where you get out if you don't want an inkpot buzzed at you!" growled Figgins.

"Gentlemen—"

"Shut up, and let's get on. Can't write while you're gassing!" yelled Figgins.

"Gentlemen, as members of the Legion of Honour, we are called upon to help these kids out," said Tom Merry. "You remember the motto of the Legion—Honour Bright!"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther.

"It is up to us to lend a hand to fellows in distress, especially as it's partly our fault. We were going out to play cricket till dark!"

"We are!" said Monty Lowther significantly.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We were!" he said firmly. "Gentlemen of the Legion of Honour, it's up to us to live up to our motto. We've got to help these chaps get through their lines."

"Oh!" said Manners.

"M-m-m-m!" mumbled Lowther.

"No good belonging to a Legion of Honour if you don't live up to it," said Tom Merry. "Wire in, and help!"

"What about the cricket?" said Lowther.

"Blow the cricket!"

"But I say—"

"Honour bright, you know," said Tom Merry, "it's up to us! Wire in, and make your fist as like theirs as possible, in case Ratty reads the lines!"

"I say, that's jolly decent of you!" said Figgins.

"That's the motto of the Legion of Honour!" said Tom Merry loftily. "We'll get through your lines in next to no time. It won't do to take them in before eight, or Ratty will smell a rat; but you can come and feed in our study till eight, when the lines are done."

"Hear, hear!" said Fatty Wynn heartily.

"Good egg!" said Figgins.

And the Terrible Three sat down to work. It was rather a wrench, for they had been looking forward to a pleasant hour on the cricket-field in the July sunset; but, as Tom Merry said, it was "up" to them as members of the Legion of Honour.

And they played up nobly.

The lines, with double the number of fellows working at them, were finished by half-past seven, and then the six juniors adjourned to Tom Merry's study, and discussed cake and lemonade till nearly eight.

"It's jolly decent of you chaps," said Figgins, as they rose to go, "and I'll tell you what, we'll let the giddy Legion of Honour alone after this, and there won't be any more japes on that subject. It's a jolly good idea, anyway."

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry, with equal cordiality, "and look here, we'll make it eligible for New House chaps to enter—you can all come in, if you accept the conditions."

"Good! Long live the T. M. L. H.!" said Kerr.

And the three juniors went back to their own House armed with their completed lines. Mr. Ratcliff looked at them sourly as they brought the lines in. Figgins & Co. looked very meek and very serious, and they brought in the lines just on the stroke of eight. And as even Mr. Ratcliff could find nothing to grumble about, they escaped from the study without any further trouble.

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ANSWERS

NEXT THURSDAY:

"D'ARCY'S LIBEL ACTION!"

CHAPTER 12.

A Noble Deed.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY were an extremely thoughtful expression.

His aristocratic brow was wrinkled over his eye-glass, as if he were trying to bury it in his eye. He wasn't; it was merely an effort of thought on his part.

Blake and Digby and Herries were watching him with covert grins. The swell of St. Jim's was so deeply buried in thought that he did not observe them. Suddenly he came out of his reverie and started.

"Bai Jove!"

"Got it?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! Is it to be blue with pink spots?"

"Eh?"

"Or pink with blue spots?" asked Digby.

"What?"

"Or yellow with crimson bars?" suggested Herries.

Arthur Augustus gazed at his study-mates in bewilderment. "I'm afraid I don't quite understand, dear boys," he remarked.

"Weren't you thinking out the pattern of a new fancy waistcoat?" asked Blake, in surprise.

"You uttah ass! Certainly not."

"What was it, then—a new thing in neckties?"

"No, you duffers," said D'Arcy, frowning. "Pway be sewious, dear boys. I have been thinkin' about the Legion of Honah! Ewemy membah is supposed to qualify himself for membahship by doin' some bwave or noble deed. Now, I am a vevy bwave chap, but I don't see any opportunity of displayin' any special cowrage just now. I have therefore decided to do a noble deed."

The Fourth-Formers chuckled.

"I fail to see any reason for wibald laughah," said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "I wegard it as bein' up to ewemy membah of the Legion to do a noble deed. I have thought of a noble deed, and I'm goin' to do it."

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "What's the wheeze? Are you going to stand ginger-pop all round to three thirsty chaps who have been watching you think for a quarter of an hour?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't be a silly ass, Blake. I wegard it as necessary to do some deed of self-sacwifice."

"Good egg! Make it a point not to talk for ten minutes at a time—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blake, you fwightful ass—"

"Or send a couple of dozen of your silk toppers to the poor—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have only four silk toppahs," said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "You know that vevy well, you ass! If you are goin' to entah into a widiculous discuss—"

"Well, what's the idea, anyway?" asked Blake.

"I am goin' to take young Fwayne in hand?"

The Fourth-Formers stared at him.

"Young Frayne of the Third!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What's the matter with him? Not ill, is he?"

"Certainly not. You are aware, I suppose, that he lived in a slum or somethin' in London when Tom Mewwy found him, and bwought him away, and that he labahs undah some vevy great difficulties with his class work."

"Does he? I shouldn't wonder."

"Well, I am goin' to take him in hand."

"In what way?" asked Blake, in astonishment.

"I'm goin' to coach him."

"Coach him!" roared Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"My only hat!"

"I wegard it as a weally wippin' ideah," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I am goin' to take him through the Accidente—"

"There will be accidents if you do!" grinned Digby. "Lathom isn't satisfied with your Latin, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My Latin is all wight," said Arthur Augustus loftily. "As a mattah of fact, I have often thought that I turn a vevy weally bettah than Howace sometimes. I am not quite satisfied with all Howace's odes considered as works of art."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Howevah, to wesume. I am goin' to give young Fwayne instwuction in Latin gwammah, say for half-an-hour ewevy evenin'. I have heard that in London and Manchester and places there are evenin' classes, you know—places where chaps go to learn things in the evenin', you know—"

"Go hon!"

"I shall work on the same lines, you see, and give young Fwayne some valuable instwuction in the evenin's. Don't you think it's a wippin' ideah. Besides, it will wewesh my own mind, and pwevent me fwom forgettin' a lot of stuff I've learnt."

"All very well for you," grinned Herries. "What about the unhappy victim, though?"

"Weally, Hewies—"

"And what are you going to charge Frayne?" asked Blake, with great gravity.

"You uttah ass! I am not goin' to charge him anythin', you fwightful duffah!" shrieked D'Arcy. "I am goin' to do a noble deed."

"Oh, I see! Poor old Frayne!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to discuss the mattah with widiculous asses," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with dignity. "I am goin' to look for Fwayne now."

And Arthur Augustus walked out of the study with his aristocratic nose very high in the air. He left the juniors chuckling.

The swell of St. Jim's made his way to the Third Form-room. The Third Form prepared their lessons there for an hour every evening under the eye of Mr. Selby, their Form-master, and after preparation was over, they had the room to themselves. The loud noise that was proceeding from the Third-Form-room as D'Arcy approached it was a sufficient proof that preparation was over, and the Form-master gone.

Arthur Augustus opened the door and looked in.

Wally and a dozen more fags were playing leap-frog up and down the Form-room. Hobbs, of the Third, alighted at Gussy's feet as the swell of St. Jim's walked in, and D'Arcy started back.

"Weally, Hobbs!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, buzz off!" said Hobbs. "You're in the way."

"Go back to your giddy Legion of Horrors!" grinned Fane.

"Yes; cut off, Gussy!" said Wally. "It's bad enough to have a major in the school, without having him poking in at odd moments. Cut off!"

"Weally, Wally, you young wascal—"

"Cut off!" roared the fags.

"I have come here for young Fwayne!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "Will you have the kindness to accompany me to my studah, Fwayne?"

Joe Frayne looked doubtful.

"No larks?" he queried.

D'Arcy reddened.

"You young duffah! Do you think I am likely to be guilty of practical jokes?" he exclaimed indignantly.

"Is it a feed, then?" asked Frayne.

"No, it is not a feed."

"What is it, then?"

"I am goin' to befwiend you," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

"Oh!" said Frayne in astonishment. "My 'at!"

"Pway come with me."

"Any ginger-beer?" persisted Frayne.

"Yaas; there is some ginger-beer if you like."

"And tarts?"

"Yaas, yaas!"

"All right, I'll come," said Frayne.

"Tuck in your tuppenny, Frayne!" exclaimed Wally indignantly. "You're not going with my majer. You've had your jump, you young bounder!"

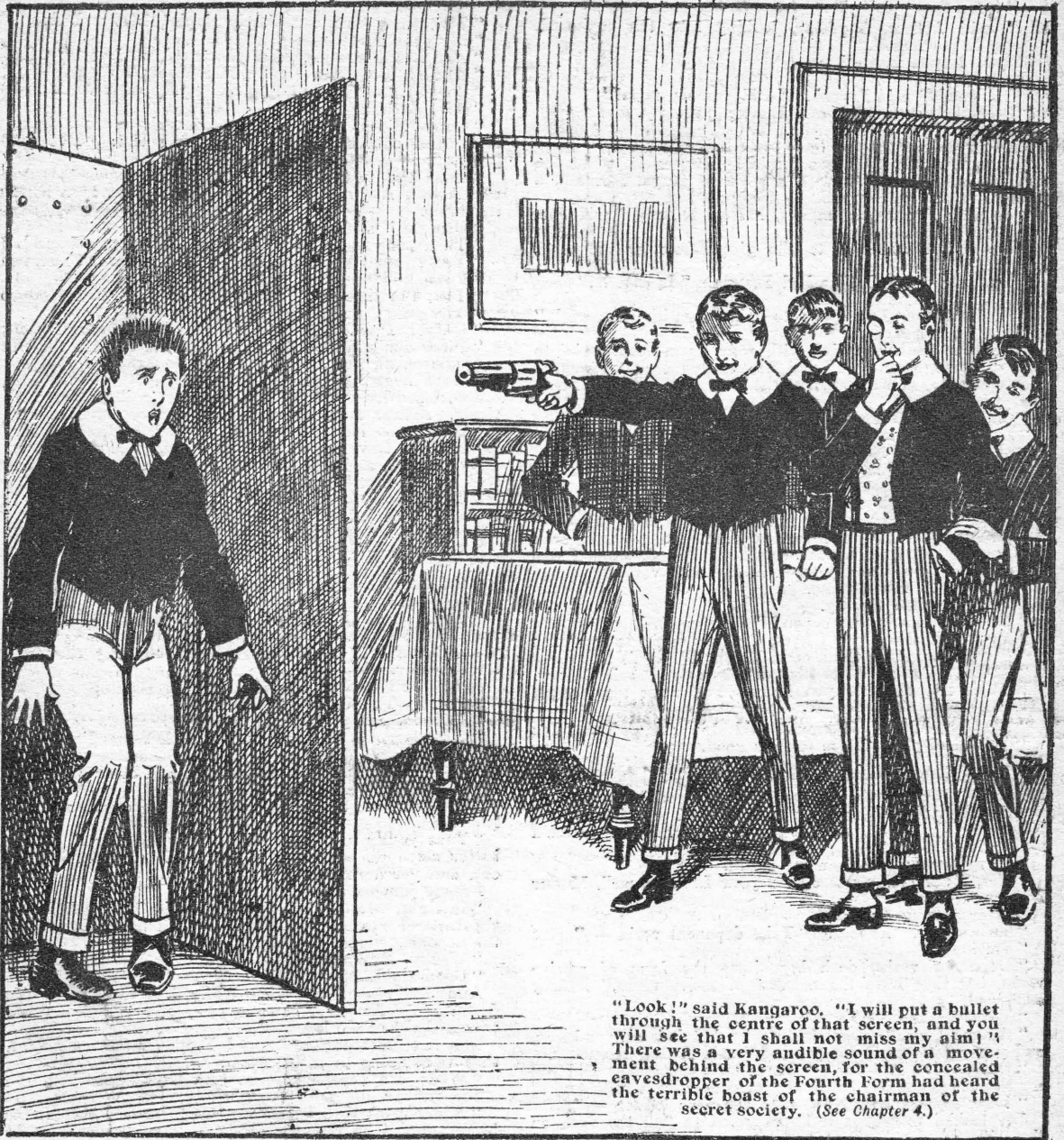
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D'ARCY'S LIBEL ACTION!

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"Look!" said Kangaroo. "I will put a bullet through the centre of that screen, and you will see that I shall not miss my aim!" There was a very audible sound of a movement behind the screen, for the concealed eavesdropper of the Fourth Form had heard the terrible boast of the chairman of the secret society. (See Chapter 4.)

"Pway come with me, Fwayne,"
"See you later, Wally," said Joe Frayne. "It's or-right!"

