

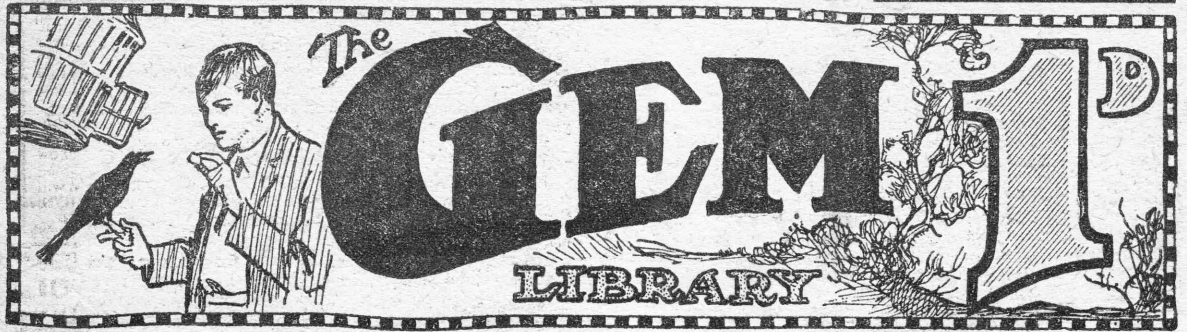
NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE PREFECT'S PLOT!"

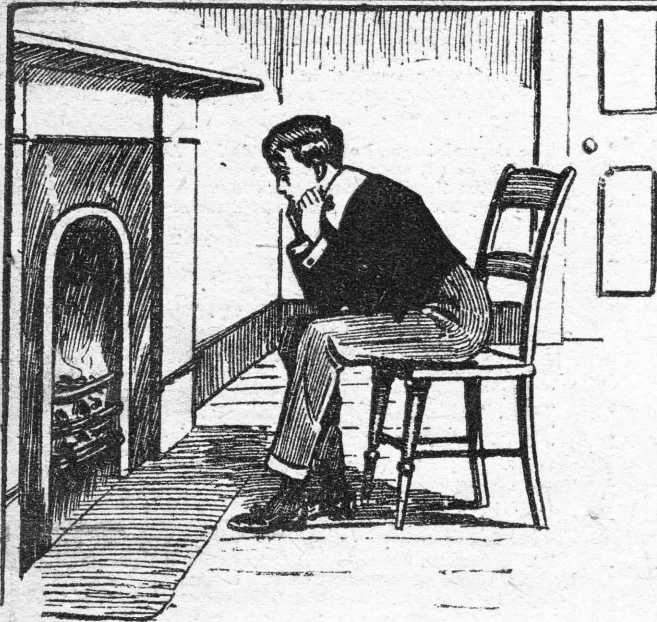
By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Every

Wednesday.



Complete Stories for All, and Every Story a Gem.



THE SENTENCE OF THE HOUSE!

A Splendid, New, Long Complete
School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

A Very Special Occasion!

CONSIDAH—

"Have you seen my bat, Gussy?"

"Weally, Blake, I considah—"

"Yes, but have you seen my bat?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and turned upon Jack Blake of the Fourth Form a withering stare, which ought to have withered Jack Blake quite up, on the spot.

But it didn't! Blake was looking round Study No. 6 for his cricket bat, and he did not even see the withering glance of the swell of St. Jim's.

"I considah, Blake—"

"I know I left it here," said Blake. "Has that ass Digby taken it, or that fathead Herries? You might help a chap to look for it, Gussy."

"I considah—"

"But you've said that before," urged Blake, "and the fellows are waiting for me on the cricket field. Where's my bat?"

"I wufuse to discuss your bat," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity. "I considah that upon an occasion of special importance a fellow has a wight to wely upon his chums for assistance."

"Just what I was thinking," agreed Blake cheerfully. "That's why I think you ought to help me look for my bat."

"I we'gard you as an ass!"

"Here it is!" ejaculated Blake, dragging the bat out from behind the bookcase and giving it a swing in the air. "I remember now, I put it there, I—"

"Look out, you feahful ass!" shrieked D'Arcy.

But the warning came too late. The flourishing bat had swept Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's glossy topper from the table, where he had laid it after polishing it. D'Arcy had spent at least ten minutes in polishing that topper. Perhaps it was exasperating, after so much trouble, to see it swept away by Blake's cricket bat. Certainly Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked exasperated.

"You uttah ass! My hat—"

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake. "Sorry, Gussy! Sorry, too, I can't stop! You can wear my cap if you like."

And with the cricket bat under his arm, Blake rushed out of the study. It was a Wednesday, and a half-holiday at St. Jim's, and the juniors were mostly going down to the playing-fields. Blake was in a hurry to join them.

Arthur Augustus picked up his hat, and looked at it. There was a deep dent in the side, and as it had rolled along the floor and bumped against a chair, the nap was decidedly disturbed.

"The f'wightful ass!" muttered Arthur Augustus, "I—"

"Blake here?" asked Digby of the Fourth, looking into the study. Digby was in white flannels, and had a bat under his arm.

"The uttah ass has just gone, aftah neatly wuinin' my hat," said D'Arcy, polishing the topper tenderly.

"Coming down to the cricket?" asked Digby cheerily.

"I have somethin' more important to attend to, Dig, deah boy," said the swell of the School House, with dignity. "I have to keep a vovvy special appointment. I want to dwess wathah nicely for the occasion, and I was thinkin'—"

"Good," said Digby. "See you later, then."

"Wait a minute, you ass!"

But Digby was gone.

A New
Companion
Paper to "The
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is Coming!

See page 28.

Next Wednesday:

"THE PREFECT'S PLOT!" AND "THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!"

No. 241 (New Series), Vol. 6.

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Arthur Augustus pressed out the dent in the topper, and took up the velvet pad, and polished it carefully. The study was quite in a litter with garments belonging to the swell of St. Jim's. Fancy waistcoats hung over the chairs, and neckties were piled on the table. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had a most extensive wardrobe, and he appeared to have made quite a raid upon it for an outfit that sunny afternoon. D'Arcy was always the best-dressed fellow in the School House, or the New House either; but on special occasions he made special efforts. And the present occasion was evidently a very special one, to judge by the amount of clothes he had dragged out to select from.

Herries came into the study. D'Arcy, Blake, Digby, and Herries shared Study No. 6 among them, and the four were very close chums. But there was sometimes a rift in the lute. Fellows had different tastes. Herries could not see what Arthur Augustus wanted with six or seven fancy waistcoats, and he considered D'Arcy very unreasonable when he showed temper on the occasion when Towser the bulldog gnawed some of them. D'Arcy, on the other hand, could not see what Herries wanted a bulldog at all for. Just now, however, D'Arcy was very glad to see the burly Fourth Former.

"Hewwies, old man," he began.

"Hallo!" said Herries, looking round the study, apparently in search of something.

"I want your advice, Hewwies, old man."

"Good!" said Herries. "Going to buy a dog?"

D'Arcy sniffed.

"No, you ass!"

"Well, you might do worse," said Herries. "What the deuce have you got all those blessed clothes out for? Have you seen my dog-whip?"

"I have not seen your wotten dog-whip! On an occasion like this, Hewwies, I considah that a fellow has a wight to expect assistance from his personal fwiends. It is wathah an important occasion, and I want to dwess myself wathah nicely."

"I wish I could find that dog-whip."

"Cousin Ethel is comin' down to St. Jim's—"

"Oh, good!"

"She is bwingin' a fwiend with her—"

"Yes; but where—"

"And I am goin' to meet them at the station!"

"I'll come with you, if you like," said Herries. "I want to take Towser for a run, anyway."

"You uttah ass! I shall certainly not take that fwiughtful beast to meet Cousin Ethel. I want you—"

"Oh, rats! Where's that dog-whip? I believe it's under some of those blessed waistcoats."

"Towsah has no respect for a fellow's twousahs. Othah-wise—"

"Look here, Gussy—"

"I want to look wathah nice, especially as Ethel is bwingin' a fwiend," said D'Arcy. "Which waistcoat would you advise me to wear, Hewwies?"

"Toss up for it," said Herries. "Good, here's the whip! I knew it was under some of this retten rubbish."

"I considah—"

"Sure you wouldn't like me to bring Towser?" asked Herries.

"Certainly not, you ass."

"Righto! So-long, then."

And Herries left Study No. 6. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave an exasperated sniff. It was certainly rather hard that a fellow with three special chums should not be able to rely upon any of them for assistance upon such an occasion.

Through the open windows of the study came the shouts from the cricket field. D'Arcy heard a roar from the Fourth.

"Well bowled, Blake!"

Arthur Augustus was a very keen cricketer himself. But that afternoon he had stayed out of it. Only that morning he had received Cousin Ethel's letter, and he had decided at once to let Reilly of the Fourth have his place in the team. Looking after ladies was a far more important matter than playing cricket. Truly, Miss Ethel could have walked from the station

to St. Jim's quite safely in about a quarter of an hour. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was blessed with a tremendous sense of duty. He felt that it was his duty to look after his cousin, and he was going to do it.

Deprived of the valuable advice and assistance of his friends, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sorted over the waistcoats and ties unaided, and after long thought decided upon those he would wear. He donned them, and surveyed the result before a large glass, and was satisfied.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "I weally think that looks wathah wippin', you know."

And, with his silk topper in his hand, the swell of St. Jim's turned to the door. He took up his gold-headed cane, and threw a light dust-coat over his left arm. Undoubtedly he did look a picture.

He stepped from the study into the passage. At the same moment three juniors, in a terrific hurry, came racing down from the Shell passage. They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Monty Lowther—the Terrible Three of the Shell. Tom Merry had a bat under his arm, and they were evidently going down to the cricket, and were afraid that they were late.

As they came tearing down the passage, D'Arcy stepped from his study—right into their path!

There was no time to avoid a collision.

Crash!

Right into the swell of St. Jim's the three racing juniors crashed, and Arthur Augustus went spinning along the passage.

"Bai Jove! Ow!"

Crunch!

The mournful sound came from Arthur Augustus's beautiful topper as he sat upon it. But he had no time to mourn its fate, for the Terrible Three were sprawling over him, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy disappeared under a sea of arms and legs.