And he followed the swell of St. Jim's from the Form-room. A howl followed him from the fags, and Hobbs hurled a cushion with deadly aim. Frayne felt or heard it coming, and ducked just in time, and the missile whizzed over his head and smote Arthur Augustus D'Arcy fairly between the shoulders behind.

"Yawooh!" gasped D'Arcy.

He shot forward and fell upon his hands and knees. There was a yell of laughter from the doorway of the Third Form-room.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Joe Frayne clutched up the cushion, and returned it with a whiz. It whizzed among the crowd of fags at the door, and there was another yell, but not of laughter this time. Joe helped the surprised and breathless Arthur Augustus to his feet.

"Orlright," he said. "Kim on!"

"The young, wascals—"

"Kim on!"

"I am goin' to thwash them—"

"Better kim on."

"Weally, Fwayne—"

"Oh, kim on!"

And Frayne dragged the swell of St. Jim's away, just in time to escape two or three more hassocks that came whizzing down the passage.

CHAPTER 13.

A Promising Pupil.

D'ARCY had recovered his equanimity by the time he reached Study No. 6 with his protegee. The consciousness that he was doing a noble deed had, of course, an exalting effect upon him. He took the waif of St. Jim's into the study, and was relieved to find that Blake and Herries and Digby had gone down. He felt that it would have been somewhat difficult to impart instruction to Frayne of the Third with three grinning Fourth-Formers in the study. He waved Frayne to the armchair, and Frayne sat down, and Arthur Augustus sorted his books. Frayne watched him in growing surprise.

"Now, Fwayne, my deah boy—"

"Where's the ginger-pop?" asked Frayne.

"Ahem! I had forgotten that. There is only one bottle

left," said Arthur Augustus, looking into the cupboard.

"Pway help yourself."

Frayne helped himself.

Pop!

"Oh, good!" said Frayne. "Did you say tarts?"

"Pway help yourself," said D'Arcy patiently.

"Good hegg!" said Frayne.

And he did.

"Now, Fwayne, deah boy," said D'Arcy again, when Joe was comfortably settled with a glass of ginger-beer and a plate of tarts. "I am goin' to help you."

"Thanks; I've helped myself, Master D'Arcy," said Joe. D'Arcy smiled.

"I was not weferrin' to the gingah-beer or the tarts, Fwayne."

"You've got a cake?" asked Frayne. "Is that it?"

Arthur Augustus coughed.

"No, Fwayne. I am goin' to help you with your work."

"Oh!" said Frayne.

"You are wathah behind with your Form-work, owin' to your early disadvantages," said Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as up to me, as a membah of the Legion of Honah, to help you, you know."

"Oh!" repeated Frayne.

"I have a Latin gwammah here," said D'Arcy, with a beaming smile. "Now, I am going ovah it with you, and I'm goin' to help you in the places where you are weakest."

"Oh!"

That monosyllable might have meant anything.

"Now, I wemebah that when I was a youngstah—" Arthur Augustus was not fifteen yet, but he might have been fifty, or five hundred, by the way he spoke. "When I was a youngstah, I was awf'ly weak in deponent verbs."

"Was you?" said Frayne.

D'Arcy coughed slightly.

"You should say 'were you,'" he remarked.

"Yes," said Frayne; "I know I didn't ought to say 'was you,' when I come to think of it, Master D'Arcy."

"Ahem! You must not say 'didn't ought,'" said D'Arcy. "That is not English, you know. You must say 'ought not.'"

"Thanky, Master D'Arcy," said Joe cheerfully. "It's werry kind of you. Them tarts is good."

"Oh, deah! When the substantive is pluwal, deah boy, you must make the verb pluwal to agree with it," said D'Arcy. "You should say the tarts are good."

"Suttin'ly," said Joe, with undiminished cheerfulness. "I b'leeve my Henglish is weak in places, Master D'Arcy—wuss'n my Latin, I think."

"Pway say 'worse than my Latin.'"

"Yes, I dessay it's worse than your Latin as well, Master D'Arcy."

D'Arcy gave up the point.

"To wesume," he said. "Take deponent verbs—"

"Suttin'ly."

"Deponent verbs, deah boy, have the form of passive verbs, but they have the meanin' of active verbs," D'Arcy explained.

"Why?" asked Joe.

"Ahem! I weally don't know why, but it is so, you know, and you must take it for granted," said Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, good!" said Joe. "Them tarts are good. Did you say there was another bottlo of ginger-beer, Master D'Arcy?"

"I am sowwy, no. Now, take the verb loquor—" Joe looked round, as if he expected to find the verb on the table.

"Loquor, locutus sum, loqui," explained D'Arcy.

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

The tarts and the ginger-beer being finished, Joe leaned back in an attitude of great ease and comfort in the armchair.

It was getting near bedtime for the Third. Joe had been lively enough in the Form-room, but in the quiet study he began to feel sleepy, and perhaps deponent verbs helped him on in that direction.

"Now, pway define deponent verbs, deah boy," said D'Arcy.

"Deponent verbs?" said Joe hazily. "Lemme see."

"They have one form and anothah meanin'," coached D'Arcy.

"Yes, I remember. They are active in form and passive in meaning," said Joe brilliantly.

Arthur Augustus sighed.

"It's the other way wound, deah boy."

"Oh! Passive in meaning and active in form," said Joe.

"No, no, no! Active in meanin' and passive in form, deah boy."

"Oh, good!" said Joe. "I was thinkin'—"

"Yaas? What were you thinkin', deah boy?" asked D'Arcy, expecting to hear some Third Form views on the subject of deponent verbs.

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"That them tarts was simply rippin', Master D'Arcy!"

"My deah Fwayne—"

"And it was werry good of you to ask me 'ere for a feed."

"Ahem! But I am givin' you a lesson, Fwayne."

"So you are," agreed Frayne. "Deponent verbs is—"

"Are, deah boy, are!"

"Course!" said Joe. "Deponent verbs are one thing in form, and another thing in something else. I've got it puffick."

"Take the verb loquor, locutus sum, loqui—to speak," said Arthur Augustus, with a sly glance at an open book on the table.

"Orlright," said Joe.

"Then the pwesent imperfect would be loquor—I speak."

"Yes, I hear you, Master Gussy," said Joe a little drowsily.

"I speak—"

"Yes; I'm listenin'."

"You young ass! 'I speak' is the verb."

"Oh yes, I see. I'm gettin' it all right, Master D'Arcy."

"Pway don't intewwupt me, and I will explain the whole conjugation all thorough."

"Good hegg!"

Joe closed his eyes, perhaps in order to listen more effectively. Arthur Augustus explained the conjugation of the deponent verb loquor from end to end. From loquor to loquendi he travelled on without a halt, Joe not interrupting him once, and still keeping his eyes closed as he leaned back in the armchair.

"There," said D'Arcy at last. "I twust I have made that cleah, Joe, deah boy?"

Snore!

"Fwayne—"

Snore!

"Bai Jove, Fwayne, deah boy—"

Snor-r-r-re!

"Gweat Scott! The young ass is asleep! Bai Jove, I wegard this as wotten! I say, young Fwayne, wake up, you young bounder!" exclaimed D'Arcy, shaking the fag by the shoulder.

Joe started into wakefulness.

"Allo! 'Tain't rising-bell! Groo!"

"Fwayne, you young ass—"

"Oh, I forgot! It's orlright, Master D'Arcy; I'm listening. We was doin' deponent verbs," murmured Joe. "Deponent verbs is—is plain in form and coloured in meaning. No; that ain't right."

The door of the study was kicked open, and Wally looked in.

"That young ass Frayne here!" he exclaimed. "You'd better come up to the dorm., Joe. Knox is seeing lights out, and you'll get warmed."

Frayne jumped up.

"Orlright, Wally. Thankee so much, Master D'Arcy for the tarts—I mean, the lesson. I shall never forget about the deponent verbs. Thanky!"

"Weally, Fwayne—"

"Good-night, Master D'Arcy!"

And Joe rushed off with Wally for the Third Form dormitory. Arthur Augustus rose, and closed his books, with a shake of the head.

The next morning he tapped Frayne on the shoulder as they were going in to breakfast.

"What is a deponent verb, deah boy?" he asked.

Joe rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"A deponent verb is ordinary in form and extraordinary in meaning," he replied.

"Bai Jove!"

And Arthur Augustus gave it up.

CHAPTER 14.

Beauty in Distress.

TOBY, the page, grinned as he met Tom Merry coming out of the Shell room that morning.

"Skuse me, Master Merry—" he began.

"Go it!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

"I dunno whether this letter is for you, Master Merry," said Toby. "I've took it up to Mr. Railton, and he said that it wasn't for him; and to Herr Schneider, and he said it wasn't for him; and to Mr. Lathom, and he larfed and said it wasn't for him; and to Mr. Selby, and he scowled and said it wasn't for him; and to Mr. Mottle, and—"

"And he said it wasn't for him, I suppose?" said Monty Lowther.

"Yes, Master Lowther; and he larfed."

"Larfed, did he?" said Lowther. "For goodness' sake get the letter and see what they all larfed at, Tommy!"

"He larfed somethin' hawful," said Toby, holding out the letter.

Tom Merry took it, and then he laughed, too, and turned red.

"Yes, it's for me," he said. "Thank you, Toby!"

"Orrright, Master Merry."

And Toby retired, grinning. Jack Blake and his chums came along from the Fourth Form-room, and they stopped as they heard Tom Merry read out the address on the letter.

"To the President of the T. M. L. H., School House, St. Jim's," read out Tom Merry.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake. "Letter for me?"

"No fear! It's for me."

"Now, don't be an ass, Tom Merry!" said Blake warmly.

"If that's a letter for the President of the Legion of Honour, it's for me."

"Rats!"

"Now, you fathead—"

"Now, you duffer—"

"Weally, deah boys!" remonstrated D'Arcy. "Open the lettah; pewwaps it's somethin' that concerns the whole Legion."

"Yes; that's a good idea," chimed in Kangaroo.

Tom Merry opened the letter.

He whistled a little as he looked over it, and his face grew amazed.

"Great Scott!"

"Something interesting—eh?" said Blake. "Who is it from?"

"Blessed if I know."

"Isn't it signed?" demanded Herries.

"No; only 'One in Deep Distress.'"

"Phew!"

"That sounds good," said Manners. "Read it out."

"It's an appeal for help," said Tom Merry, looking very puzzled. "Somebody has heard of the Legion of Honour, and is appealing for help."

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors looked at one another with very satisfied looks. The fame of the Legion of Honour was evidently spreading, and they felt themselves a company of Bayards already, called upon to defend beauty in distress.

"Is it from a gal?" asked D'Arcy.

"It seems so."

"Bai Jove! Then we shall have to play up, of course. Pway wead it out!"

"Not here," said Tom Merry cautiously. "Don't want the whole giddy school to hear it. We'll have a meeting in the wood-shed."

"Good! Call up the Legion, then!"

And the various members of the Legion of Honour were called up, and they gathered in the wood-shed in a state of great expectancy.

"Gentlemen of the Legion of Honour," said Tom Merry, standing on a bench, "although the Legion has only been in existence a short time, we are already called upon to play up to our title and motto."

"Hear, hear!"

"Someone in distress has already heard of us, and has called upon us for aid."

"Bravo!"

"Of course, we're bound to give it. The business of the Legion of Honour is to help people who are in distress."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Read out the letter!" shouted Kangaroo.

"Get it off your chest, Tommy!"

"Buck up!"

"Very well!" Tom Merry cleared his throat with a little preliminary cough. "Listen!"

"Order!" called out Lowther.

"Pway shut up, deah boy, and let us hear the lettah!"

"To the President of the Legion of Honour," Tom Merry began.

"That's me!" said Jack Blake promptly and ungrammatically.

"Shut up!"

"Order!"

"Dear Mr. President,—I beg you to excuse me for addressing you, when I am a stranger to you. But I am sorely in need of help."

"Oh, good!" said Digby.

"Don't interrupt!"

"Yaas, wathah! Pway don't intewwupt, deah boy!"

"Who's interrupting now, fathead?"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead. I—"

"Order!" roared Lowther.

"Weally, Lowther—"

"Shut up, Gussy," said Kangaroo imploringly. "We can't wait for you to finish, because we have dinner in less than an hour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

Blake and Herries seized Arthur Augustus, and by threats of instant bumping induced him to remain silent. Tom Merry went on reading the letter.

"I am sorely in need of help. Will you help a persecuted girl to escape from her bitter enemies? I beg of you to aid me; and in the hope of seeing you, I will wait under the big oak by the stile in Rylcombe Lane at half-past eight this evening. Do not fail me, I implore you, in the name of the motto of your Legion. ONE IN DEEP DISTRESS."

"Bai Jove!"

"Is that all, Tom Merry?"

"That's all," said Tom Merry.

"I suppose it isn't a rag?" said Kangaroo.

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"Well, it looks like a girl's handwriting," said Tom Merry, showing the letter round. "Look at it yourselves." The members of the Legion of Honour examined the letter with keen attention. There was no doubt that it was a feminine hand.

"Looks genuine," said Blake. "But who can she be?"

"Nobody we know, I suppose?" Clifton Dane remarked.

"I suppose not, or she'd have signed her name," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I think, as president, that we ought to go and help her."

"I think so, as president, too," Blake remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We shall have to get passes out, at half-past eight," said Lowther. "We can't all go."

"No; I suppose we three'd better go."

"Rats!" said Blake warmly. "I shall have to go, as president."

"Now, look here! Blake—"

"Yaas, wathah; and I am bound to go."

"How are you bound to go, you ass?" demanded Kangaroo.

"As a fellow of tact and judgment. A fellow with some delicacy will be required to deal with a mattah of this sort," said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"We can all go, I think," said Bernard Glyn. "We can ask different prefects for passes, and each of us keep dark about the others."

"Good egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! That's a good idea. Bettah keep this lettah dark, too, or we shall have a ewowd of youngstahs comin' wouud."

"Then it's settled we're to go," said Tom Merry, looking round at the meeting.

"Yes, rather."

"Hurray!"

"But it might be a New House jape," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, rats!"

"We'll take Figgins & Co. into it," said Tom Merry, with a sudden inspiration. "Figgy said he wasn't going to jape the Legion any more, and he's a fellow of his word. But if we take them into it, they'd be on their honour to own up if it was a jape."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the meeting broke up, and Tom Merry & Co. went in search of Figgins & Co. They found them, and it was soon evident that if the letter was not genuine, at all events Figgins & Co. had nothing to do with it. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn entered most heartily into the matter, and they agreed to ask Monteith, their head prefect, for passes out that evening. And during the afternoon the Legion of Honour were thinking very much of the new enterprise which seemed to promise them a thrilling adventure.

CHAPTER 15.

To the Rescue!

THE shades of night were falling fast, as a well-known poet has expressed it, when quite a little crowd of juniors left the gates of St. Jim's, and made their way through the gathering dusk down Rylcombe Lane.

There were a round dozen of them.

The Terrible Three, and Figgins & Co., and Blake and D'Arcy and Herries, of Study No. 6, and Kangaroo and Reilly and Clifton Dane, were there. The others had failed to obtain leave out of gates, and had had to remain behind. But undoubtedly the Legion of Honour were in sufficient force. Twelve able-bodied juniors of the Fourth Form and the Shell were surely sufficient to rescue one damsel in distress.

Exactly what kind of distress the damsel was in, the juniors did not know. She had said that she had enemies, who persecuted her, and that was quite enough to make the Legionaries thrill with indignation. Some of them had been doing some punching-ball exercise before coming out. They were quite ready to deal with the dastardly foes of the distressed young lady.

Half-past eight was sounding from the chimes in Rylcombe when they reached the stile. Within the wood was thick dusk,

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and it was very shadowy in the lane. The crowd of juniors halted at the stile, and looked over. The big oak was a well-known landmark. It stood just within the stile, beside the footpath.

There was a soft sound of distress in the gloom. It was a sob.

Sob!

The juniors heard it distinctly.

It went directly to the soft heart of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "Poor little gal!"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry.

He vaulted over the stile, and hurried towards the oak. Under the tree a feminine form was discernible in the gloom. So far as Tom Merry could see, it was that of a girl of about his own age, dressed entirely in black. Her face was covered by a thick black veil, so that it was difficult to tell what age she really was; but a thick cluster of flaxen curls escaped from under her hat, and proved that she was still young.

Sob!

Tom Merry raised his cap. The juniors all raised their caps, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who swept off a silk topper in his inimitable way.

"Excuse me, miss," began Tom Merry. "We—we—"

"Pway allow me to explain, Tom Mewwy—"

"Better leave it to me," said Blake. "We received a letter to-day, miss, signed by One in Deep Distress. It was addressed to me as president—"

"It was sent to me as President of the Legion of Honour, miss," said Tom Merry. "If you are the lady who wrote—"

"I am!" said a low voice through the veil

"Good! We're here to help you, miss."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Whatever it is, we'll handle it," said Kangaroo. "Will you tell us what's the matter?"

Sob!

"Perhaps the young lady's hungry," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "I've got some sandwiches in my pocket—ow! What blessed idiot shoved his hoof on my foot?"

"Shut up, you ass," whispered Kerr fiercely.

Sob!

The sound of weeping from behind the thick veil moved the juniors deeply.

"I hope we shall be able to help you, miss," said Tom Merry anxiously. "We're ready to do anything."

"Or anybody!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Pway confide in us, deah boy—I mean, deah gal!" said D'Arcy kindly. "You can speak to me as a fathah, you know."

A peculiar sound came from under the veil. Had not the young lady evidently been in a state of deep distress, the juniors might have fancied that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's remark had caused her to chuckle. But that, of course, was impossible.

"Will you help me, indeed?" came in a distressed tone from under the veil, followed by another sob.

"Certainly!" said Tom Merry sturdily.

"I have enemies—bitter enemies."

"Bai Jove! Pway tell us where we can find them, and I undat take to give them a feahful thwashin', deah gal."

"I am fleeing from them," said the distressed voice; "but they are hunting me down."

"Bai Jove!"

"Where shall I find refuge?"

"Better apply to the police," suggested Kerr, who was always practical.

Sob!

"Alas, I dare not!" murmured the girl. "I must hide from them. Alas! But where shall I hide from them in safety? I implore you—I beg of you—take me to the school, and hide me there!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

The juniors looked at one another in dismay.

Helping a damsel in distress was one thing, but concealing a young lady in the school was another. It was hardly likely to be allowed at St. Jim's.

"H'm!" said Tom Merry. "Wouldn't it be better to let your father and mother know, miss?"

"Alas! I have none."

"Poor gal!"

"I have no home—I have no family!" said the girl tragically. "I am the last of my race. And when I am dead, my wicked uncle will inherit my vast estates."

"Bai Jove! But how can you have a wicked uncle if you have no relations, miss?"

"He is my only relation, and he seeks me now to take

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my life." The veiled female sobbed. "Even at this moment his minions are searching for me, and if I am found my life will pay the forfeit."

"Bai Jove, that's wotten."

"But the police!" urged Tom Merry.

"Alas! I dare not enter the village again! I dare not remain here. Alas! I was foolish to send to you! Far wiser would it be to end for ever the sorrows of the wretched Clara de Vere in the dark waters of the river. But it is not yet too late."

And the girl made a movement, as if to go.

"Hold on, my deah young lady!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's all wight! We'll take you to the school!"

"Yes, yes; if you are really in danger," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

"Come along at once."

"But it will bring danger upon you if you befriend me," said the veiled girl.

That was exactly the way to make the juniors determined, as perhaps the mysterious damsel was aware.

"Oh, that's all right," said Figgins. "We're not afraid."

"Wathah not."

"We'll ask the Head's advice about it," said Tom Merry. "Come along to the school at once, and—"

"Hark!" exclaimed the girl, with a convulsive start, as a low whistle sounded through the wood. "The signal!"

"Bai Jove!"

The juniors started, and listened. It sounded strangely weird and ghostly, the low, clear whistle sounding and echoing among the dark underwoods.

"W-w-what is that?" muttered Herries.

"The signal of my foes. It shows that they are on the track!" said the veiled girl hurriedly. "Fly—fly! Leave me to my fate! You are bringing danger upon yourselves by lingering here!"

"Wats! We won't go without you," said Arthur Augustus sturdily. "This way, deah gal!"

"You will save me!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, how can I ever repay you?" exclaimed the veiled young lady, falling upon Arthur Augustus's neck, and winding her arms about him. "My noble preserver!"

"Bai Jove!"

"My brave, brave defender!"

"Welcase me! I—I mean, just so, deah gal; but—but there's no time to lose, and—and—"

"You are right!" The veiled young lady released D'Arcy from her embrace. "Lead on, my brave preservers. Let us fly."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors hurried out into the lane with the veiled young lady. Arthur Augustus prudently dropped to the rear.

"I don't want to criticise the conduct of a lady, especially a lady in distress," he confided to Blake. "But weally I think that that young lady is wathah demonstrative. I would wathah Tom Merry walked with her."

And Blake chuckled.

Twice again the mysterious whistle sounded from the wood as the Legion hurried towards St. Jim's with the rescued young lady in their midst. It sounded from the wood on the left, and from behind the hedge on the right, and it seemed to haunt the party all the way to St. Jim's. There was no doubt that the enemy were tracking them down, and keeping out of sight in the trees and hedges all the time.

It was not till they were at the gates of St. Jim's that the whistles died away. The gates were closed, but Tom Merry rang Taggles up, and the school porter came down grumbling to the gates and opened them. He stared at the sight of a veiled female form.

"My heye!" murmured Taggles. "Who's that?"

"Don't ask questions, my son," said Tom Merry. "Come in, Miss de Vere."

"My heye!" murmured Taggles, in wonder.

And he closed the gate after them as they came in, wondering whether he ought to report to the Head the fact that Tom Merry and Co. had brought a stranger into the school.

Ten minutes later the bell rang again, and Taggles again growled and grumbled his way down to the gates.

This time it was Lawrence and Owen, of the Fourth, who presented themselves, with smiling faces, and passes signed by Baker of the New House.

"Where's Master Redfern?" growled Taggles. "He went out with you?"

"Hasn't he come in?" asked Lawrence blandly.

"No, he haint."

"Oh, perhaps he's come in without your seeing him," suggested Owen.

"Which what I says is——"

"Good-night, Taggy."

"Young humps!" murmured Taggles, and he locked the gates again; and although Redfern of the Fourth, so far as Taggles knew, had not come in, yet strangely enough the school porter was not troubled with any more rings at the bell that evening.

CHAPTER 16.

A Very Surprising Young Lady!

TOM MERRY & CO. crossed the dusky quadrangle with the veiled young lady. They had rescued her from her enemies, there was no doubt about that. But exactly what they were to do with her now, they hardly knew. Don Quixote, in his career as a knight-errant, was hardly ever in a more difficult position.

"Better ask the Head about what we'd better do!" said Figgins.

The young lady uttered a cry.

"No, no! Keep my presence here a secret, I implore you!"

"But, you see——"

Sob!

"My dear young lady——"

Sob!

Figgins looked helpless. What was to be done with a young lady who used the truly feminine reply of a sob to everything?

"I implore you to keep the secret! I beg of you! On my knees——"

"Oh, don't!" exclaimed Tom Merry hastily, as the distressed young lady flung herself on her knees at his feet. "P-p-please gerrup! We'll do anything—everything——"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, hurrying forward and assisting the young lady to rise. "Anything in the world, deah girl. Pway don't distwess yourself."

"You promise me?"

"Yes, yes, yes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hide me!" murmured the veiled young lady. "This brave youth shall stay with me." She tightened her grasp upon the arm of Arthur Augustus. "He shall never leave me! When my enemies are overcome, I will reward him with my hand."

"Bai Jove!"

"Where the dickens shall we hide her?" murmured Tom Merry. "This is rather a bigger order than we expected."

"Distressed young women don't give all this blessed trouble in novels," murmured Kerr. "I think I'll go and get my prep. done."

And Kerr disappeared.

"I've got to feed Towser," remarked Herries.

"Look here, Herries——"

But Herries was gone.

"What price the wood-shed?" suggested Figgins. "We can't get her into the house without being seen, that's a cert."

"Good; it will do for the present, anyway."

And the veiled young lady was guided to the wood-shed. Figgins lighted a bicycle lantern to illuminate the wood-shed, and the young lady sank down upon a bench and sobbed. Sobbing seemed to be her chief accomplishment. She made Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sit down beside her.

The swell of St. Jim's was too polite to resist. But he looked very uneasy as he sat down with the young lady's arm through his.

"My dear, noble protectors!" murmured the veiled lady. "How can I thank you? Here I can remain in safety till my enemies are overcome."

"Bai Jove!"

"I am hungry!"

"Oh, good," said Fatty Wynn, "we'll soon get you something to eat, miss. You'll feel better when you've had a bit of a feed. I always say it's best to lay a solid foundation; and a chap gets jolly hungry in this July weather, too."

And Fatty Wynn hurried out, and the rest of the juniors, feeling more fitted to deal with the commissariat department than with the distressed female, followed him, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's sat looking very unhappy. The young lady sobbed

chiefly as an occupation of her time while the juniors were gone, and D'Arcy's heart was deeply touched. But he was very glad when Tom Merry & Co. came in again bearing a large basket.