CHAPTER 2.

Very Obliging!

TOM MERRY sat up dazedly.

He was sitting upon Manners, but he did not notice that for the moment.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Ow!" groaned Manners. "Gerroff! Ow!"

"Groo!" murmured Monty Lowther. "I'm dead! Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

Manners wriggled, and Tom Merry rolled off. The Terrible Three picked themselves up.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was not equal to rising yet. He lay upon the ruins of his beautiful topper, and groaned.

"Oh, deah! Ow! You asses! You feahful asses! Ow!"

"You chump!" roared Tom Merry. "What do you mean by buzzing out of the study all of a sudden like that?"

"Ow! You ass!" groaned D'Arcy. "What do you mean by wushin' by like a set of dangewous lunatics?"

"Ass!"

"Duffah!"

"Fathead!"

"Ow!"

"Oh, bump Jim," said Monty Lowther.

"I wefuse to be bumped," said Arthur Augustus, staggering up, and groping wildly for his eyeglass. "Bai Jove! My monocle is bwoke! Look at my toppah! Look at my twucks! Oh! You awful asses! How can I possibly go and meet Cousin Ethel like this?"

The Terrible Three, who were making a concerted movement towards the swell of St. Jim's, paused.

"Cousin Ethel?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yaas. Ow!"

"Cousin Ethel's coming?" said Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! Gwooh!"

"Oh, good!" said Lowther. "You can't go down to the station in that state, Gussy."

"Wathah not! Ow!"

"Never mind," said Tom Merry. "I'll tell you what we'll do. It's partly our fault—"

"It's all your fault, you silly ass!"

"Well, it's all our fault, then. Under the circumstances we can't do less than go down to the station and meet Cousin Ethel for you."

"Good egg!" said Manners and Lowther simultaneously.

"You wottahs! I wefuse to allow you to do anythin' of the sort. I—"

"My dear Gussy, you can't keep a lady waiting at the station for you while you change your clothes," urged Tom Merry, "and you can't go like that. Look at the dust!"

"And your jacket's split up the back," said Lowther.

"And really, your chivvy wants washing," remarked Manners.

"You feahful chumps! You have wained my toppah, and weduced my clothes to a howwid and disweputable state. I weward you as wuff hooligauns."

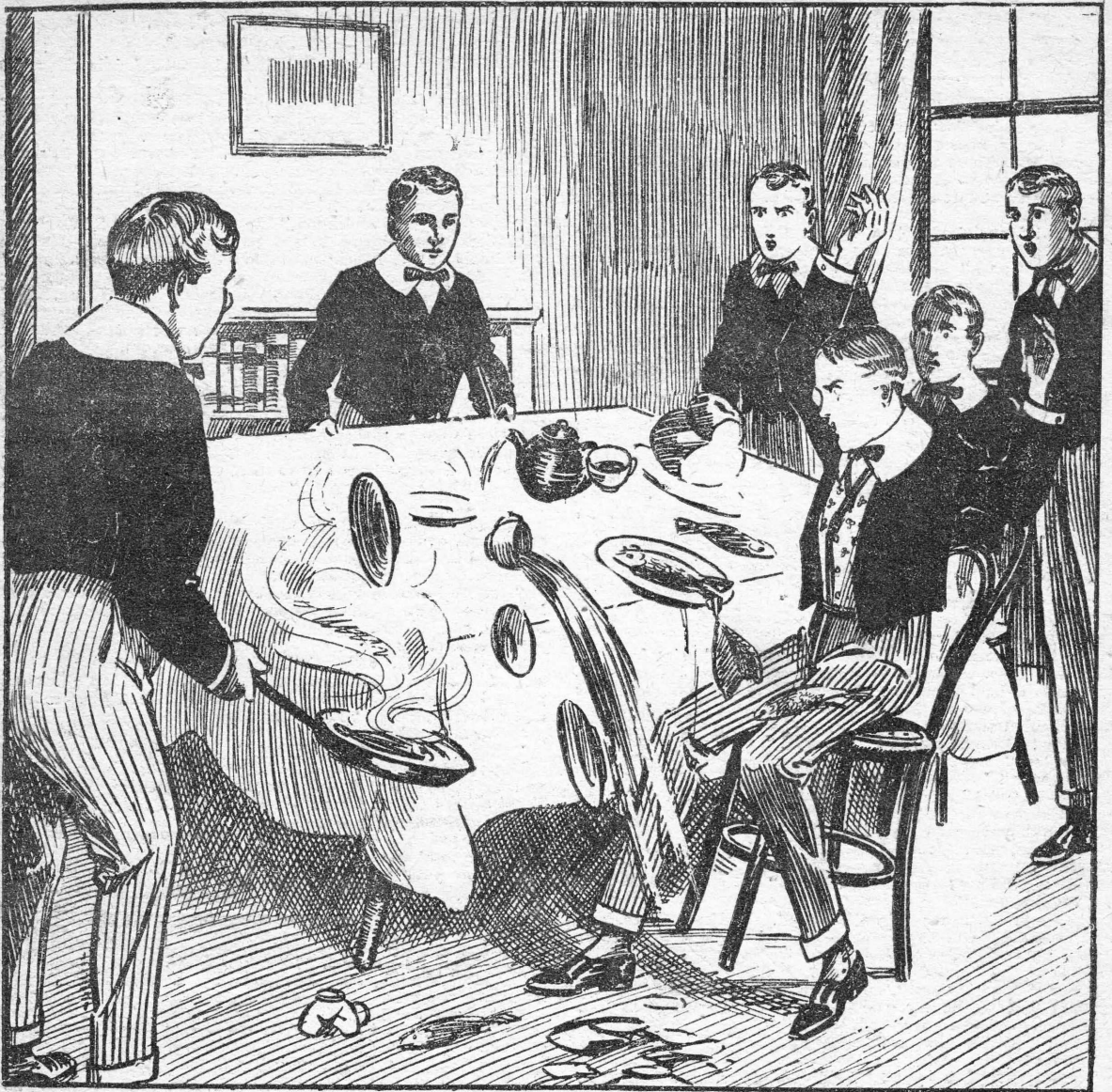
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(See column 2, page 27 of this issue.)

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Lorne jerked up the table, and the crockery, the dishes, and the herrings all shot to the floor together. There was a wild yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as half a dozen greasy herrings alighted upon the knees of his trousers. "Yawooh! My twousahs! Oh!" (See Chapter 11.)

"It's all right, if we go to meet Ethel instead of you," said Tom Merry. "Ethel will be just as pleased, and——"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Better go at once. The train will be in, if she's coming by the next train," said Monty Lowther. "Are you coming like that, Gussy?"

"You—you feahful asses! I can't come like this," said D'Arcy, in great distress. "Pewwaps upon the whole you fellows had bettah go. Pway explain to Ethel that I was detained by an accident, and you are comin' instead. Ethel is bwingin' a fwiend with her."

"Oh, good! Who's the friend?" asked Tom Merry.

"I don't know. She just mentioned in her letter that a fwiend was comin' down with her. I wanted to look aftah them, but now you silly asses have mucked it up. I should give you a feahful thwashin' if I had time. But pway go, if you are goin'!"

"Righto!"

And the Terrible Three, after a hasty brush-down in the passage, hurried off in high spirits. Arthur Augustus turned back disconsolately into the study, where he had spent so much time in preparing himself to make a really stunning impression upon Cousin Ethel and her unknown friend.

"What about the cricket?" asked Monty Lowther, as Tom

deposited his bat in a corner of the landing on the way down stairs.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Oh, blow the cricket! Cricket's about over, anyway, and it's not a match—only giddy Form practice. Blake can look after it."

"Good!"

The Terrible Three walked quickly across the quadrangle towards the gates. There was a shout from Jack Blake of the Fourth in the distance.

"Hallo, you Shell chaps! This way."

"Sorry—can't come!"

"Eh? What about the cricket?"

"Sorry, got an important engagement."

"Well, you asses——"

The Terrible Three did not stay to argue the point. They cut across the quadrangle to the school gates. There was no time to lose, if they were to be in time to meet the train Cousin Ethel and her friend were coming by. Arthur Augustus had left it rather late, and some time had been lost in the collision in the Fourth Form passage. But the chums of the Shell were not destined to get away in a hurry. As they reached the gateway, six juniors lined up in their path with cheerful smiles. They were New House fellows—Figgins, Kerr, and

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Wynn (otherwise known as Figgins & Co.), and Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, the scholarship juniors—all of the Fourth Form. They planted themselves in a row in the way of the Terrible Three, and smiled, and Figgins held up his hand in a chiding way.

"Halt!"
The Terrible Three paused. At another time they would have charged, and broken a way through the New House fellows. But there was no time to waste now, and they did not want to arrive at the station with an assortment of swollen noses and thick ears for the inspection of Cousin Ethel and her friend.

"Pax!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Don't play the giddy goat now, Figgy, we're in an awful hurry."

"What's on?" demanded Figgins.
"We're going to the station."
"Well, people have been to the station before without breaking their necks about it," remarked Kerr.

"The train's coming in, you ass!"
"Well, trains have come in before now."

"Fathead! Cousin Ethel's in the train, and we're going to meet it!" roared Tom Merry. "Now, don't play the giddy goat; clear off!"

Figgins started. Figgins was very much interested in Cousin Ethel. Indeed, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had sometimes complained that Figgins seemed to think that Ethel was his cousin, and not D'Arcy's at all.

"Cousin Ethel!" exclaimed Figgins.
"Yes. We're going to meet her. Gussy's met with an accident."

Figgins grinned.

"Oh! You're going for Gussy!"

"Yes."

"Good! Then we're going for you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar them!" yelled Figgins.

And in a second the New House fellows were "going for" the Terrible Three. With a rush they overwhelmed them, and the three School House juniors rolled on the ground under the weight of the six heroes of the New House. Tom Merry roared and struggled.

"Yow! Lemme gerrup! You ass!"

"Leggo!"

"Chuck it!"

"Sit on 'em!" said Figgins serenely. "Reddy, I depend on you to keep these School House youngsters out of mischief, while we go and meet Cousin Ethel."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Redfern. "Anything to oblige. What-ho!"