"Here we are!" said Tom Merry cheerfully.

The young lady pushed up the lower part of her veil, revealing a somewhat square and determined-looking chin. She ate with an excellent appetite of the good things placed before her. Danger and distress had evidently done her no harm in that respect. The juniors pressed good things on her from all sides, feeling that that was the least they could do. And she did them more than justice.

Tom Merry & Co. were growing more uneasy every moment. It was getting near the time for them to turn up in their House to go to bed, and certainly they could not stay out after bedtime. But what was to be done with their protegee?

"Bai Jove," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully, "I wish you'd let us confide the whole mattah to the Head, Miss de Vere. Mrs. Holmes would take care of you, then."

"Oh! Never, never!"

"Othahwise, I weally don't see what is to be done. You see——"

"You will not desert me, Arthur!" murmured the young lady, in soft tones, and her arm glided round the neck of the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus sat as if he were turned to stone.

His face was crimson, and his ears looked as if they had been set on fire.

"Bai Jove!" he gasped.

"Hear me! I love you."

"W-w-what!"

"I love you! Fly with me, and I will endow you with

the title and the estates of De Vere! The ancient Castle of Mouldyacres—the village of Rackrent—all are mine, and all shall be yours, Arthur, if you will fly with me."

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Gussy has been mashing the lady while we went for the grub," murmured Monty Lowther. "Oh, Gussy! Gussy!"

D'Arcy caught the whispered words.

"Weally, Lowthah! I wegard that as a wascally insinuation! I have not been doin' anythin' of the sort! I twust I am uttaly incapable of takin' advantage of the twust of an unpwotected female."

"Hear, hear!"

"The young lady is ovahwrought," said D'Arcy. "She is not aware of what she is sayin——"

"Arthur," sobbed the young lady, "I love you!"

"Weally, my deah gal, this is wathah shockin', you know," said Arthur Augustus, greatly scandalised. "Pway weleas me."

"Arthur!"

"I object vewy stwongly to havin' arms wound my neck, and besides, you are disawwangan' my collah! I——"

"Fly with me!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort."

Sob!

"Pway weleas me!"

Sob!

"Bai Jove, this is horrible, you know!" said D'Arcy, twisting his head round in the young lady's arms, and casting a very distressed look at Tom Merry & Co. "I weally feel quite at a loss! This sort of thing thwows me into a fluttah! I——"

"Fly with me!"

"Imposs.!"

The young lady jumped up.

"Then I will fly alone; and never, never more will you hear of the unhappy Clara de Vere."

She rushed to the door of the wood-shed.

"Bai Jove! My deah young lady——" said D'Arcy feebly.

"I—I say——" stammered Tom Merry.

The young lady turned in the doorway.

"It's all right," she said, in quite a different tone of voice, "I haven't far to go—only as far as the New House, you know. By the way, I got the girl at the confectioner's in Rylcombe to write that letter. Good-bye, Gussy; ta-ta, you fellows."

There was a roar of surprise and rage from the juniors. The young lady pushed up her veil, and disclosed the laughing



face and merry eyes of Redfern, of the Fourth. Then she fled.

"Redfern!"

"Done!"

"Spoofed!"

"Bai Jove!"

"After him!" shrieked Tom Merry. "Squash him! Bump him! Scalp him! After him!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors rushed from the wood-shed in frantic pursuit. Across the quadrangle the door of the New House slammed. Redfern was gone, and when Figgins & Co. went into their study, they found a black skirt, a flaxen wig, and a veil on their study table. And Figgins & Co. jammed them into the fire with feelings too deep for words. And over in the School House, Tom Merry & Co. raged!

CHAPTER 17.

Up a Tree!

REDFERN smiled when he met the School House fellows the next day; but Tom Merry & Co. did not smile. They were going into class, so there was no chance to bump Redfern; but they promised themselves that pleasure later. Redfern tapped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the elbow as the Fourth Form went in.

"Gussy, old man!" he murmured.

Arthur Augustus jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and gave the humorist of the New House a freezing look.

"Weally, Wedfern——" he said.

"Have you rescued any more damsel in distress?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Lawrence and Owen.

"You uttah ass!"

"Fly with me!" murmured Redfern.

Arthur Augustus elevated his aristocratic nose, and marched into the Form-room.

"You awful spoofer!" murmured Jack Blake. "We'll bump you bald-headed after lessons. You just look out for squalls."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Redfern only grinned.

He knew that it would behoove him to look out for the vengeance of the exasperated Legion of Honour; but he did not seem to be afraid.

During morning lessons, the New Firm made many little sly allusions to the affair of the rescued damsel, when Mr. Lathom's attention was otherwise engaged, and by the time the Fourth were dismissed, Blake & Co. were in a state of great exasperation, and promising the three humorists all kinds of things.

After morning lessons, Redfern & Co. strolled into the quadrangle; and they were stalked there by the enraged Legion.

"Let's get 'em into a quiet place and bump 'em," said Tom Merry.

"Good egg!" said Blake.

Redfern & Co. seemed to be playing into the hands of the avengers. The whole Legion tracked them across the quad, and round the houses, and, finally, Redfern & Co. disappeared behind the chapel. There they were quite secluded, and the hour had come. Tom Merry & Co. came round the chapel wall with a whoop.

They halted suddenly.

Redfern and Owen and Lawrence were talking quite peacefully with Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth. Reddy had evidently known that the Fourth Form master was taking a stroll there, and he had been leading the avengers on.

Mr. Lathom gazed in astonishment at the crowd of juniors as they came whooping round the chapel.

"Dear me!" he said.

Tom Merry & Co. looked very sheepish.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir," said Tom Merry, turning very red. "I—I didn't know you were here, sir."

"Wathah not, sir; we didn't mean to startle you, sir."

And the Legion beat a hasty retreat.

"The bounder was only leading you on, Tom Merry, you ass!" growled Blake, as the juniors escaped out of sight again.

"Leading you on, you mean!" grunted Tom Merry.

"Look here——"

"Look here——"

And vengeance on the New Firm was postponed.

Redfern & Co. smiled at Figgins as they came in to dinner in the New House. A good many other fellows were smiling, too. The whole school knew by this time about the veiled damsel who had been rescued by Tom Merry & Co., and they seemed to think it was funnier than it appeared to the juniors concerned.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon at St. Jim's, and after dinner, Redfern & Co. strolled out of the school gates. Jack

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Blake saw them go, and he hurried off to his comrades with the news.

"We've got 'em!" he announced. "Come on!"

"What about the cricket?" asked Tom Merry.

Blake snorted.

"Blow the cricket! Haven't we got to make the young bounders show a proper respect for the Legion!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They've got to be bumped, and bumped hard, and made an example of," said Figgins. "We shall have all the giddy fags getting their ears up, otherwise."

"Quite wight, deah boy."

"Oh, all serene!" said Tom Merry. "Which way have they gone?"

"Down to the towing-path."

"Come on, then."

"I expect they'll be dodging us," said Herries. "Wait a minute while I get Towser. Towser will track them down if they try to dodge us. You remember how splendid he is at following a trail."

"Weally, Hewwies, I object to Towsah. That wotten bulldog has no respect whatovah——"

"Look here, you ass——"

"For a fellow's twousahs!"

"I'm going to fetch him," said Herries.

And he did. Arthur Augustus eyed the bulldog very suspiciously as Herries brought him up. D'Arcy distrusted Towser. Herries often declared that Towser hardly ever bit anybody, but that was really not quite reassuring. The crowd of juniors hurried down to the towing-path, Herries in the lead with Towser.

Tom Merry & Co. looked very grim as they followed on the track of the New Firm. For once Figgins & Co. and the School House juniors were firmly united. It was necessary to make an example of Redfern & Co., and the juniors debated as to their punishment. Arthur Augustus suggested tar and feathers, or, as he called it, "tah and feathahs." But as tar and feathers were not available, that idea had to be given up. But, as Monty Lowther remarked, a good coating of mud from the nearest ditch would answer the purpose equally well.

Redfern & Co. were sighted in the distance on the towing-path. They caught sight of their pursuers, and instead of looking alarmed, Redfern only kissed his hand to them.

"Run the bounders down!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah! Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

And the whole crowd broke into a sprint.

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen broke into a run, too. They were making for the old bridge, and they reached it easily ahead of their pursuers. Redfern jumped on the parapet of the bridge to wave his hand to the pursuers, and then the three fugitives disappeared across the bridge. Tom Merry & Co. ran on. They had a suspicion that Redfern & Co. were deliberately leading them on a wild-goose chase, as an afternoon's amusement. But they intended to make the New Firm properly sorry for themselves before the afternoon was out.

They crossed the bridge, and scanned the wooded shore on the other side for the fugitives. Redfern & Co. had disappeared among the trees, but from the wood came the sound of a clear whistle. It was the same as the mysterious signal whistle which had startled the juniors in Rycombe Wood the previous evening, and they looked at one another sheepishly when they heard it.

"The awful wottahs!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"They're leading us on!" growled Kangaroo.

"We'll have them soon. Come on."

The juniors scrambled and stumbled and ran along the rough, wooded bank of the Ryll. Glimpses were caught of Redfern & Co. occasionally in the wood, and when they were lost sight of, the whistle was heard again as if to guide them. Tom Merry & Co. were growing very much exasperated. The New Firm were deliberately making fun of them and their pursuit, they realised that now.

"Bai Jove," exclaimed D'Arcy suddenly, "we've missed them! Listen!"

The whistle sounded again behind the juniors. They had evidently overshot the mark. They halted, and turned back, and plunged through the underwoods again, and again the whistle sounded. Tom Merry stopped.

"Where on earth are the bounders?" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh rang out almost above Tom Merry's head.

He looked up in amazement.

Then he saw Redfern & Co. The three New House juniors were comfortably seated on a great branch of a tree that grew far out over the waters of the Ryll. Almost at the end of the great branch they were ensconced among the boughs that forked off from it, quite at their ease. Below them flowed the deep, swift waters, but the New Firm did not seem to be at all uneasy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors gathered on the bank under the tree, and gazed out at the trio reclining among the twigs out over the water.

"Well, here we are, up a tree!" said Redfern cheerfully.

"You've got us!"

"Yaas, wathah, you boundahs."

"You've only got to come and fetch us!" said Redfern sweetly. "We're ready to be fetched. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Owen and Lawrence.

The crowd on the shore stared grimly at them. If they could only have got to close quarters with Redfern and Co., there were enough of them to have eaten the New Firm. But how to get at them—that was the question. One fellow only could crawl at a time along the giant bough, and a struggle there would be extremely perilous. The Ryll was very deep in this place, and there were swift and treacherous currents under the high banks. A fall into the water would be fatal to any but the best of swimmers. The pursuit of the exasperated Legion was evidently checked.

"You bounders!" roared Figgins. "Come down!"

"Not this evening!" sang Redfern softly. "Some other evening!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"We're going to have the rotters down," said Blake resolutely. "They've got to be made an example of."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come down, you rotters!"

"Come down, you outsiders!"

"No fear!" said Lawrence. "We're waiting to be fetched. Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll come and fetch you if you don't come."

"Come on, then."

Blake stepped towards the trunk of the big tree.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "It's too jolly dangerous. You might fall into the water; old man, and be swept along into the Pool before you could say rats."

"I'm going, all the same," growled Blake. "I'm not having a New House bounder chipping me. I'm going to yank 'em down."

"New House what?" demanded Figgins warmly.

"Bounder!" said Blake.

"Look here, Blake," said Figgins, pushing back his cuffs, "I—"

"Peace, my sons, peace," said Tom Merry. "Look here, if anybody goes, I'd better go. Wants a good swimmer in case of accidents."

"Well, I'm the best swimmer here," remarked Blake.

"Oh, don't be funny! I—"

"As a mattah of fact, deah boys, I'd bettah go. The pwopah place for a D'Arcy is leadin' in time of dangah, you know."

"Rats! I'm going."

And Blake made a jump for the tree, and clambered up into the lower branches. Redfern grinned, and produced a pea-shooter from his pocket.

"Come on," he called out. "you'll have to face the fire! This one is for your nose, Blakey."

Whiz!

"Yow!" roared Blake.

Redfern was a dead shot with a pea-shooter. The pea landed exactly on the specified spot, and Blake clapped his hand to his nose and roared. He could not retain his hold on the tree at the same moment, and he dropped off the trunk on his back in the grass.

"Oh! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll tell you what," said Herries, "we'll send Towser along the branch to clear them off, you know. Towser'll manage it easily enough."

"Rot! He wouldn't go."

"Towser'll do anything I tell him," said Herries defiantly.