"Come on, Kerr! Come on, Wynn!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. ran out into the road. Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence sat upon the three Shell fellows, and kept them pinned down, in spite of their desperate struggles.

"Let us go!" yelled Tom Merry. "I'll—I'll—"

"Better take it calmly, my infants," said Redfern. "This is where you toe the line, you know. We'll let you go as soon as Figgins has had a good start."

"You New House rotter!"

"Order!"

"Yah! I'll lick you! We'll slaughter you! Leggo! Gerrup!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther struggled furiously. But the three sturdy Fourth Formers had the advantage, and they kept it. And there was no help at hand. It was a sunny afternoon, and all the fellows were on the playing-fields. The Sixth were playing the last match of the season on the senior ground, and most of the fellows were there. There was no rescue for the Terrible Three, and they could not get loose, Redfern & Co. smiled down upon them serenely.

"One good turn deserves another, you know," said Redfern.

"I can guess what kind of accident Gussy met with. Now you've met with another of the same sort. Take it easy."

"You—you New House rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For full five minutes the three heroes of the New House kept the Terrible Three pinned down. They would have kept them longer, but just then Mr. Railton, the House Master of the School House, came by. Redfern & Co. jumped up in a great hurry, and strolled away with the most innocent expression in the world. Mr. Railton glanced after them, and then glanced at the Terrible Three, who were sitting up, very flustered and very red and very dusty.

"You will spoil your clothes if you sit on the ground in that way, Merry," said the House Master, suppressing a smile.

"You had better go and brush yourselves down."

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry meekly.

The Terrible Three went in. It was too late to think of overtaking Figgins & Co, but the chums of the Shell planned a reception for these cheerful youths when they returned.

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CHAPTER 3.
Cousin Ethel's Friend.

F IGGINS chuckled gleefully as he walked into the quiet old village of Rylcombe with Kerr and Wynn. Figgins was satisfied in every way. He had scored over the School House fellows, which was naturally very satisfactory to the chief of the New House juniors. The rivalry between the two Houses at St. Jim's never slept—at least as far as the juniors were concerned. But better than even the score over the School House was the satisfaction of having "bagged" Cousin Ethel.

"It's a jolly fine afternoon," Figgins remarked. "I don't see that there's any hurry to get back to the school. I think very likely Cousin Ethel would like a drive round the country."

"Good egg!" said Kerr, grinning.

"Or we might have a picnic," suggested Fatty Wynn. "If you like I'll stop at Mother Murphy's, and get the things, while you chaps go on to the station. We could put a good big lunch-basket in a trap, and have a drive round, and stop for a feed somewhere. Then we could get to St. Jim's before dusk."

"Jolly good idea," said Figgins. "Cousin Ethel's got a friend with her, too. It will make a ripping party."

"Here's the tuck-shop," said Fatty Wynn, pausing outside the little establishment of Mrs. Murphy. "You fellows had better hand over all your loose cash, and I'll pool it with mine and we'll have a big spread."

"Good!"

Figgins and Kerr turned out their pockets, and handed their spare cash over to the fat Fourth Former, who promptly disappeared into the tuck-shop. Then Figgins and Kerr hurried on towards the railway-station.

"Train's in," said Figgins as they drew near the station, and he observed two or three people, evidently newly arrived passengers, coming out.

"Yes, buck up!"

The chums of the Fourth hurried on to the station. They rushed into the station, and almost dashed into a charming young lady who was waiting inside. They halted just in time, and raised their caps enthusiastically.

"Cousin Ethel!"

"Good-afternoon, Cousin Ethel!"

Ethel Cleveland smiled a greeting to the New House juniors, and shook hands with them in a very cordial way. Cousin Ethel always got on famously with Figgins. She glanced past them, however, towards the doorway.

"We came to meet you here, Figgins explained.

"Came to meet the train," said Kerr.

"Thank you," said Ethel softly; "I was expecting my cousin."

Figgins coughed.

"He—he's been detained," he explained. "He's awfully sorry."

"Detained by his master?" asked Ethel.

"H'm! Ahem! No. Detained by a slight accident," stammered Figgins.

Ethel looked at him.

"We didn't—I—I mean, Tom Merry told us," said Figgins, turning red, "he was coming to meet you instead of Gussy, as—Gussy has had an accident. Nothing serious, you know, only it prevented him from coming out in time to meet the train."

"Is Tom Merry here, then?"

"N-no! The—the fact is, he had an accident, too, so—so we came," said Figgins. "I—I say, I understood that you had a friend with you."

"Yes, that is so," assented Ethel, looking towards the entrance to the platform.

"Good!" said Figgins. "I—I say, I—I was thinking that

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if you weren't in a hurry to get to St. Jim's, we—we might have a drive round, and—a bit of a picnic in the wood, you know. It's jolly fine weather, don't you think so?"

"The wood looks beautiful—lovely autumn tints," said Kerr.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"My friend——" she began.

"She will come, too, of course," said Figgins eagerly. "That will make it all the jollier. We shall be jolly glad to have her, too."

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"You are very kind," she said.

"Not at all," said Figgins. "It will be ripping. I—I say, you'll come, won't you?"

"But my friend——"

"Is your friend still on the platform?" asked Figgins, a little puzzled.

"Yes, looking after the box."

"The—the what?"

"The box."

Figgins wondered what on earth Cousin Ethel's friend had brought a box with her for. He glanced through the little gate upon the platform, but could not see any person of the gentle sex there. A somewhat pale-faced boy in Etons and a silk hat was directing a porter, who was placing a box on a trolley, but there was no sign of a girl. Figgins glanced carelessly at the boy in Etons, wondering whether he was a new fellow for St. Jim's. He had not a pleasant face. His features were certainly good-looking, but there was an expression about them Figgins did not like. His tone, as he spoke to the old porter of Rylcombe, was decidedly disagreeable.

"Uppish sort of cad!" said Figgins to himself. "If he comes to St. Jim's we'll soon take that out of him."

He turned back to Cousin Ethel.

"I can't see your friend here, Ethel," he remarked. "Let's wait. I—I say, you'll come for that little drive, won't you? Fatty Wynn's getting the lunch-basket ready at Mother Murphy's."

"You are very good, Figgins. But——"

"Oh, you must come," said Figgins. "Think what a lovely afternoon it is."

"Yes, but——"

"And a drive will do you good, after your—your journey," said Kerr.

"Yes, but——"

"And Fatty is laying in a ripping spread," said Figgins temptingly. "You—and—and your friend will be hungry, you know, after a journey."

"But Arthur is expecting us, and——"

"Oh, he won't be surprised if you don't come, when he knows that we've come to meet you," said Figgins innocently.

Ethel smiled.

"Yes, but——"

"You can drive if you like," added Figgins, offering the crowning inducement.

"Thank you, Figgins. But——"

"It will be ripping, you know——"

"I am sure it would, Figgins. But my friend has to go on to the school," said Ethel. "So I must go too."

Figgins looked surprised. If Ethel had felt bound to go on to the school, that would not have been surprising, but he could not for the life of him see why Ethel's friend had to go on to the school.

"Is it somebody we know?" he asked.

"No, not yet."

"A relation of the Head's, perhaps?"

"Oh, no."

"Well, if you must go straight to the school, of course, you must," said Figgins resignedly. "I suppose you know best. Will you walk or drive?"

"Well, my friend will have to have the hack for the box, I suppose," said Ethel thoughtfully.

"Is it a big box?" asked the surprised Figgins.

"Oh, the usual size."

"Usual size!"

"Yes, I think so."

Figgins was lost in wonder. It was very odd that Cousin Ethel's friend should bring a box with her at all, he thought; but Ethel spoke as if it were quite the customary thing, and she said that the box was the usual size. Figgins did not know in the least what to make of it.

The trolley came trundling off the platform, and the unhealthy-complexioned youth followed behind the porter.

"Careful with that box, porter," he rapped out, in a thin, petulant voice. "Don't bump it into everything."

"Yessir," said Trumble.

"I suppose there is a cab of some sort here?" said the youth, with a disparaging glance round the little old station.

"Yessir."

"Well, put that box on it."

"Yessir."

The youth turned towards Ethel Cleveland and her companions. He glanced at Figgins and Kerr with a kind of supercilious inquiring look that made both of them long to shake him, and they would undoubtedly have done so but for the presence of Cousin Ethel. The stranger did not deign to take any further notice of their existence. To the great surprise of Figgins and Kerr, he addressed Cousin Ethel.

"Ready, Ethel?" he asked.

Figgins and Kerr jumped. At the first glance they had set the young stranger down for a "bounder" of the most unpleasant type. What did he mean by speaking to Ethel and calling her by her Christian name? Figgins clenched his fists involuntarily. But he unclenched them again in sheer amazement as Cousin Ethel answered the stranger's question.

"Yes, Eric."

Figgins and Kerr were so astonished that they stood almost open-mouthed. Cousin Ethel turned to them with a somewhat tremulous smile.

"This is my friend, Eric Lorne," she said.

"Oh!" murmured Figgins.

He understood now.

"Eric, these are two of my friends from St. Jim's—Figgins and Kerr of the Fourth Form—the Form you are going into, Eric. I—I hope you will be friends."

CHAPTER 4.

Quite a Toad!

ERIC LORNE condescended to look at Figgins and Kerr once more.

He was the last fellow in the world whom Figgins would have wanted to shake hands with of his own accord, but for Cousin Ethel's sake Figgins would have shaken hands with a cannibal. Figgins held out his hand as cordially as he could. Lorne looked at it for a moment, as if it were a peculiar zoological specimen extended for his inspection. Then he took it, and bestowed upon it a touch like that of a defunct fish. Kerr did not offer to shake hands. He didn't want a handshake of that sort, and he did not mean to be condescended to, as he afterwards remarked, by a putty-faced bounder. But Lorne did not appear to notice the omission.

There was an awkward pause for a moment. Lorne did not seem to feel awkward. He rapped out a sharp command to the porter not to bump his box as he placed it on the hack outside the station. He looked at the hack with a discontented expression.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "Is that the thing we've got to drive in? Isn't there anything better than that?"