"Now, then, Towser, old boy! Fetch 'em, fetch 'em!"

Herries lifted his big favourite into the lower branches of the tree. Towser submitted quietly, and curled himself up in a fork of the tree, apparently imagining that Herries intended him to go to sleep there.

"Go on, Towsy!" said Herries, shaking him. "Fetch 'em, boy! Go for 'em!"

Towser yawned.

"He won't go!" growled Digby.

"He will go!" roared Herries, exasperated. "My bulldog will do anything I tell him."

"He can't walk along the branch, you ass," said Clifton Dane.

"He can, you chump! Towser can walk a tightrope if he likes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries snorted. To Herries, there was nothing in the wide world that Towser could not do. He climbed into the lower branches of the tree, and pushed the bulldog along the big branch that Redfern and Co. were perched on.

Towser appeared to regard it as a game, and he made a playful snap at Herries's cuff, and took a mouthful out of it. "Let him come down!" yelled Tom Merry. "He'll fall into the river. Dogs can't climb like cats, you duffer."

"Rats!" retorted Herries. "Towser can!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Go on, Towser! Fetch 'em, Towser, old man! Go for 'em!"

Towser growled. He was out on the thick branch now over the water, but he declined to go any further. Further on, the branch grew narrower, and the foothold was certainly not adequate for a dog of Towser's size. Herries urged and persuaded and expostulated in vain. Towser declined to go any further, and he had apparently quite made up his mind on the subject. He squatted on the branch and refused to budge.

"I told you he wouldn't go," said Digby.

Herries growled.

"My bulldog isn't one of those sneaking brutes that do exactly as they are told," he retorted. "Towser isn't going to be bullied by anybody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mind he doesn't fall coming back," said Tom Merry.

"I—"

"Oh, rot! Towser isn't a clumsy brute—oh! My hat! TOWSER!"

For even as Herries was speaking, Towser's foot slipped, and he shot down with a sharp yell into the water.

Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries scrambled down angrily from the tree. As Towser could swim, of course, he had no uneasiness about his dog, and he was not alarmed. But the fellows on the bank soon saw that Towser was not so safe as his master imagined. Either the fall had dazed him, or he had been seized with cramp. He seemed to be making hardly an effort; and a whirl of the current swept him out into the stream, under the end of the long bough, and he was whirled away almost in a twinkling. There was a shout of alarm from the juniors.

"Towser! Towser!"

"Great Scott! He'll be drowned!"

"No, he won't!" sang out Redfern, "I'm going in for him."

And without even waiting to tear off his jacket, Redfern put his hands together and dived from the branch.

CHAPTER 18.

The First Regiment of the Legion of Honour.

SPLASH!

Redfern shot into the water and disappeared.

Lawrence and Owen on the branch, and the crowd of fellows on the bank, watched breathlessly. There was evidently something wrong with Towser; he was being swept helplessly away, with hardly a struggle on his part. Redfern came up to the surface, and struck out boldly in the direction of the dog. The swift current bore him on, as it was bearing the bulldog. In a few seconds both of them were far away from the spot where the juniors were standing.

Herries rushed towards the steep bank, but Blake caught him and dragged him back. Blake's face was very pale.

"It's no good, Herries," he muttered, "you couldn't swim to him from here."

"I'm going to try!"

"No good, old man; let's get along the bank and get a boat out."

Herries nodded, and the juniors raced along the bank. Lawrence and Owen scrambled down from the tree and ran with them. It was not only Towser that was in danger, but Redfern. For in the wide, deep Pool the waters were swift and dangerous. There had been more than one serious accident in the Pool; and since the last, a boat had been always kept there. But the boat was on the school side of the river, and to reach it, the juniors had to run down to the bridge and get across, and race along the opposite bank.

There was not a moment to lose.

Tom Merry & Co. tore along the bank towards the bridge as fast as they could go, and tore across the bridge, and then dashed breathlessly to the spot where the old boat was kept moored.

Meanwhile, Redfern, swimming splendidly, had reached Towser. The bulldog had been twice under, and was evidently exhausted. Redfern's strong grip upon his collar brought him up as he was sinking again.

"Got you, old boy!" murmured Redfern. "All right now."

He looked over the shining, flurried water to the bank. He had hardly noticed where he was going, in his haste to reach the sinking bulldog; but he saw now that he was past the bridge, and out in the wide circling waters of the Pool. Back to Redfern's mind came the recollection of the

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day when he had fought for life in that Pool, holding the exhausted Tom Merry in his arms—and a shiver went through him. Narrowly, fearfully narrowly, he had escaped death then. But this time?

Yet he did not think of letting the bulldog go. He held on to Towser, and swam, battling with the current as well as he could.

There was a shout along the river. The juniors were in the boat now, and four sturdy pairs of arms were at the oars, and they were pulling with the current—pulling as they had never pulled in a boat race on the waters of the Ryll.

"Buck up, Reddy! We're coming!"

Tom Merry's voice came ringing along the river. The first half-dozen of the juniors to reach the boat had piled into it; the rest were running along the bank and keeping pace with Redfern as he whirled along.

Redfern could not call back; he needed all his breath.

The oars were making good time; the boat shot down with the current. But Redfern felt his strength giving way. He allowed himself to drift, exerting himself only to keep afloat, and to keep the bulldog's head above water. Towser, with great intelligence, realised what Redfern was doing for him, and he placed his paws on Redfern's shoulders, and kept them there, leaving both the junior's hands free.

"Row like the dickens!" gasped Tom Merry.

The juniors pulled their hardest.

The boat seemed to shoot along the shining water. It shot past Redfern, and half turned, and Tom Merry leaned over and grasped the collar of the swimmer.

"Got him!"

Redfern grinned faintly.

"Thanks! Get Towser in!"

Herries leaned over and seized Towser, and dragged the heavy, exhausted bulldog into the boat. Tom Merry and Lawrence and Figgins helped Redfern in. The junior sank down in the bottom of the boat, panting feebly in a pool of water. His face was very white.

"L-l-lucky you got here!" he gasped at last. "Poor old Towser! He was jolly near a goner!"

"You were jolly near a goner, too, you—you ass!" said Lawrence, half crying. "You—you ass! You went under once, and I—I thought—"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Redfern cheerfully. "I only want a change of clothes! I'll give you fellows another run back to the school!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"We'll let you off the bumping!" he said.

"Yaas, wathah! I regard Weddy as a hewo!"

"Oh, rot!" said Redfern.

The juniors pulled to the shore, and Redfern was lifted out of the boat. Although he made light of the matter in his usual cheery way, he was too spent to walk, and the juniors took him in their arms to carry him to the school. Kildare met them as they entered the gates, and he stared at Redfern in surprise.

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

"Reddy went in for Towser," explained Figgins. "It's all right. He's wet."

Kildare grinned.

"Yes; he looks wet," he said. "Take him into the House, and put him into bed at once, and tell the House-dame!"

"Here, I'm not a giddy invalid!" roared Redfern, in alarm. "I'm not going to be coddled, and I'm not going to have any gruel."

"Take him in!" said Kildare.

And Redfern was rushed into the New House; and, in spite of his remonstrations, he was tucked up in bed, with a hot-water bottle at his feet, and any number of blankets over him, and he was left in charge of the House-dame.

It was a couple of hours later when the juniors were allowed to come in and see Redfern. The hero of the New House was sitting up in bed, with a muffler round his neck, blankets over him, and a basin of gruel by his side. He grinned rather forlornly at his visitors.

"I've got to stay in bed till the evening," he growled. "Nice way to spend a half-holiday, ain't it? How's Towser?"

"All serene," said Herries. "He was a bit queer at first, but I've had the vet. to him. He's all right now. I—I say, Reddy, old man, I'm awfully obliged to you. It isn't every fellow who'd risk his life to save a dog. You're a splendid chap, old man!"

"Yaas, wathah! And he must have ruined his clothes," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "A fellow who would wisk his clothes like—"

"Bravo, Reddy!"

"Oh, shut up!" said Redfern. "I'm not taking the gruel, and I'm jolly well not going to have any rot, either. Ring off!"

Tom Merry laughed.

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"We were going to make an example of you this afternoon, Reddy," he said. "But—"

"Well, he's reddy," said Monty Lowther.

There was a howl.

"Shut up, Lowther!"

"Yaas, wathah! At a sewious moment like this, Lowthah, I must say that you might wing off those wotten puns. I considah—"

"But instead of making an example of you," said Tom Merry, who had evidently prepared a little speech for the occasion, "you have made an example of us—no, that isn't it—I mean you have set an example for us to follow—"

"Hear, hear!"

"The opinion of all the members of the Legion of Honour is that you have played up splendidly, and—and deserved well of your country—I mean of St. Jim's, and we all say—"

"Hurrah!"

"Yes; but as well as that, we all say—"

"Bravo!"

"Don't interrupt!" roared Tom Merry. "We all say—"

"Wippin'!"

"Shut up, Gussy. We say—we say that a chap who plays up like this ought to be a member of the Legion of Honour—"

"Hurrah!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We therefore make Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen members of the Legion of Honour," said Tom Merry solemnly, "and, moreover—"

"That's a good word, anyway!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Moreover, as the chap who has mostly distinguished himself, and set an example of pluck to all the chaps, we elect Redfern President of the Legion of Honour—"

"Hurrah!"

"Carried unanimously!" said Blake heartily. "Redfern is president! Three cheers for the giddy president!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Redfern rose to the occasion.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you do me great honour! I accept the presidency of the Legion of Honour, and will always try to set you a noble example. Watch me, and do as I do, and you will be all right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Weddy—"

"But seriously, I'm jolly glad to join," said Redfern, "and though I don't think I deserve to be president, I'll do my little best. That's all I can say."

"Hear, hear!"

"Gentlemen!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Gentlemen, I quite approve of the remarks of my friend Weddy. And as soon as he gets up, I propose that we have a weally wippin' feed to celebrate the election of the First Pwresident of the Legion of Honour!"

And the motion was carried nem. con.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK.

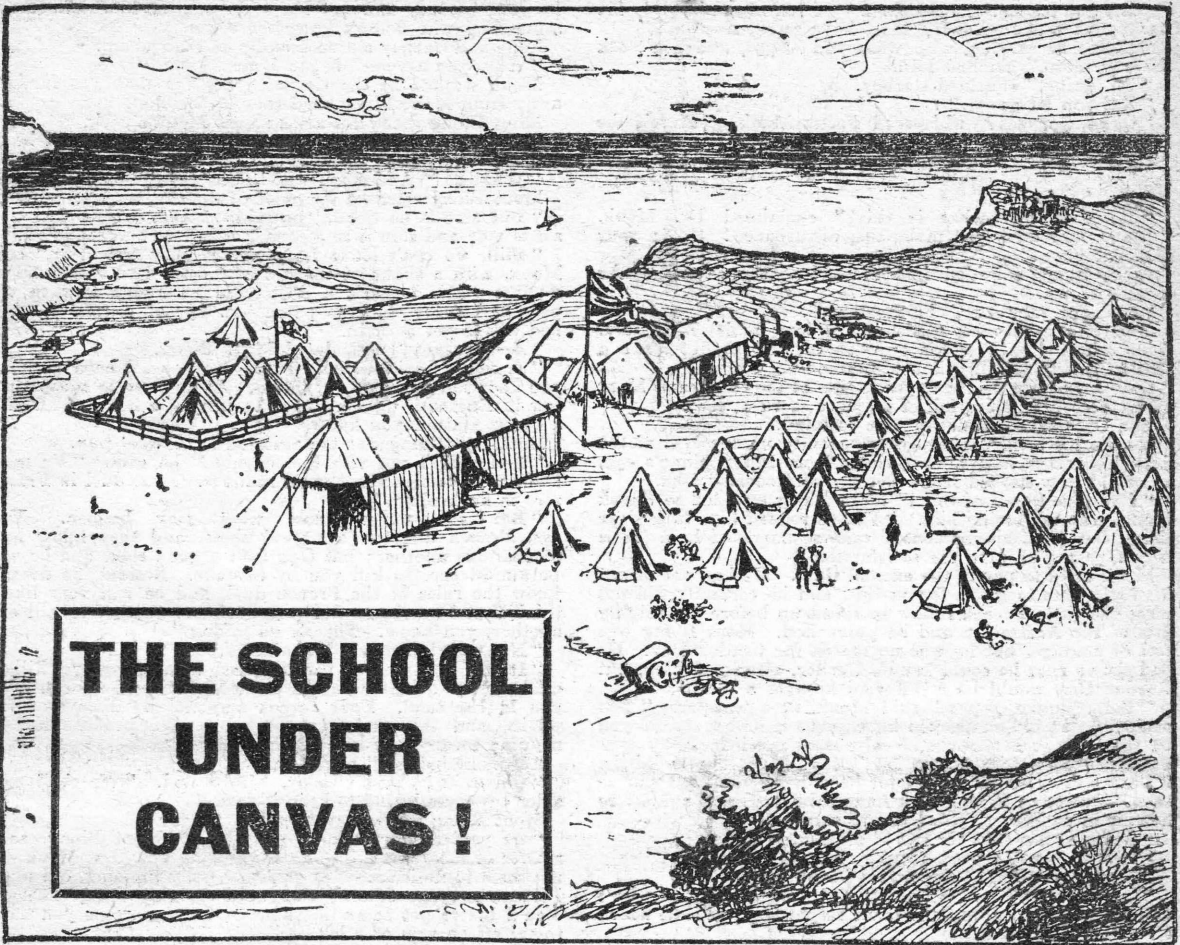
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WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR.