Kerr's eyes began to glitter. The station hack was good enough for other fellows who came to St. Jim's, and Kerr decidedly considered that it was good enough for this obnoxious youth—in fact, too good.

"You might 'phone to the Head to send his car," he suggested.

Kerr meant that remark for sarcasm, but Lorne appeared to take it quite seriously.

"By gad!" he said. "That's an idea! Is there a telephone in this weary hole?"

"My hat!" murmured Kerr, overcome.

Cousin Ethel's fair cheeks were a little pinker than usual.

"You must be satisfied with the hack, Eric," she said gently.

"I am afraid the Head would not send his car for us. But perhaps you would rather walk."

Eric sniffed.

"Walking's a bore," he said.

"Then we must go in the hack."

"Well, I suppose there's room for two in the thing," said Eric, going towards the ancient vehicle and looking into it. "Come on, Ethel."

Figgins and Kerr exchanged a glance. They wondered where Lorne had come from; but wherever it was, it was evidently not a place where good manners were cultivated. How on earth Cousin Ethel came to have a friend like that was a deep mystery.

"There is room for four, Eric," said Ethel gently.

"Oh!" said Eric.

"It's all right—we'll walk," said Figgins hastily.

"You can come in the hack if you like," said Lorne.

"Thanks, we'll walk."

"Then we may as well get off," said Lorne. "Ready, Ethel?"

Ethel hesitated. But Lorne was standing ready to hand her into the hack, and she gave Figgins a piteous look and stepped in. Figgins made a step after her, changing his mind; but Lorne, apparently unconsciously, stepped in, and closed the door after him, and called out to the driver to go on.

Kerr grasped his chum by the arm.

"Hold on, Figgy," he murmured. "You're not going to chum with that filthy outsider, even to please Cousin Ethel. I won't have it."

"Hush!"

The hack moved away. Cousin Ethel glanced out of the window, with an indefinable expression upon her fair face. Lorne did not look out. He settled himself discontentedly on the old, hard horsehair cushions.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE PREFECT'S PLOT!" A Splendid New Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Good Lord!" he remarked.

Ethel looked at him.

"Those some of the fellows you have told me about?" asked Lorne.

"Yes," said Ethel quietly.

"That long-legged chap Figgins?"

"The tall one is Figgins."

"Chap who bolted off to Paris to look after you—hey?"

"Yes!"

"Huh!"

"He is my best friend," said Cousin Ethel steadily; "a kinder, braver fellow never existed. I hope you will try to make him like you, Eric."

Lorne stared at her for a moment. Then he ejaculated "Good Lord!" and relaxed into discontented silence.

Figgins and Kerr stood on the kerb, gazing after the hack till it disappeared down the old High Street of Rylcombe. Figgins was so dazed that he stood with his cap in his hand, forgetting to put it back upon his head. He wondered whether he was dreaming.

Kerr tapped him on the shoulder and Figgins started.

"Well?" said Kerr.

"Well?" said Figgins.

"What do you think?"

"Blessed if I know," said Figgins, "I think I've been dreaming. What can Cousin Ethel think of an awful outsider like that chap?"

"That's the giddy friend," grinned Kerr. "It seems to me that we've been done instead of doing those School House bouncers. Tom Merry would have been welcome to this."

"The cheek," said Figgins, "carrying off Ethel like that, after we've come to meet her!"

"I hope they'll put him into the New House," said Kerr; "we'll teach him manners."

Figgins was silent.

"I can foresee a high old time in front of that merchant at St. Jim's," continued Kerr. "What do you think, Figgy?"

"He's Ethel's friend, Kerr."

"Well, really, Figgy, Ethel ought to know better than to have a friend like that. Did you ever see such an unpleasant cad?"

"No, never."

"He seems to be looking for trouble, doesn't he?"

"Well, he does."

"And he'll find it, if they shove him into the New House," said Kerr grimly. "Let's get back."

The chums of the Fourth walked down to the tuck-shop rather disconsolately. Fatty Wynn was waiting outside, with a large parcel in his hand. He was filling up the moments of waiting by munching tarts.

"Hullo!" he said. "Where's Cousin Ethel? Hasn't she come?"

"Yes, and gone!" grunted Kerr. "They went in the hack." Fatty Wynn stared.

"Why didn't you chaps keep them?" he asked indignantly. "I've got the feed all ready."

"Cousin Ethel's friend had to go on."

"What's she like?" asked Fatty.

"It isn't a she—it's a he!"

"Oh!"

"A new fellow for St. Jim's," explained Kerr. "The rankest outsider you ever saw. A rotten, unspeakable toad!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Come on! The feed's off!" growled Kerr.

The juniors walked back to St. Jim's. They did not follow the road, as they did not wish to overtake the lumbering hack. They took the short cut, and arrived at St. Jim's before the station cab came in sight.

"Here they are!"

The Terrible Three were waiting in the gateway. They looked warlike, as soon as they saw that Cousin Ethel was not with the New House fellows. But Figgins held up his hand in sign of peace.

"Pax!" he said. "We've been sold!"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"Didn't Cousin Ethel come? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, she came—she's coming on in the hack!" growled Kerr. "With her friend!"

"You've left them to come on alone?" asked Tom Merry, puzzled.

"They've left us. Her friend turns out to be of the masculine gender—a new chap for the Fourth Form here."

"Oh!"

"And an awful toad!" said Kerr.

"Oh, rot!" said Tom Merry, warmly. "If he's an awful toad, he wouldn't be a friend of Cousin Ethel's."

"Well, he is!"

"Yes, he is, that's right enough," said Figgins. "I can't understand it. I don't know why Ethel should have taken up such an outsider."

"We'd have bumped him for his cheek, but for Ethel," said THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 241.

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Kerr. "They'll be along in a minute or two, and you can see for yourself."

And Figgins & Co. went in moodily. The Terrible Three, puzzled and curious, waited in the gateway. The hack came in sight a few minutes later, and rolled into the gateway. Tom Merry & Co. raised their caps to the fair face that looked out of the window, and Cousin Ethel nodded brightly.

"Don't stop, driver!" called out Lorne.

The hack rolled on.

The Terrible Three jumped back out of the way just in time. Then they stood almost transfixed. They gazed stonily after the hack as it rolled on up the drive.

"Well!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"My hat!"

"So that's Cousin Ethel's friend?"

"Kerr was right!" said Monty Lowther. "He's a toad—the toadiest toad that ever toaded."

And Tom Merry had to admit that there was no doubt about it.

CHAPTER 5.

The New Boy.

"**P**WAY, can I help you, deah boy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy asked the question. He had just come downstairs, and he found a

youth in Etons in the hall, looking about him in a rather lost way. Arthur Augustus saw at once that the stranger was a new boy, and evidently at a loss, and with his usual urbane courtesy the swell of St. Jim's placed himself at once at the disposal of the stranger.

The new boy looked at him.

"I suppose this is the School House?" he asked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Two rotten Houses here, I understand?" said the new boy discontentedly.

D'Arcy looked at him.

"There are two Houses," he replied. "This is the School House. New chap, I suppose?"

"Yes. I want to see the Head."

"Pway allow me to show you to his studay!" said D'Arcy.

"Thanks."

"Not at all, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus led the way. He was not very favourably impressed with the new fellow, but he wanted to be civil.

"Just awwived?" he asked.

"Yes!"

"Coming into the School House?"

"I don't know. I'm going into the Fourth Form."

"That's my Form!" said Arthur Augustus graciously. "I'm in the Fourth!"

"Are you?" said the new boy indifferently, evidently not taking the slightest interest in the fact that D'Arcy was in the Fourth.

The swell of St. Jim's coloured a little.

"Here's the Head's studay," he said, rather abruptly.

He tapped at the door and opened it. The study was empty. "Bai Jove! The Head isn't here!" he remarked. "You can't see him."

The new boy grunted.

"Beastly nuisance!" he remarked. "I want to know where my quarters are. I suppose I shall have a study?"

"You'll share a studay with two or three othah chaps," said Arthur Augustus, inwardly hoping quite fervently that the study would not turn out to be No. 6.

"Two or three? How rotten! I want a study to myself!"

Arthur Augustus stared.

"Nobody under the Sixth Form has a studay to himself!" he said.

"Oh! It's rotten to be crowded."

"Oh, it's all wight, you know. You'll soon chum up with the othah fellows in your studay."

"I don't know about that. I'm a bit particular whom I chum up with!" growled the new junior.

Arthur Augustus thought to himself that the new junior was looking for trouble, and would not look very long without finding it. But he did not say so. He wanted to be civil to a new-comer who very evidently did not know the ropes.

"I want to see the Head. Where can I find him?"

"The Head is probably at tea with his family now," said D'Arcy mildly. "You can't see him. But if you're going into the Fourth, it's all wight. I'll take you along to Mr. Lathom's studay."

ANSWERS

"Who's Mr. Lathom?"

"Mastah of the Fourth."

"Oh, very well."

The new boy appeared to be quite unconscious of the fact that D'Arcy was obliging him in any way. From his manner, it might have been supposed that D'Arcy was paid a regular salary for guiding new boys about the School House. The swell of St. Jim's suppressed his annoyance with some difficulty, and wished he had not been quite so obliging. However, he guided the new-comer to Mr. Lathom's study.

Mr. Lathom was at home. He blinked at the two juniors over his spectacles, and told them to come in.

"A new chap, sir," said D'Arcy. "He's going into the Fourth, he says, sir, so I've brought him to you."

"You are very good, D'Arcy," said little Mr. Lathom. "It is quite right; I was expecting you, my lad. Your study has been arranged; perhaps you will show the new boy to No. 5 in the Fourth Form passage, D'Arcy—the study next your own? I shall see you again presently. I have no time to attend to you now, Lorne."

The new boy gave a slight grunt, and followed Arthur Augustus out of the study. He seemed very dissatisfied with his reception. It was easy for D'Arcy to see that he was a spoiled youth, and had been made very much of at home, and had had a vague expectation that he would be made much of at St. Jim's. That expectation was likely to be disappointed. Among more than two hundred and fifty boys, the addition of Eric Lorne was not likely to create much of a sensation.