"The School will assemble in Big Hall at half-past six o'clock. An important announcement will be made.

"(Signed), E. MONK, Headmaster."

The appearance of the above brief notice on the school board is the first hint that the Rylecombe Grammar School receives of the great change in its circumstances that is pending—nothing less than the removal of the whole school into temporary quarters under canvas by the sea, on the Essex coast. Dr. Monk's formal announcement of this step is greeted with the greatest enthusiasm by the entire Grammar School, with the exception of Herr Hentzel, the unpopular German-master, who has, apparently, reasons of his own for objecting. Gordon Gay & Co., and Monk & Co., and indeed the entire Fourth, as the liveliest Form in the school, are particularly excited at the prospect of the change. Just at this time the ranks of the Fourth Form are reinforced by Gustave Blanc—immediately christened Mont Blong—a new boy from

Mont Blong Requires Satisfaction.

"Oh, my shum! Mon dieu!"

Gustave Blanc, otherwise Mont Blong, lay blinking in amazement at Gordon Gay, quite amazed by what had happened to him.

There was a roar from the Grammarians.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, my shum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Gordon Gay, with a contracted brow, turned and strode into the mess-tent. He was a little sorry that he had punched Mont Blong, but it was the only way to rid himself

across the Channel. Mont Blong, who attaches himself to Gordon Gay & Co., is a slim and elegant youth with a peculiar flow of English, but he quickly shows his worth by holding his own with Carker, the bully of the Fourth.

Amidst great excitement the Grammarians travel down to their new abode. On their first night under canvas Gordon Gay & Co., including the French junior, are awakened by the collapse of their tent. During the trouble which follows, Mont Blong slips away unheard, and when he returns he is so surprised at seeing Gay awake that he addresses him in pure English. Gordon Gay is dumbfounded, and the next morning, hearing that someone has been listening to a conversation between Herr Hentzel and a German friend, he refuses to speak to the French junior. Mont Blong, wishing to make it up, embraces Gay. The Cornstalk, his patience gone, hits out, and the French junior crashes to the ground.

(Now go on with the story.)

of the endearments of his over-affectionate chum. Mont Blong sat up, and rubbed his nose, and blinked at the laughing juniors.

"Ciel! I have been punch!" exclaimed Mont Blong, who realised the indignity that had been inflicted upon him.

"I have been knock down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a mattair for to laugh!" said Mont Blong. "It is zat I sall zrash him! He is no longer my shum! I zrash him viz my hands!"

And the French junior jumped up like a jack-in-the-box and rushed after Gordon Gay into the mess-tent. Frank

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Monk & Co. closed in upon him and dragged him back. The excited French junior struggled in their grasp.

"Zat you let go!" he shrieked. "I have been insult! He has struck a Blanc, and I must have ze satisfaction!"

"Better be satisfied with what you've got, and don't ask for any more," grinned Lane.

"Oh, quite!" chuckled Carboy.

"Zat you let go—"

"Quiet, you ass!" whispered Frank Monk. "Here's the Head!"

"I care not! I have been insult, and I demand ze satisfaction!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What is this—what is this?" exclaimed Dr. Monk. "Blanc, how dare you make this disturbance! Go to your place at once!"

Mont Blong subsided into meekness at once under the Head's frown.

"Oui, oui, monsieur," he murmured.

And he went to his place at the long table, Monk and Lane keeping hold of his arms in case he should make a sudden bolt in the direction of Gordon Gay.

Gay was sitting on the opposite side of the table, and Mont Blong darted a glance full of majestic scorn at him.

The Cornstalk did not appear to mind.

He ate his meal cheerfully, apparently unconscious of the dark lightnings that were flashing from Mont Blong's eye, as of old they flashed from the eyes of Roderick Dhu.

"I vash ze hands of him!" Mont Blong confided to Frank Monk, who sat beside him. "I have regard him as ze dear shum, but from zis moment I vash ze hands of him. It is necessary zat he give me satisfaction."

Monk tried to pacify the excited Gaul. He had not meant his little joke to go so far as this, and he certainly did not want the little French fellow to stand up before the mighty fists of the Australian and be pulverised. Mont Blong was full of courage, but he was no match for Gordon Gay. He had shown that he could handle Carker, after a fashion, but Gordon Gay would be a different kind of a foe.

"Better make it pax," said Monk, in a whisper. "You can't fight an old chum, you know, even if he has dotted you on the boko in a moment of—of absent mindedness."

"I not fight him viz ze fist!" said Mont Blong loftily.

"I zrash Carkair viz ze fist, for he is not a foe worthy of ze steel. But from ze shum zat have raise his hand against ze honour of ze Blancs, I demand ze satisfaction."

"Coffee and pistols for two!" murmured Lane.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monk.

"Vy for you laff?" demanded Mont Blong.

"Oh, nozzing," said Monk. "But you see, duelling isn't allowed in England, and the Head might flog you if he heard of such a thing."

"I demand ze satisfaction!"

"Blessed if I can see where there's any satisfaction in getting a skewer in the ribs!" said Lane. "But if you want to be skewered, you'll have to skewer yourself. Skewering one another isn't allowed."

"I shall insist on ze right of ze satisfaction!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence there, please!" called out Mr. Adams.

And the Grammarians suppressed their merriment. Mont Blong was full of surprises, but this one was, as Carboy remarked, the best of the bunch. The idea of the little Frenchman challenging Gordon to a duel was irresistibly funny. But Gustave Blanc was to all appearance in deadly earnest.

When the meal was over, Gustave Blanc left the mess-tent with Monk, Lane, and Carboy, and drew them aside from the crowd of Grammarians. His face was very serious and earnest.

"Monkey, mon ami, you are ze friend of me, n'est-ce pas?" he asked.

Monk looked very serious.

"Till death do us part!" he said solemnly.

"Zen I ask you ze favour?"

"Pile in."

"You will be ze second?"

Monk shook his head.

"The motto of the Old Co. is 'Second to None,'" he replied. "Impossible!"

Lane and Carboy turned away to hide their smiles. It was a new meaning to the motto of the Old Co.

"Zen I ask somevun else," said Mont Blong, with dignity.

"Hold on!" said Monk, as the French junior turned away. "Have you fully decided that the insult can only be wiped out in gore?"

"Oui, oui."

"And that Gordon Gay must die the giddy death?"

"Ze honour of ze Blancs demand ze satisfaction. "I am not my own master in zis matter. It is for ze honour of ze Blancs."

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"Well, if you've fully decided, of course there's no stopping you," said Monk. "In that case, of course, I'd better be your second, and not leave the matter in the hands of some chap who doesn't know the ropes."

Lane and Carboy stared blankly at their chum.

"Why, you ass—" began Lane.

Monk winked at the Co. with the eye that was furthest away from Mont Blong, and they understood.

Mont Blong threw his arms round Monk's neck.

"Zat is my true shum!" he exclaimed. "You will be ze second?"

"What ho! And Lane will be the third," said Monk.

Mont Blong released the chief of the Co., looking puzzled.

"But zere is no third," he said. "Zere is ze principal—zat is me—and zere is ze second, zat is you, and zat is all."

"Still, we can't leave Lane and Carboy out of it," said Monk, with a shake of the head. "Lane had better act as doctor. His father's a doctor, so he knows how to kill people—I mean, how to patch 'em up, of course. Carboy had better get a coffin."

"A—a—a vat!" ejaculated Mont Blong.

"A coffin," said Frank Monk. "We shall need a coffin, you know, in case you get killed. As duelling is against the law in England, we shall have to keep it a dead secret—it's a grave matter, you know."

But Mont Blong was too agitated to see that pun.

"I—I zink I not vish to keel him," he said. "Ve meet and fire ze pistol in ze French manner. In ze duel in Franco zere is no keeling."

"But you never know what may happen. You see, French duellists are good shots, and they know how to miss one another; but Gay isn't a good shot, and he will be almost sure to kill you by mistake. Besides, he doesn't know the rules of the French duel, and he will very likely think that Frenchmen fire pistols at one another to kill one another, you know. There's no telling."

"Non, non! Zat would be barbarous!"

"It will be all right for Gay, but in case you get killed, old man, we'd better have a coffin handy, and we can bury you in the sand. Your corpus may not be discovered for weeks, and then nobody will know. We promise not to mention to anybody how you got killed."

"Honour bright!" said Lane.

"Oh, quite!" said Carboy, with a nod. "We shall consider ourselves bound to keep it dark."

Mont Blong looked rather pale.

"As you're so pressing," said Monk—Mont Blong, as a matter of fact, was not quite so pressing now, but Monk did not seem to notice it—as you're so jolly pressing, old man, I'll act as your second, and we'll see this thing through. You'd better get some instruments, Lane, in case you have to cut off an arm or a leg—"

"Goo!" said Mont Blong.

"I suppose a chopper would do?" said Lane thoughtfully.

"Certainly! Make a clean cut, if you can, of course. We learned first aid as Boy Scouts, and I think I could tie up an artery with anybody. Don't forget that coffin, Carboy!"

"Right-ho!" said Carboy.

"My shum—"

"It's all right," said Monk, digging his French friend vigorously in the ribs. "I'll go to Gordon Gay at once with your message. I've no doubt he'll accept. He's an Australian, you know, and Australians are as full of fight as eggs are full of meat. I'll bring you back his answer as soon as I can, and we'll arrange the meeting."

"Zank you, my shum!" said Mont Blong, with much enthusiasm.

"Not at all," said Monk. "Now we've fixed it, I'm beginning to feel quite keen about it. You don't want to back out, I suppose?"

Mont Blong's eyes flashed.

"Zat is impossible for a Blanc!"

"Yes; I suppose so. Wait here for me, then!"

And Frank Monk walked away in search of Gordon Gay, looking very cheerful considering that he was upon a mission of life or death.

Making the Arrangements.

Gordon Gay & Co. were seated upon a big rock, watching a steam launch on the sea. The launch had come out of the Nether river, and was rounding the headland, and the juniors were very interested in watching the handsome little craft, which cut through the water like a knife.

"Foreign chaps," said Wootton major. "Look at that tall beggar! He's a German."

Gordon Gay started a little. The launch was very close to the shore, and they could see two faces on board of her. One of them, at least, was a foreigner.

"That friend of Herr Hentzel's, perhaps," he remarked.

Jack Wootton shook his head.

"No; he wasn't so big. Seems to be a jolly lot of Germans round here!" he remarked. "There was that friend of Hentzel's, who visited us in the middle of the night, and now here's a giddy German launch! I—"

"Hallo, my children!"
Frank Monk came up, and stood with his hands in his pockets, looking down upon the Cornstalk Co. with a grin. Gordon Gay made a motion to rise.

"You ass!" he said. "I believe it was you put Mont Blong up to hugging me in that way before the crowd. It was your fault I biffed him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's bump him for it!" suggested Jack Wootton.

"Good egg!"

Frank Monk held up his hand in sign of peace.

"Hold on!" he remarked. "The person of an ambassador is sacred!"

"What!"

"I'm a giddy ambassador!"

"What are you driving at, you ass?"

"I've brought you a message."

"From the Head?"

"Ha, ha! No; from Mont Blong!"

Gordon Gay grunted.

"Oh, blow Mont Blong! I'm fed up with him!"

"Blessed if I know what you've quarrelled about!" said Frank curiously.

"Well, I'm not going to tell you!" said Gordon Gay cheerfully. "And you can take the message back to Mont Blong, and tell him to go and eat cokernuts!"

"My dear chap, you'd better hear it first; it's a serious matter!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Question of life or death!" said Frank solemnly.

"Eh?"

"Mont Blong challenges you to a deadly duel!"

"Phew!"

"You're to meet him, and wipe out in your blood—or his blood—or somebody's blood—any blood will do, so long as it's blood—the insult to the Blancs!"

"The silly ass!" said Gordon Gay, in amazement and wrath. "I'll jolly well punch his silly head for him, if he talks such rot to me!"