"Shall I show you where your study is?" asked D'Arcy politely.

"Yes."

D'Arcy led the way in silence to the Fourth Form passage. He knocked at the door of No. 5, and opened it. Reilly and Kerruish of the Fourth were there. Reilly was frying rashers of bacon and Kerruish was washing a teapot—preparations that hinted that the two owners of No. 5 Study were going to have tea.

"New chap for this study, deah boys," said D'Arcy.

"Faith, and he can come in," said Reilly.

But Lorne did not come in.

He stood on the threshold, sniffing. Apparently he did not care for the scent of frying bacon. The scent of the bacon was reinforced by smoke from the fire, and certainly the atmosphere of the study was a little thick. The supercilious expression upon the new boy's face caused the cordial grin to fade from Reilly's countenance, and he frowned.

"Sure, and why don't ye step in?" he inquired.

"Is this a study?" asked the new boy.

"Yaas, wathah."

"Is cooking done in the studies? I should have fancied there was a kitchen for cooking."

"We usually get our own tea in the studies," D'Arcy explained patiently. "It's a pwivilege, you know. You can have tea in hall, if you pwefer it."

"My hat!" exclaimed Kerruish. "He can have tea in hall whether he prefers it, or not. He's not coming into this study with his nose turned up!"

"Faith, and ye're right!" said Reilly. "If that's a friend of yours, Gussy, I won't hammer him, but ye'd better take him away."

"And bury him!" said Kerruish.

"Ahem! He is a stwaghah to me!" said D'Arcy, who was by no means anxious to claim so extremely bad-mannered a youth as a friend. "I am just showin' him to his quartahs, you know."

"Well, you can show him to some other quarters!" growled Reilly. "I don't like the looks of him, intirely."

"Shut the door after you," added Kerruish.

Arthur Augustus hesitated. The new boy certainly deserved to be left to his fate, but Arthur Augustus knew what a boy would naturally feel like in a totally strange place, and this particular new boy was not likely to make friends. The swell of St. Jim's felt a sentiment of compassionate concern for a fellow who evidently did not understand the manners and customs of the place he found himself in.

"I'll tell you what, deah boy," he said, as Reilly unceremoniously closed the door upon both of them. "I'll take you to tea in my study, if you like. I suppose you're pweetty hngawy atfah your journey?"

"Doesn't the school provide tea?" demanded the new boy.

"Oh, yaas."

"Then show me where it is."

"Oh, vevy well!"

"I shall complain to the Head," said the new boy, further. "I'm not going to be shut up in a poky little hole like that with two low bounders for company. At home I have two rooms to myself, and each of them is six times as large as that."

Arthur Augustus smiled. At home Arthur Augustus himself

had most palatial quarters, as he had the good fortune to be the son of a noble lord; but at St. Jim's he did not expect the same, and he realised that the new boy had lessons to learn. In the kindness of his heart he resolved to teach him some of them.

"Pway allow me to give you a word of advice as an old hand," said Arthur Augustus. "If you turn up your nose at what you see here, you know, you will get the fellows' backs up, and that will be wathah wotten for you."

"I don't care twopence for them!"

"They will take it as cheek, you know."

"They can take it as they like."

"I mean, you may get bumped."

"If I am bothered in any way I shall complain to the Head."

Arthur Augustus halted, and stared at him.

"Bai Jove, you mustn't do that, you know!" he exclaimed.

"That's sneaking. Fellow who sneaks is sent to Coveatry, you know."

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it."

Arthur Augustus clenched his hands hard and drew a deep, deep breath. The new boy, at that moment, was perilously near to being used as a duster for the dusting of the passage floor. But the swell of St. Jim's contained his wrath; he would not lick a new boy on his first day at St. Jim's.

"There's the dinin'-room," he said chokingly. "Good-bye."

And he walked away hurriedly, feeling that if he spent many more minutes with the new boy he would not be able to keep his hands off him.

He met Blake and Herries and Digby going up to No. 6 to tea, and confided to them that there was a new fellow in the Fourth—"an uttah wottah!"

CHAPTER 6.

Cousin Ethel's Request.

TOM MERRY looked into Study No. 6 after tea. Herries and Digby had gone out, but Blake and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were still there.

"Seen the new kid, Tommy?" asked Blake.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Gussy says he's a rank outsider," Blake remarked.

"So he is," said Tom Merry. "I only saw him for a minute, but he certainly gave me the impression of being a rotter."

"Uttah wottah!" said D'Arcy. "I shall wefuse to speak to him. He has not the slightest ideah of good-bweedin'. If he hadn't been a new boy I'd have given him a feahful thwashin'."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, there's no need to have anything to do with him," he remarked. "I dare say he'll get put into his place sooner or later. I've

looked in for you fellows. Are you coming?"

"Where?"

"Cousin Ethel wants to see us," explained Tom Merry.

"Figgy has just told me. I suppose she told him."

"Bai Jove! It's a remarkable thing that Figgy—"

"Exactly. Cousin Ethel can't come to tea—she's had tea with Mrs. Holmes—but she wants to see us. Has something to tell us, I think. I thought I'd take you chaps along, if you'd like to come."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake. "I'm on! Where is Cousin Ethel?"

"Figgy says she's waiting in the Head's garden."

"How does Figgy know, deah boy?"

Tom Merry smiled.

"She must have told him."

"It is wathah remarkable—"

"Better not keep her waiting," suggested Blake. "You can give us your opinion of Figgins afterwards, Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I fancy it's something rather important," said Tom Merry.

"If there's anything we can do for Cousin Ethel, of course—"

"Of course we shall all be weady," said D'Arcy. "Wait a minute while I give my toppah a wub."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus gave his topper a hasty polish, and the three juniors left the study. Outside the School House they found Figgins waiting. Figgins nodded very seriously.

"Come on," he said.

They crossed towards the Head's garden.

"How did you know that Ethel wanted to see us, Figgy?"

D'Arcy inquired.

Figgins stared.

"I—she told me," he said.

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I've been to tea in the Head's house," Figgins explained, colouring a little. "Ethel and Mrs. Holmes—"

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"Bai Jove!"

"Here we are," said Figgins, opening the gate. "March in!"

"Yaas, but——"

Jack Blake took his elegant thum by the arm and propelled him into the garden, and Figgins and Tom Merry followed.

Cousin Ethel's pretty hat could be seen in the little summer-house. The girl rose to her feet as the juniors came up. Her sweet face was very serious in its expression.

"It is good of you to come," she said. "I—I want to ask a favour of you."

"Anythin', deah boy—I mean, deah gal," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gracefully. "We are quite at your service."

"Entirely," said Blake.

"Yes, rather."

Cousin Ethel looked a little troubled.

"It's about the friend who came with me to St. Jim's this afternoon," she said.

"Oh!" said Figgins.

"I was so sorry not to meet you at the station, deah gal," said D'Arcy. "Just as I was startin' three awful daffahs biffed into me, and——"

"It is all right; I was there," said Figgins.

"I do not wegard that as all wight, Figgay."

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"And I have not had the pleasure of bein' pwesented to your fwiend, Ethel," went on Arthur Augustus, in a stately way. "I twust I shall see her."

"My friend is a new boy for St. Jim's," said Ethel.

"Gweat Scott!"

"You have seen him?" asked Ethel anxiously.

D'Arcy looked dismayed.

"Not a chap named Lorne?" he asked.

"Yes, Eric Lorne."

"Bai Jove!"

"Then you have seen him?"

"Yaas."

"We've all seen him," said Tom Merry, rather uncomfortably.

"And do you not like him?" asked Cousin Ethel.

"Ahem!"

"H'm!"

"Well, I wouldn't say that," said Arthur Augustus cautiously.

"I—I have spoken to him. Of—of course you can't tell what a chap is like at first meetin'."

Ethel's face was a little clouded.

"I understand," she said quietly. "Now, that is the favour I want to ask of you. That is why I came down here with Eric to-day. Eric's sister is one of my best friends, and—Eric is not a bad boy, but he has been very much spoiled at home. His sister is afraid that he will have a very unpleasant time at first at school, as he is so used to having his own way in everything, and—as she knew I had some friends here, she asked me——"

Ethel paused.

"I see," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "She asked you to speak a word for the kid so that he gets some attention here, and be made to feel more at home. It's all right; we'll look after him."

"Certainly," said Figgins.

"Y-a-a-s, wathah."

"I know it is a great deal to ask," said Ethel, looking distressed. "But—but I really believe that all Eric's faults are on the surface, and—if he is treated kindly he—he will soon find his place. But I know that new boys are sometimes ragged, especially if they are supposed to put on airs in any way, and so——"

"Yaas, wathah."

"It's not asking much," said Tom Merry. "Fellows fresh from home often want their corners knocked off. I know I was a little bit out of the common when I first came to school; Miss Fawcett used to dress me years younger than my age, and the fellows chipped me to death at first. We'll look after Lorne, and see that he isn't scalped."

Ethel smiled.

"Of course I don't want Eric to know that I've spoken to you for him," she said. "He is very proud, and it would be very like him to quarrel with anybody he suspected of wanting to protect him."

"Oh!"

"But I promised his sister to do what I could; she asked me to," said Ethel. "That is why I came down with Eric. I should like to think that he was given a chance here."

"We'll give him a chance," said Figgins. "I sha'n't have much to do with him, I suppose, as he's a School House chap, and I'm in the New House. But I shall certainly do what I can."

"Yaas, wathah! You can wely upon me, Ethel."

"And upon me," said Blake.

"Same here," said Tom Merry heartily.

Ethel looked relieved.

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"I'm so glad to hear you say so," she said. "It is very, very kind of you."

"Not at all."

"And I'll answer for the other chaps in the Shell," said Tom Merry.

"And I for the Fourth," said Blake. "It will be all right. Lorne will have a chance to shake down and learn the ropes."

"Yaas, wathah! I should wefuse to allow him to be wagged."

"Thank you so much, all of you," said Ethel. "You are very kind. I was doubtful about asking you, but——"

"Wubbish, deah gal! You can ask us anythin' you like, and you'd always find us play up like anythin'," said D'Arcy.

"Yes, rather."

There was a step on the garden path. The new boy, Eric Lorne, came into sight. He glanced at the juniors with the supercilious expression on his face that seemed to belong to it.

"I've been looking for you, Ethel," he said.

"Yes, Eric."

Tom Merry and Co. took their leave. They walked back into the quadrangle, looking very thoughtful. In the quad, they halted, and exchanged glances.

"We must do our best to please Cousin Ethel," Figgins remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"It won't be easy," Blake said slowly. "I never saw a fellow I felt more inclined to hammer at first sight."

"He seems to make that impression upon everybody," said Figgins ruefully. "I was surprised that Cousin Ethel had a friend like that. But, you see, he isn't really her friend; he's her friend's brother. I don't suppose she likes him any more than we do, but she's promised to put in a word for him."

"After all, he'll soon get licked into shape," said Tom Merry. "It's only a question of being patient for a bit. We'd do more than that for Cousin Ethel."

"Yaas, wathah."

"Better tell the other fellows," said Blake.

"Right-ho!"

And the "Co." were duly informed of Cousin Ethel's request, and all the fellows agreed that they would be very patient with the new junior, and give him a chance. But they did not know yet what demands would be made upon their patience.

CHAPTER 7.

Tom Merry Does His Best.

ERIC LORNE came into the junior common-room in the School House.

There were a good many fellows there. Most of the juniors had done their preparation, and were chatting before going to bed. Tom Merry and Manners were playing chess, and they finished a game as Lorne came in. Lorne was looking surly and dissatisfied. After the way he had repulsed D'Arcy's advances, he was not likely to be treated with much friendliness, and his looks showed that he was feeling lonely and depressed. A new fellow in a strange place naturally did not feel much at home at first, and even without Cousin Ethel's intercession, Tom Merry would probably have taken compassion upon him.

He rose from the chess-table, leaving Manners in the midst, of an elaborate explanation as to why he had lost. It appeared, from Manners' statement, that if he had moved a rook at a certain moment, instead of a bishop, Tom Merry would have been completely done in. He suggested going back to that interesting point in the game, and playing it out again, just as an experiment. He sorted out the pieces, and Tom Merry grinned and left him doing it, and strolled over to Lorne. The new junior was standing by the mantelpiece, leaning upon it, and looking about him with a very sour countenance.

"You're the new chap," began Tom Merry affably.

"I'm new here," said Lorne.

"Like the place?"

"No."

"Oh," said Tom Merry, a little disconcerted.

"I think it's rotten," said Lorne.

"We don't think it rotten," said Tom Merry rather wanly.

Lorne shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps you're more easily satisfied than I am," he remarked.

Tom Merry fully understood the feeling Figgins had mentioned to him—of a desire to hit the new boy upon the nose very hard.

But he refrained. That proceeding would have been very satisfactory to his feelings, but it was hardly the way to start a friendship.

"You'll like it better when you've been here a bit," he said. "Perhaps I could do something to make you a bit more comfy. I'm Merry of the Shell."

"Are you?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry, determined not to take offence.

"Have you got a good study?"

Lorne sniffed.

"No. I've been put into a poky hole with two other fellows in it—and I don't like either of them," he said.

"There are some chaps here who aren't pleasant," agreed Tom Merry. "Who have you been put in with?"

"I believe their names are Reilly and Kerruish."

Tom Merry frowned.

"They're both very decent chaps," he said. "Reilly is a kid from Belfast, and as good as gold; and Kerruish is from the Isle of Man, and we all like him."

"They may suit your taste."

"They do!" said Tom Merry.

"They don't suit mine."

Tom Merry was silent for some moments, nobly struggling with a desire to wipe up the floor of the common-room with Eric Lorne. He conquered his inward longings, and went on, with unshaken politeness:

"You might be able to change into another study."

"I've asked, and it seems that I can't have a study to myself," said Lorne. "There's only one empty study, and that's a room in an out-of-the-way corner, with stone walls, and I don't like it. It seems that it's only empty because nobody wants it, so it won't do for me."

"Oh, that's the room called Nobody's Study," said Tom Merry, smiling. "You won't want that; nobody likes it. It's supposed to be a haunted room."

"What rot!"

"Ye-es; it's rot," agreed Tom Merry sweetly. "But if you don't get on with Reilly and Kerruish, you're not bound to use the study, you know. You can keep your books in a locker in the Form-room, and do your prep. in any other study—in the room of any fellow you happen to chum up with, you know."

"There's nobody here I feel inclined to chum up with."

"You know some of the fellows in No. 6, I think. They're great friends of Ethel Cleveland, who came down here with you."

"I don't know them."

"You'll like them," said Tom Merry. "I am a friend of Miss Cleveland's, too."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Oh!"

Lorne's manner was not encouraging. Tom Merry turned over in his mind what to say next.

It was only too evident from Lorne's manner that he had been hopelessly spoiled at home; and although he was feeling lonely in the new school, he was determined to repulse any offer of friendship, from sheer ill-humour and superciliousness.

"Do you play chess?" asked Tom Merry.

"No. Rotten game!"

Tom Merry might have asked him how he knew it was a rotten game, if he never played it; but he did not.

"We're getting up regular footer practice now," he remarked.

"You play footer?"

"No!"

"Don't care for the game?"

"I hate it!"

"I suppose you're stronger on cricket?"

"I don't play cricket."

"What's your favourite game?"

"I don't care for games."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry.

"I shall be bored to death here," said Lorne.

"What on earth did you come to St. Jim's for?" Tom Merry could not help asking.

"I didn't want to come. My father's just come home from India, and he sent me. My mother wouldn't have sent me."

"I don't get on with my pater."

Tom Merry was not surprised to hear it.

"I hear that you fellows sleep in a row of beds in a big room," said Lorne.

"Yes; every Form has a separate dormitory."

"I don't like the idea. I want a bed-room to myself. I don't want to sleep in the same room with a lot of rotters, you know."

"I shouldn't recommend you to call the fellows rotters," said Tom gravely. "They are liable to cut up rusty."

"I don't care if they do."

"I mean you might get ragged."

"I should complain to the Head."

"That would be sneaking."

"I've been told that before by a cheeky young rotter—that ass over there with the eyeglass," said Lorne, with a nod towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I told him that when I wanted his advice I'd ask him for it. I'll do the same to you."

Tom Merry flushed.

"Very well, you won't get any more advice from me," he said.

"I was only giving you a tip, as you're new to the place."

"Oh, rats!"

Tom Merry contained his temper with an effort, and turned away. He rejoined Manners and Lowther, his face flushed and his eyes very bright.

"Got on with him?" asked Lowther, with a grin.

"No. I'm glad he isn't in the Shell," said Tom Merry. "He wants a licking more than any other chap I've ever seen. He's just an unlicked cub—a cub from the toes up."

"Suppose we give him a bumping, to begin with," Lowther suggested.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I've told you what Cousin Ethel asked us," he said.

"Yes; but that's the best way of helping him on," said Monty Lowther argumentatively. "A jolly good hiding to begin with would take some of the rot out of him, and then he'd have a fair start."

Tom Merry laughed.

"That wasn't what Cousin Ethel meant," he said. "Patience, my son. I suppose he will get licked before long; but his needn't have it from us. Hallo, here's old Kildare!"

Kildare, the Captain of St. Jim's, put his head into the junior's room.

"Bedtime, you kids," he said, in his pleasant voice.

"Right-ho, Kildare, my infant," said Monty Lowther.

And the juniors made a general move. Eric Lorne remained standing by the mantelpiece.

Jack Blake walked over to him.

"Bedtime," he said.

"I never go to bed early," said Lorne.

"But it's bedtime—half-past nine," said Blake. "We have to go to bed at a regular time here, you know."

"What rot!"

"Kildare will be waxy if you don't come," said Blake gently, as the new junior gave no sign of moving.

"Who's Kildare?"

"The senior who just looked in—he's captain of the school. He's going to put out lights for the Fourth to-night."

"Well, I'm not going. My mater lets me stay up to what time I like."

"But your mater isn't here, you know," urged Blake. "Better come."

"I'm not coming."

"But—"

"Oh, let me alone, do!"

Jack Blake swallowed his wrath, and followed the rest of the juniors out of the common-room.

The Fourth Formers went into their dormitory, Blake the last of them.

"Where's the new kid?" asked Digby.

"He won't come up!" said Blake, with a shrug of the shoulders. "He says his mater lets him stay up late; might have guessed that from his putty complexion."

"The ass! He will get a licking."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare came into the dormitory. The juniors had turned in, but one bed was vacant. The Captain of St. Jim's glanced at it.

"Isn't the new kid here?" he asked.

"He hasn't come up yet," said Blake.

Kildare frowned.

"Go and fetch him," he said. "Tell him that if he isn't in this dorm. in one minute, I shall come to look for him."

Blake hesitated. He did not want to carry a message like that to Lorne. But there was no help for it. Kildare's word was law. Blake left the dormitory, and descended to the junior common-room.

CHAPTER 8.

A Licking for Lorne!

LORNE had seated himself in an armchair, with his feet on the fender, and he was staring moodily into the fire.

Blake came in, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Kildare sent me for you," he said.

"I'm not coming."

"He says if you don't come up at once he'll come and fetch you."

"Let him!"

Blake paused.

"Look here, Lorne," he said as calmly as he could. "Don't be an ass! Kildare is head prefect of this House, and he has authority over all the juniors. Don't you understand?"

"Let me alone!"

"He will lick you!"

"Rot!"

"Won't you come?"

"No, I won't!"

Blake left him, and returned to the dormitory. Kildare stared at the Fourth Former as he came in alone, looking flushed and uncomfortable.

"Well, where is Lorne?" he asked.

"He hasn't come."

"Did you give him my message?"

"Yes."

Kildare knitted his brows, and strode out of the Fourth Form dormitory. There was a chuckle from some of the Fourth Formers.

Kildare strode into the common-room, and found Lorne in

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the armchair before the dying fire. Lorne did not even look round.

"Lorne!" rapped out Kildare.

Something in his tone made Lorne rise to his feet. He cast a glance of dislike at the Captain of St. Jim's.