"The blessed chump!" said Wootton major. "Does the blithering jabberwock think it would be allowed, even if Gay were dummy enough?"

Frank chuckled.

"I've undertaken to arrange the affair," he said. "You can't decline, Gay!"

"What!" roared Gordon Gay. "Do you want me to punch your silly head as well as Mont Blong's silly head?"

"Thanks, no! But you must accept the challenge!"

"Ass!"

"And meet the French fire-eater!"

"Fathead!"

"And be shot dead!"

"What!"

"For the sake of a lesson to Mont Blong," Frank explained. "If he has once killed a chap in a duel, it will be a lesson to him, and he'll realise that it's a serious matter, and won't want to do it any more."

"You—you blithering, wooden-headed, burbling, chortling dummy!" ejaculated Gordon Gay. "Are you quite off your rocker? Do you think I want to be potted by a cranky ass as a lesson to him not to be cranky?"

"No; I've thought of that," said Frank. "It would be uncomfortable to be really potted, and would interfere with your lessons, too. But if we have some pistols without any bullets in them, I don't see why anybody should be hurt."

The Cornstalks stared at Frank Monk for a moment, and then, as his intentions dawned upon them, they burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think it will be a first-class jape, and a lesson to Mont Blong that he won't forget in a hurry!" grinned Frank. "You can have some red ink in a bladder all ready. When the pistol pops, you fall down, and spurt the red ink over your chivvy. You're a jolly good actor, Gay, and you ought to be able to do the part very well. Now, what do you think of that for a jape?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ripping!"

"First chop!"

"It will be a lesson to the giddy ass!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "I'm on! I'll do the dying gladiator in first-class style. I've seen Othello die on the stage, and I've often thought I could die quite as well as he did. Ripping!"

"But what about the pistols?" grinned Wootton major.

"It won't do to have real pistols. We can't get 'em."

"Yes, we can!" said Frank cheerfully. "I've thought of that. As we don't want anybody to be killed if we can help it, it will be safer to use toy pistols."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Carboy's got a pair of toy pistols that his uncle gave him," said Frank. "You've seen him potting with them when we were playing Red Indians at Rylcombe, and he was a cowboy. They fire off real powder, you know, and make a frightful row. So long as there is a bang, Mont Blong will be satisfied."

Gordon Gay chuckled.

"Good egg! You can be my second, Harry!"

Wootton major nodded.

"It will give me great pleasure to act for you, Mr. Gay!" he said, with much seriousness. "I had better make the arrangements with your second. You're only the principal; you're out of it now. When will your friend meet mine, Mr. Monk?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This evening," said Frank. "Suppose we say after dark?"

"After dark?"

"Why not? It will be safer to have no prefects spotting us. They mightn't take the joke as we do."

"But how are we to shoot after dark?" asked Gordon Gay.

"By lantern-light. That will make it more tragic, you know—a duel by lantern-light, and the body thrown into the sea afterwards! If we don't give Monty a thrill—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A couple of bike lanterns will show light enough for the tragedy," said Frank. "You'll meet at half-past eight by the haunted mill—ahem!—I mean, by these rocks here. We shall have to be a very good way from the camp, in case the prefects hear us and come to inquire. We don't want to take Delamere and Hake into the joke."

"No fear!"

"Then you'll be there with your second, Gay? I'll bring the pistols, and Lane is going to bring a chopper in case any limbs require to be amputated!"

The Cornstalks shrieked, and Frank Monk, brimming over with merriment and satisfaction, walked back to the camp.

Mont Blong met him anxiously.

"You shall have give ze message?" he asked.

Monk nodded.

"Yes, rather!"

"And vat do Gay say?"

Mont Blong certainly did not look as if he hoped that Gordon Gay had accepted. Perhaps he had been reflecting over the matter, and felt that a duel was not, after all, a really satisfactory way of settling a dispute. Perhaps he had read Eugene Aram, and remembered how dreadfully difficult it is to get rid of a body after one has indulged in a pastime of that kind.

"Oh, he's ready to fight!" said Monk.

"Oh!" said Mont Blong.

"Simply keen and eager for it!" said Frank. "He's after your scalp, you know! Wootton major suggests that the one who is killed shall be dropped into the sea."

"Ah!"

"Of course, I want to meet your wishes in every way, as your second," said Monk. "Would you prefer that, or a coffin in the usual way?"

"I—I—"

"It would save the expense of a coffin," said Frank thoughtfully, "though, as it is an affair of honour, of course we should be quite prepared to dub up. If you'd prefer the coffin, say so. You wouldn't mind it's being a plain one, I suppose?"

Mont Blong shuddered.

"Just say what you'd prefer," said Frank.

"I prefer nozzing. It is all right."

"You wouldn't like to back out now?" asked Monk. "If you could let the honour of the Blongs slide, you know, you needn't meet Gay, and—"

"I go through viz him!" said Mont Blong resolutely.

"Good egg! You're a plucked 'un, Mont Blong. Trust me to make all the arrangements, and to see you buried, and all that. Have you any special fancy in tombstones?"

"Mon Dieu! But—but perhaps it get you into trouble afterwards, mon ami?"

"Never mind that—can't think of little things like that when it's a question of an affair of honour," said Frank.

"Don't mind me."

"But—but—"

"Not another word, old man," said Frank affectionately.

"I'm prepared to risk everything for your sake."

And he walked away. Mont Blong remained standing with a very thoughtful look upon his face. He did not seem quite happy somehow, although everything appeared to be going satisfactorily.

Lane strolled up presently, and tapped him on the arm. Mont Blong came out of a deep reverie with a start.

"Ah, it is you, my shum."

"Yes; I've got the chopper."

"V-v-vat?"

Lane opened his jacket, and showed a wood-chopper hidden under it. He drew the jacket round it again immediately.

"I'm going to get it sharpened," he explained. "It will need to have a good edge on it, in case I have to chop off your arm or leg. Of course, if it's only your nose or an ear, I can do it with my penknife."

"Mon Dieu!"

"By the way, I want to give you a tip. Have you made your will?"

"M-m-my will!"

"Yes; last will and testament, you know. If you make it—and it's just as well to take precautions—you might leave me your pocket-knife with the three blades. I should like something to remember you by, you know."

And Lane walked away to get the chopper sharpened. Mont Blong remained standing where he was, looking after Lane with a far from happy expression.

The Duel.

Mont Blong was observed to look very thoughtful for the remainder of that day.

He seemed to have something on his mind.

Most of the fellows who noticed it attributed it to the fact that he was on bad terms with Gordon Gay, and did not dream of the deadly adventure in which the French youth had engaged.

The secret was well kept.

Outside the two Co.'s of the Fourth Form, not a word was said. Even Tadpole was not taken into the secret. Tadpole had a rather loose tongue sometimes, and if the story had got out, certainly there would have been a crowd to witness the deadly fray.

Frank Monk informed Mont Blong of all the arrangements made for the duel in deep and mysterious whispers, which sent thrills down the French boy's spine.

Carboy showed him the pistols, opening the case containing them behind the school-room tent, but he did not allow Mont Blong to examine them. The French junior had just a glance at them, and that was all.

But they gave a touch of realism to the matter, and Mont Blong seemed more thoughtful than ever afterwards.

As the sun sank lower, and the grey rolled over the North Sea, the duellists prepared for business.

Gordon Gay had carefully avoided his opponent, and Mont Blong wondered how the young Cornstalk was taking the affair, and whether he was looking forward to it with dread. The Cornstalk Co. had tea in their tent by themselves, just as if they were in the old study at the Grammar School. Mont Blong strolled past the tent, and saw them at tea, and could not help seeing that Gay appeared to be quite cheerful and unconcerned.

When the sunset was deepening into night, three youths quitted the school under canvas, and walked sedately along the shore towards the headland.

They were Gordon Gay and Wootton major and minor.

Their faces were serious and earnest, and Mont Blong, as he saw them go, knew that they were going to the rendezvous where the deadly encounter was to take place.

Frank Monk tapped him on the shoulder, and Mont Blong started as suddenly as if the tap had come from the hand of a policeman.

"Ready?" asked Frank cheerily.

"Oui, oui, monsieur."

"Good! Come on, then."

"Vere are ze ozers?"

"Gone round by a different way. Lane's got the chopper."

"Oh!"

"Carboy's got a couple of bike lanterns. It will be quite dark by the time we get round the headland. Not funky—eh?"

Gustave Blanc drew himself up to the utmost of his diminutive height.

"Zat is impossible for a Blanc!" he said.

"Yes, of course—my mistake," said Frank blandly. "Come on, then. In half an hour from now the honour of the Pongs—I mean the Blongs—will be avenged."

"Zat is so."

"I'm sorry that we couldn't get a coffin, after all," said Frank, as they walked down the seashore. "You don't mind being chucked into the sea just as you are?"

"Non, non, non!" gasped Mont Blong.

"Good, then; it will save expense. This way."

Mont Blong followed Frank to the headland.

The headland jutted into the blue waters where the Nether river rolled out over the sandy bar into the sea.

The tide was coming in now, and the river was full, salt water rolling in past the village of Netherby. The sun had sunk out of sight by this time behind the low hills inland, and darkness gathered over the sea and the shore. A gleam

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of light in the deep shadow of the rocks guided Monk and his companion.

"I—I say!" murmured Mont Blong. "I zink zat if Gay apologise I pardon him."

"Oh, no chance of that," said Frank. "He isn't the kind of chap to do that. He's after your gore, you know."

"It is not zat I fear," said Mont Blong proudly, "but I come to zis country for a purpose, and if I fall zat purpose is unfulfil. Vous savez?"

"You came here to learn English, I suppose?" said Frank, a little puzzled. "Well, if you're killed, you know, English won't be of any use to you. That's all right."

"I zink I ask you to accommodate ze quarrel."

"All serene," Monk said. "Here we are."

It was a wide embayment of the rocks, a stretch of yellow sand with big cliffs on one side, and the sea on the other. Two bike lanterns were burning brightly, and they were set on chunks of rock to illuminate the scene.

The juniors all raised their hats to one another ceremoniously. It was evident that they were all impressed very much with the gravity of the occasion.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said Frank Monk. "Mr. Gay, may I ask you if it is possible for this affair to be accommodated?"

"Impossible!" was the answer.

"Suppose my principal begs pardon for being an ass——"

"Ciel! I not say zat! Zat is impossible!"

"No good," said Gay; "I'm after his gore. I've never killed a fathead yet, you know, and it's all experience."

"I refuse to allow my principal to withdraw," said Wootton major. "The honour of the Gays is at stake. Monsieur Blong must remember that the Gays are a very great family in Australia, with an ancestral line stretching back to the time of Sir Brian de Brisbane, the founder of the family."

Jack Wootton nearly burst into a chuckle, which he just contrived to change into a cough.

"All the retainers of the Gay family, in the ancestral halls at Castle Ballarat, would cry shame upon Gay if he declined the combat," pursued Wootton major. "The head of the family, the aristocratic Marquis of Port Philip, would disown him. I decline to allow Gay to accept an apology."

"I not ave offer ze apology!" shrieked Mont Blong. "I accept ze apology from Gay, and zat is all."

"Then we may as well get to business," said Harry Wootton, shaking his head. "The honour of the family of Gay de Gay forbids my principal to offer an apology."

"That's settled," said Frank Monk. "Load the pistols, Carboy!"

Carboy and Lane loaded the pistols very carefully. One of them was handed to Gordon Gay, and the other to Mont Blong. Mont Blong glanced at his weapon curiously.

"Zat is a very small pistol," he said.

"Big enough to kill, if you put the lead in the right place," said Frank Monk cheerfully. "Of course, if you both survive the first fire, you will fire again until one falls. We can't come all this way for nothing."

"Oh, quite!"

"Take your places," said Monk.

"How many paces?" asked Gordon Gay.

"Not more than ten, in this light. We don't want to waste the powder. Better get it over at first fire, if possible."

"Right."

The duellists took up their stand, pistol in hand. They faced each other at a distance of ten paces. Monk held up his hand.

"I'm going to count three," he said. "When I say fire, blaze away."

"Yes."

"Oui, oui!"

"One!"

Frank's voice rang out solemnly over the solitary shore.

"Two!"

Gordon Gay stood quite calmly, but Mont Blong drew a deep breath.

"Three!"

The pistols were raised.

"Fire!"

Bang, bang!

The Honour of the Blongs is Avenged,

Bang!

The rocks echoed back the double report.

Then a sharp, terrible cry was heard, and Gordon Gay sank upon the sand.

"He's got it!" yelled Monk.

"Poor old Gay!" said Lane. "Our man wins!"

Gordon Gay lay stretched upon the sand.