"It is bedtime," said Kildare, feeling that he was called upon to be patient with a new boy—"bedtime for all the junior Forms is half-past nine. Go up at once!"

"I don't want to go to bed yet."

"What?"

"I always stay up to what time I like at home."

"You'll find St. Jim's rather different from home, then," said Kildare grimly. "I give you one second to get outside this room!"

Lorne gritted his teeth, and did not move. Kildare waited a good second, and then strode towards him. His grasp fastened upon the back of the junior's collar.

"Come on!" he said.

Lorne struggled.

"Let me alone!" he roared.

"Will you come?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then I shall carry you!"

Lorne struggled and kicked, and Kildare gave a sudden gasp of pain as he caught the new boy's heel upon his shin. Then Lorne was swept off his feet, and bundled up in the arms of the St. Jim's Captain, and carried out the common-room as easily as if he had been an infant.

He struggled and yelled as he was borne along the passage and up the stairs. Kildare carried him into the dormitory passage, and met Langton, who was returning from putting out lights in the Shell dormitory. Langton of the Sixth stared at him.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" he asked.

Kildare panted.

"This young beggar won't go to bed."

"My hat!"

"Lend me a hand with him!"

Lorne was scratching and kicking wildly. The two seniors grasped him by the arms and legs, and carried him, between them, into the Fourth Form dormitory. He was tossed upon the vacant bed, and he lay there glaring and gasping.

"Now undress yourself!" thundered Kildare.

"I won't!"

"Take your things off!"

"I won't!"

"Then I jolly soon will!" said Kildare. "You've got to learn to obey orders here, my son! What on earth place were you brought up in, I wonder?"

"Faith, and it's a lunatic asylum he wants," said Reilly. "That's the spalpeen they're going to stick in my study!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus turned out of bed, a very elegant figure in his silk pyjamas. "Pway allow me, Kildare. The new chap doesn't know the wopes, you know; pway allow me to explain to him."

Kildare was a very good-natured fellow. He paused.

"Well, you can try," he said.

D'Arcy advanced to the savage-looking junior on the bed.

"Pway undress yourself, deah boy," he said. "Juniahs here have to obey the prefects, you know. Kildare and Langton are prefects, and they have the wight to give you ordahs, you know. It's a wule of the coll. Pway undress."

"I'm not going to bed!"

"Pway allow me to help you off with your boots," said D'Arcy persuasively. And he knelt beside the bed and took up one of Lorne's boots.

Lorne jammed the boot against his chest and knocked him over backwards.

"Ow! Bai Jove! Ow!"

Bump!

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "Gussy, old man—"

"Ow! Gweat Scott!"

"Smash him!" roared Herries.

Arthur Augustus jumped up, gasping. He had clenched his fists, and he looked as if he were going to rush at the new junior. But he remembered his promise to Cousin Ethel.

"You are an uttah wettah!" he panted. "You are a fearful cad! I wegard you with despision—I mean contempt! Pah!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went back to bed, rubbing his chest, where a bruise was already forming. It had been a hard kick. There came a snigger from Levison's bed.

"Yah! Funky!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wheeled round towards the cad of the Fourth.

"If you will have the gweat kindness to step out of bed, Levison, I will show you whethah I am funky or not!" he exclaimed.

Levison did not accept the invitation.

Lorne sat on his bed, and glowered at the two prefects. After Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's experience, nobody in the

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Fourth felt inclined to interfere on his behalf. The swell of St. Jim's was still gasping from the effect of the cowardly kick he had received.

"Will you undress and get into bed?" asked Kildare quietly.

"No!" said Lorne.

"I think you must be dotty," said Kildare, as much amazed as angered by the obstinacy of the new boy. "Do you want to make me thrash you?"

"I'm not going to bed! I hardly ever go to bed before twelve!"

"But don't you understand that you can't do here as you do at home?"

"No, I don't."

"I'll give you one more chance," said Kildare. "I'm going down to fetch my cane. If you're not in bed when I come back I shall thrash you!"

Kildare quitted the dormitory.

"Go to bed, Lorne," said Blake. "Don't be an ass! You can't back up against a prefect, you know! Go to bed, like a sensible chap!"

Lorne did not reply. His face was white with anger and bitterness; it was only too evident that all the obstinacy of a passionate and sullen nature had been aroused, and that he would yield to nothing but force.

Kildare came into the dormitory, cane in hand. His brow darkened as he saw the new junior still seated upon the bed, fully dressed.

"Now, then," he said. "Begin!"

Lorne glared, and did not speak.

"Will you undress?"

"No!" yelled Lorne.

Kildare wasted no more time in words. He grasped Lorne with his left hand, and lashed him with the cane in the right. Lorne yelled and kicked, and struggled; and Langton lent a hand to keep the junior extended on the bed. It was very seldom that Kildare really let himself go in inflicting punishment upon a junior; but on this occasion there was no resource but severity.

Lash! lash! lash!

The new boy wriggled and shrieked. Kildare desisted at last.

"Now will you go to bed?"

Lorne rolled off the bed, his face flaming. He caught up a jug from the nearest washstand, and raised it in the air.

"Stand back!" he said hoarsely.

There was a murmur of amazement from the juniors.

"Put that jug down, you idiot!" roared Blake.

Lorne did not even look at him. His eyes were fixed upon Kildare. There was no doubt that he meant to strike if the St. Jim's Captain approached him; but Kildare did not pause. He strode straight at the new junior.

Whiz!

Blake's pillow flew through the air, and smote the upraised jug, and knocked it out of the hands of Eric Lorne. There was a crash as it fell to the floor, and smashed into a hundred pieces. Lorne gave a sharp cry; and as he glared round wildly for another weapon, Kildare's grasp closed upon him. Then the cane came into play again; and this time the Captain of St. Jim's did not spare him.

The Fourth Formers looked on in grim silence. Lorne deserved all he was receiving; but it was a terrible licking. His yells died away into whimpering sobs.

"Now will you go to bed?" asked Kildare quietly.

Lorne panted.

"Hang you! Yes!"

"Quick, then!"

And Lorne, quivering with pain and rage, but no longer daring to resist, undressed himself and turned in. Without another glance, Kildare extinguished the lights and left the dormitory with Langton. There was silence in the Fourth Form dormitory—silence broken only by the gasping sobs of the new junior.

CHAPTER 9.

A Rank Outsider!

WHEN Lorne appeared in the Fourth Form class-room on the following morning many curious looks were cast at him.

His adventures in the dormitory, his defiance of the captain of the school, had become the talk of the House, and the New House fellows had heard all about it.

All sorts and conditions of fellows had come to St. Jim's at different times. But the fellows agreed that there had been nobody quite like Lorne before.

Spoiled youths were not uncommon; but they generally found their place sooner or later; and a fellow who expected the same indulgence at school as he had received from a fond and foolish mother at home was something new in the experience of the St. Jim's fellows.



Suddenly the door opened, and in the excitement of the moment the juniors did not notice it, and the sledge race went on. A horrified gasp broke from Coker minor as he caught sight of the awe-inspiring figure, and it was this that attracted the attention of the riotous Fourth Form at last. "Oh, crumbs!" gasped Fry. "Cave! The Head!" (The above incident is taken from the splendid long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "COKER MINOR, SIXTH-FORMER!" which is contained in our popular companion paper, "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.)

Lorne sat in his place in the Fourth Form with a sullen face.

When Mr. Lathom, the Fourth Form master, spoke to him he answered sullenly and as disrespectfully as he dared.

But the caning of the previous night had done him good, and he did not want to repeat that experience; and so he kept his impertinence within bounds.

Mr. Lathom, who realised that he had a somewhat peculiar youth to deal with, was very considerate with him, and so Lorne's first morning in the Form-room passed off without trouble.

Blake & Co. had resolved to avoid him for a time, in order to avoid trouble with him; but Lorne did not allow them to carry out their intention. When the Form came out after morning lessons, Lorne strode towards Jack Blake.

Blake saw him coming, and read trouble in his face, but he assumed his sweetest and most disarming smile, thinking of Cousin Ethel.

"Coming out to footer practice?" he asked, as Lorne came up.

"Yaas, that's a good ideah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I should be very glad to help," said Figgins.

Lorne scowled.

"Hang football!" he replied. "I've got something to say to you—Blake, I think your name is?"

"That's my name," said Blake. "Won't you come down to the footer?"

"No, I won't."

"Come and have a ginger-pop at the tuck-shop," suggested Blake.

"You threw a pillow at me last night," said Lorne.

"Oh, that was to keep you from getting into trouble!" said Blake cordially. "If you had biffed Kildare with that jug, you'd have been smashed."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You threw a pillow at me," said Lorne. "Take that!"

Blake knocked his hand up and stepped back, turning very red.

"Don't do that," he said quietly.

"You will fight me!" said Lorne passionately.

Blake shook his head.

"I'm not looking for a fight this morning," he said.

"You are afraid?"

Blake laughed.

"Not exactly," he replied. "But I've got reasons for not wanting a row with you. I'm not going to fight you, and there's an end of it."

"Coward!"

Blake turned crimson.

"Oh, shut up!" he said irritably. "If I were to fight you, you silly young ass, I should make mince-meat of you."

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE PREFECT'S PLOT!" A Splendid New Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I shall give you the coward's blow if you do not fight me."
 "Rats!"
 "My hat!" said Herries. "Give him one on the boko, Blake. It will do him good. Look here, he's not going to get his ears up like this. If you don't lick him I will."
 "Cheese it, Herries. Nobody's going to lick him."
 "Wathah not. He is undah our pwotection, Hewwies."
 "Buzz off while you're safe, Lorne!" advised Digby.
 "Mind your own business!"
 "You ass—"

"I'm going to fight Blake, and if he does not fight me I shall thrash him!" said Lorne arrogantly. "Blake, you are a coward!"

"Oh, pile it on!" said Blake resignedly. "If ever I undertake not to lick a howling cad again, you fellows, you can use my napper for a footer."

"Shut up, Lorne!" said Kerruish. "If you get Blake's back up, you fathead, he will mop up the floor with you! Shut up while you're safe."

"Coward!" repeated Lorne tauntingly.

"Fire away!"