Mont Blong rushed frantically towards him.

On the face of the fallen junior, in the gleam of the lanterns, was a thick smear of crimson!

Mont Blong gave a cry.
 "My shum! I have keel him! Mon Dieu! My shum!"
 He would have thrown himself down beside Gay, but Frank Monk dragged him back.
 "Keep your pecker up," he said coolly. "Don't lose your head, you know. I expected you would be killed, old man, but it turns out to be Gay; but it can't be helped. These accidents will happen in the best-regulated duels."
 "Mon Dieu! My shum!"
 Gordon Gay groaned. Mont Blong gave a cry of joy.
 "Ciel! He is not dead viz himself!"
 Wootton major was kneeling beside Gordon Gay.
 The fallen junior groaned.
 "Where is it?"
 "Right leg," said Gay faintly.
 "But—but ze blood is on ze face!" exclaimed Mont Blong, in amazement.
 "Must be a lot of it shed to splash his face," said Frank Monk, with a shake of the head. "I'm afraid poor old Gay is a goner. But the honour of the Blongs is avenged, so that's all right."
 "Mon Dieu!"
 "Lane! Come on, Lane!"
 Lane rushed up, chopper in hand.
 "It's the right leg," said Wootton major. "I suppose you know how to handle it. You'd prefer to have it off, Gay?"
 "Yes—yes."
 "It may save his life," said Frank Monk. "I suppose you've got no objection to his life being saved, if possible, Monty?"
 "Non, non, non! My shum! Ciel! I am ze murderair!"
 "Not at all," said Frank, in astonishment. "That is an affair of honour, you know, and somebody was bound to get killed. Besides, very likely Gay will survive, if Lane amputates his leg all right."
 "Oh, that's all right," said Lane. "The chopper's got a beautiful edge, and I'll have it off in a jiffy."
 Mont Blong shrieked.
 "Non, non! Zat is not ze way. It is better to staunch ze wound."
 "Impossible! It's too big!"
 "But—but he die if ze leg is chop off."
 "My dear Mont Blong, you are interrupting the bizney," said Frank impatiently. "You must leave this to Gay himself and his second to decide. I suppose you know the etiquette of duelling, don't you?"
 "But—but you keel him!" gasped Mont Blong.
 "Rats!" said Lane. "My father's a doctor, and a surgeon too, and he's cut off lots of legs in his time. He often advises a patient to have a leg off, you know, just as a dentist tells you to have a tooth out. Shove his leg across that flat stone, Wootton."
 "There you are!"
 "Non, non, non! It is murdair!"
 "Take that chap away. He'll put me off my stroke," said Lane.
 "Come away, Mont Blong."
 "Non, non—"
 "I suppose I'd better amputate it, Gay?"
 "Yes," groaned Gay.
 "Good! Set your teeth, and take it like a man. Push that shrieking ass somewhere where he can't see, if he goes on like that."
 "Non, non! Zat you fetch a doctair instead," yelled Mont Blong. "You sall not chop ze leg of my shum. You sall not chop ze leg of my shum. You sall not."
 "Oh, take him away!"
 Monk and Jack Wootton took Gustave Blane by either arm, and marched him back into the shadow of the cliff. The French junior struggled with them, evidently determined to save Gordon Gay from an amateur's amputation.
 "Lend a hand!" gasped Monk. "He's giving us a lot of trouble!"
 Carboy lent a hand, and the three juniors among them held Gustave Blane quite securely. He struggled in vain.
 "Go it, Lane!"
 "Just going to begin!" said Lane cheerfully. "Keep that lunatic away, or he may spoil the stroke. I shouldn't like to get the wrong leg off."
 Gordon Gay groaned deeply.
 There was a sudden sound of a chop!
 Chop-p-p!
 A terrific groan burst from Gordon Gay.
 "Ripping!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "Clean as a whistle!"
 Groan!
 Mont Blong struggled and screamed.
 "Ciel! You have murdaird him! Mon Dieu!"

(To be continued next week.)

NEXT THURSDAY: "D'ARCY'S LIBEL ACTION!"

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR.

Since the closing down of the "Exchange" in April last, thousands and thousands of my loyal readers have written asking me to give them a "Correspondence Exchange" of some kind, and I have at last settled upon a scheme which will effectually defeat the ends of those unscrupulous persons who abused the privileges I freely offered them, and who, unfortunately, succeeded in compelling me to close down such a universally popular feature.

The new "Correspondence Exchange" will, of course, be run on very different lines to its predecessor; but this announcement will be received with pleasure, I know, by all Gemites—especially by readers of "The Gem" Library in Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, and other parts of this great Empire of ours.

The only names and addresses which I can print in these columns will be from those of my readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

It is the Colonist who must send me his or her name and address for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book, and he or she must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scot, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons. One taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

FIRST LIST.

B. Lawrence, care of P.O. Box 26, Te Aro, Wellington, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a Gemite with a view to exchanging duplicate stamps.

Miss A. Von Os, of 54, Height Street, Doornfontein, South Africa, would very much like to correspond with a reader living in England, whose age is about 17.

F. Holdsworth, 94, Plein Street, Johannesburg, South Africa, would like a few readers, of either sex, age 17-18, to correspond with him.

C. Hosking, age 17, Box 266, Cape Town, South Africa, wishes to correspond with boy or girl reader of "The Gem" or "The Magnet."

Master T. H. Boon, age 17, of Canton Street, Canterbury, N.S.W., Australia, would like to correspond with a girl reader of "The Gem" living in Canada.

J. E. Catter, George Street West, Post-office, Sydney, Australia, would like to correspond with a girl reader, 16 years old, in England.

A. G. Mosely, of 18, Stafford Street, Paddington, N.S.W., Australia, would like to correspond with some girl readers about 16 years old.

L. C. Hammerton, of 168, Turf Club Street, Turfontein, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader.

S. Foye, 38, Bullfontein Road, Kimberley, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers of "The Magnet."

F. Jeffery, of Bargerton, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of "The Magnet" Library.

W. Perkins, of 2, Mona Villa, Ruskcutters Bay, Sydney, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl Gemite.

H. C. Vianello, of Post-office, Port Adelaide, S. Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of about 17 years of age.

S. Rubenstein, of 10, Smith Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, Transvaal, S. Africa, would like to correspond with some English readers of "The Gem."

Miss Connie MacDermott, of 428, 8th Avenue East, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, known to her friends as "Skipper," would like to correspond with her old chums of Erdington, Birmingham, or any other readers.

L. Forbes, 59, Hawthorn Grove, Glenferrie, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, would like to correspond with a boy reader in England.

P. E. Mansfield, of St. Kilda, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, would like to correspond with a girl reader, age about 16.

J. A. Stewart, 322, Gore Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 14-15 in England.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 233.

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE

**For Next Thursday.****"D'ARCY'S LIBEL ACTION!"**

is the title of next Thursday's school story of the famous chums of St. Jim's. Tom Merry revives the famous "Tom Merry's Weekly," and D'Arcy, over-zealous to obtain repute in the journalistic world, casts a slur upon the Mayor of Wayland. In fact, the one and only Gussy, in a rousing article, makes a slashing attack on the mayor's "beastly baggay twousahs" that the well-meaning gentleman was wearing at a public meeting.

This libel gives Kerr an idea, and—well, I will not give the game away as Gussy did, but will ask you to read

"D'ARCY'S LIBEL ACTION!"

when it appears in "The Gem" Library next Thursday.

Have You?

Have you seen the splendid new feature in our companion paper, "The Magnet" Library this week? It is now on sale. Price one penny.

A New Reader's Enthusiasm.

The letter I have selected for the honour of publication this week comes from a New South Wales reader. There is something so breezy and infectiously enthusiastic about my many Colonial correspondents that I find they are taking up, perhaps, slightly more than their fair share of the limited space of our Chat Page, but I know my readers do not grudge them this. This is the letter that Ernest J., of Loch Lomond, Jarro, Australia, writes me in full:

"Loch Lomond.

"Dear Editor,—As I have just started to read your books—both 'The Magnet' and 'The Gem'—I should like you to know what I think about them. Since I began reading them, I have learnt a lot, and they put me in mind of my school-days, as I am a young man now. Well, Mr. Editor, I live in far-away Australia, but I would like you to know that we Australians know good books when we see them, as well as they do in the Old Country. I live far back in the country, on the Hunter River, so you see I don't get much chance of reading books. I will tell you how I came to read 'The Gem.' I was out one day, and my horse shied at a piece of paper on the wayside, as I thought. So I stopped him and got down, and what do you think it was that had frightened him? It was a copy of 'The Gem'; so I put it in my pocket until I got home, and then I had a look at it, and, of course, began to read it. I thought it was the finest paper I had ever read, so I sent down to my newsagent in Newcastle to reserve me a copy of 'The Magnet' and 'The Gem' every week, and he sends them by each Thursday's post. After reading them, I give them away to friends, and they think they are the best penny books they have ever read. I have got you about twenty readers out here, although I have only been reading your books about three months. I am proud to say that I will always do my best to get more readers for 'The Magnet' and 'The Gem.' Well, I shall be glad when I get this week's books, as I have nothing to read until they come—the good old 'Gem' and 'Magnet.'—Yours truly,

"ERNEST J."

Many thanks, Ernest J., for the most interesting letter. No wonder the circulation of "The Gem" and "The Magnet" in the Colonies is increasing week by week when I find my efforts seconded in every direction by such loyal supporters as you, and many another chum like you!

Replies in Brief.

R. H. B., of Andover, is anxious to hear from his old chum, W. B., of Leicester.

S. Thompson (Liverpool).—Thanks for your long and interesting letter. I will bear your suggestion in mind.

R. A. Brown (Australia).—Thanks for your postcard. You may hear more of the characters you mention at a later date.

J. F. Harris (E.C.).—Thanks for your letter. I will make a note of your suggestion.

J. Macdonald.—"The mark," also sometimes termed "the body" and "the wind," in boxing parlance, is the region between the bottom of the chest-bone and the belt. A smart tap here will knock all the wind out of a person's body, and will sometimes double him up, leaving him open for an attack by his opponent.

Further Hints for Young Bowlers.

During his overs, a bowler should, of course, have entire control of the fieldsmen, and the art of placing these just in the right position is one which, generally speaking, can only come after long practice. Young bowlers who are inclined to pride themselves upon their "demon" speed are sometimes addicted to the habit of insisting upon a number of "slips"—four or five, at least; this is often more a form of affectation than anything else, and as the change is made, there is a stir among the onlookers, who are evidently expecting to see some lightning bowling. In order to justify his plethora of "slips," the inexperienced, would-be "demon" attempts some terrific deliveries, with the only result that he overbowls himself, and his balls coming down loose and unevenly pitched, are swiped away by the batsman all over the field, very often being "pulled" over to the on-side, which has been depleted of fieldsmen to provide the extravagant number of slips. Before indulging in five or six slips, a bowler should be certain of his pace and his ability to keep the ball on the off-side of the wicket.

A slow bowler will often "bowl for catches," and it is here that the placing of the field is a matter of supreme judgment; a knowledge of the capabilities of every individual fieldsmen will, naturally, prove of immense value to the bowler who wants his catches to be sent up to fieldsmen who will not be likely to drop them.

In an important match, a bowler should be careful not to over-bowl himself, especially if he finds that his bowling appears to be essential to the success of his side. If he feels himself becoming fatigued while the innings is, apparently, some way from being over, he should apply to his captain for a rest from trundling, if that worthy does not take him off for a bit of his own accord.

A bowler kept on too long after he has once begun to tire will give the tail-end of the opposing side a chance to score runs, which may make all the difference to the result of the match. If the champion bowler is taken off for a while when he first begins to show signs of fatigue, the runs may come a little faster while he is resting, but upon his resumption with all his old skill and vigour, it is more than possible that a rot will set in amongst the opposing side, and the last few batsmen follow each other in and out again in a hurry. It is no disgrace to plead fatigue when you feel that your bowling is becoming affected, and the use of common-sense in this direction may be greatly to the interest of your side. One of England's greatest bowlers—Charlie Blythe, of Kent—has to be treated very carefully by his captain, as he is liable to "break up" altogether under the strain of over-much bowling. To take wickets at the cost of the fewest possible runs is the whole duty of a bowler, in a nutshell, and the trundler should leave no device unexhausted to attain this end.

A bowler who uses his head, or "bowls with his head," as the saying is, is usually of infinitely more value to a cricket team than one who bowls mechanically, and fails to adapt himself to the ever-changing exigencies of the great game. The young bowler should, therefore, experiment privately, and in trial games, in every wile, and with every style of ball he can think of, and, above all, practise constantly until he is quite sure of his pitch, pace, and break.

THE EDITOR.