Lorne's eyes blazed, and he ran at Blake, hitting out. Blake dodged round the Terrible Three, who had just come out of the Shell Form-room.

"Save my life!" gasped Blake. "That terrible chap is going to lick me! I'm so nervous! Help!"

There was a roar of laughter in the crowded passage. It was evident to everybody, with the exception of Lorne, that Blake could have knocked the weedy, seedy new boy into a cocked hat without the slightest difficulty, if he had chosen to do so.

Lorne turned red with rage.

"Let me get at him!" he panted.

"Run for your life, Blake!" howled Monty Lowther.

"Wun, deah boy! Wun like anythin'."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake dashed out of the open doorway into the quadrangle. Lorne dashed after him, as far as the steps. There he met Kildare, who looked at his angry face with grim disapproval.

"You in trouble again?" he exclaimed.

Lorne scowled, but did not reply.

"What are you rushing about like that for?" demanded the senior.

"I'm runnin'g after Blake," said Lorne sullenly.

Kildare stared at him.

"Runnin'g after Blake?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"I'm going to thrash him!"

"Eh! Blake! You're going to thrash Blake?"

"Yes!" snarled Lorne.

Kildare burst into a laugh.

"Well, run after him, if you like," he said. "I should advise you to be careful not to catch him, you young ass! Ha, ha, ha!"

Lorne ran into the quadrangle, scowling. He ran towards Blake, who was strolling under the elms. Lorne was not in good condition, and even the little run across the quad. made him pant for breath. Blake did not glance towards him, but he watched him out of the corner of his eye, and when he was almost within hitting distance, Blake suddenly darted away.

Lorne halted and panted.

"Stop!" he roared. "Come back, you rotten funk!"

"I'm afraid!" said Blake.

"Stop!"

"Oh, chase me!"

Lorne dashed after him again, and again Blake allowed himself to be nearly overtaken. But he darted off before the new junior could touch him.

He halted at a distance of a dozen yards, and looked back with a smile.

"Come on!" he said invitingly. "The exercise will do you good. You need it."

"Coward!" yelled Lorne.

"Go it!"

"Cad!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Funk!"

"Hurray!"

There was a yell of laughter from the juniors who had followed them into the quadrangle, and were watching the absurd scene. Lorne gritted his teeth with rage. He could not get close to Blake; the athletic Fourth Former could have run him off his legs without an effort. And Blake appeared quite impervious to his taunts.

Lorne cast a wild glance round him, as if in search of a weapon. He stooped suddenly and caught up a stone, and flung it with all his force at Blake's head.

There was a yell of warning from all who saw the action.

"Look out, Blake!"

Blake started, and uttered a sudden, sharp cry and fell prone to the ground.

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CHAPTER 10. A Bump for Blake.

"BLAKE!"
 "Blake's down!"
 "You awful cad!"

There was a rush towards Blake at once. The Fourth Former lay on the grass, quite still for the moment. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the first to reach him. He raised Blake's head from the grass. There was a trickle of red upon the face under the thick, dark hair.

"Blake, old man—"

Blake blinked at him dazedly.

"Hallo! Ow! My head!"

"Bai Jove, there's a bwaise comin'!" said Arthur Augustus, feeling over the damaged spot. "Gweat Scott! The awful cad! You might have been sewiously injahed!"

Blake put his hand to his head. There was a stain of red on his fingers as he drew them away.

"By Jove!" he said. "What a rotten cad—a regular wild beast! I was bowled right over!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Why, you might have been killed!" roared Herries. "Look here, Blake, if you're going to stand that kind of thing, I'm not!"

"Hold on, Herries—"

"Rats!"

Herries rushed towards Lorne. The new junior was standing under the trees, looking a little scared at what he had done. In the anxiety about Blake, no one was taking any notice of Lorne till Herries turned towards him.

"You know what you've done!" said Herries savagely.

"You're spoiling for trouble. Well, put up your hands! I'm going to lick you!"

"Hold on, Herries!"

"Rot!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Shut up!"

"I'll fight you if you like!" said Lorne savagely. "I'll fight any of you!"

Smack!

Herries's heavy hand came upon Lorne's cheek, and he staggered against a tree.

"Take that for a start," said Herries. "Now come on."

Lorne sprang at him like a tiger.

There was a rush of the juniors to form a ring round them. Lorne attacked Herries furiously, and Herries hit out at him right and left. The new junior did not succeed in planting a single blow on Herries' angry face. He was knocked to and fro like a punching-ball, and Herries did not spare him.

Whack! Crash! Biff! Biff!

Lorne went sprawling on the ground. Herries pranced round him.

"Get up!" he roared.

"Ow!"

"Get up, you cad, and take your medicine!"

Lorne staggered up. He seemed to have courage of a wildcat variety, and he came on again, clawing and kicking and scratching. There was a yell of disgust from the ring of juniors.

"Yah! Cad!"

"Hooligan!"

"Knock him out, Herries!"

"What-ho!" said Herries grimly.

Blake came towards the throng, leaning on D'Arcy's arm. Blake's face was very white, and he was dabbing at his forehead with a handkerchief, which was stained red. The junior was still dizzy and not quite himself.

"Stop it, Herries!" he said. "Let him alone! He's had enough!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Herries snorted.

"He's not had half enough. I'm going to lick him within an inch of his life. He's got to learn not to chuck stones about."

"Faith, and ye're right!" roared Reilly of the Fourth. "If Herries doesn't lick him, I will. Mind ye're own bizney, Blake!"

Bump!

Lorne went down again very heavily. He was discovering by this time that he was no match for the St. Jim's fellow. He sat up, panting and gasping, and put his hand to his nose, which was very much swollen.

"Gerrup!" roared Herries.

"Oh!" groaned Lorne. "Ow!"

"Chuck it," said Tom Merry. "Do let him alone, Herries. Remember what we promised Cousin Ethel."

"I didn't promise anything," grunted Herries.

"Well, we did for you."

"Look here, is that cad going to be allowed to chuck stones at fellows' nappers?" demanded Herries.

"Well, no! But—"

"It's all right!" said Blake. "Do let him alone, Herries."

Herries snorted.

"You're an ass, Blake!"

Blake grinned faintly.

"That's all right! Only let him alone."

"Well, he's had a pretty good wallop," said Herries, looking at Lorne's bruised face with considerable satisfaction.

"Have you had enough, you cad?"

"Oh! Ow! I'll make you sorry for this!" groaned Lorne.

Herries laughed scornfully.

"You'll like me, I suppose?" he said. "Well, you're welcome to try. I only wish you would, my boy. I want another go at you!"

Lorne staggered to his feet. He did not offer to attack Herries again. He moved away, and a groan and a hiss from the juniors followed him.

"Bettah come in and bathe your nappah, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Blake nodded.

"Yes, rather! Keep round me, you fellows. For goodness' sake don't let anybody see this. There would be a fearful row."

"The rotten cad would be expelled if this were known," growled Digby angrily. "It would be a jolly good thing, too!"

"Yaas, wathah! But——"

"But we promised Cousin Ethel we'd do our best," said Blake.

"Yes; but that doesn't include letting the brute bash stones at our cocoonuts!"

"N-no; but——"

"We'll leave him severely alone," suggested D'Arcy. "It's uttally imposs. to have anythin' to do with such an uttaly wank outsidah; but for Ethel's sake we must let him alone."

"That's right," said Blake.

Blake went into the School House, his friends keeping close round him to conceal the fact that he was hurt; and he hurried into a bath-room to bathe his injury.

There was a big black bruise upon his forehead, only partially concealed by the hair; and though he brushed the hair down over it as well as he could, it was not of much use. The bruise, which was growing bigger and blacker all the time, was very much in evidence when Blake had his cap off.

As soon as the Fourth Formers took their places in the Form-room that afternoon, little Mr. Lathorn's eyes fell upon Blake. He blinked at him through his spectacles, and came closer to inspect the bruise.

"Dear me, Blake!" Mr. Lathorn exclaimed, in a shocked voice. "What ever is the cause of that dreadful bruise upon your forehead?"

"I—I had a knock, sir," said Blake.

"Bless my soul! In what way?"

"It got knocked, sir," said Blake awkwardly. "I didn't do it on purpose, sir."

Mr. Lathorn smiled.

"No, I don't suppose you did, Blake. Dear me! It is a terrible bruise. Do you not feel a headache from the effects of it?"

"Yes, sir; my head aches a bit."

"I should imagine so. I will excuse you from lessons this afternoon, Blake; and you shall go down to Dr. Short's, in Rylcombe, and ask him to look at it."

Blake rose with alacrity. He was not sorry to miss an afternoon's lessons, to have a stroll down the lane to Rylcombe.

"Thank you, sir!"

"Go at once, Blake!"

"Yes, sir; thank you."

And Blake departed, followed by some envious glances. Lorne had sat quite still and quiet. He had fully expected Blake to inform the Form-master of what had happened; and he wondered that Blake had not done so. In Blake's place, he would have made the matter as bad as he could for his adversary.

Surprised as he was, Lorne was very much relieved as well. He knew little of public school life; but he could guess that the punishment for inflicting such an injury would be very severe.

And he was very much relieved, if not grateful.

Mr. Lathorn glanced at Lorne once or twice, noticing the damage done to his face by Herries' heavy fists; but he made no remark upon it. And Lorne, who had his complaint all ready, was not afforded the opportunity of playing the sneak.

CHAPTER 11.

Fishy!

REILLY of the Fourth tapped D'Arcy on the shoulder in the Form-room passage after lessons. Arthur Augustus gave him an inquiring look.

"I want you!" said Reilly mysteriously.

"Yaas, deah boy. What do you want?"

"I've got fresh herrings for tay," said Reilly. "They've been sent up specially. Will you come to tay, and bring the other chaps? Fatty Wynn is coming over to cook the herrings."

"Thank you vevy much, deah boy!"

"It will be ripping!" said Reilly. "First chop. Nothin' like good herrings well cooked, you know; and you know how Fatty Wynn cooks herrings."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And at teatime the chums of Study No. 6 presented themselves next door, in Reilly's study, and found preparations for tea well advanced. Fatty Wynn of the New House was there, in his shirt sleeves, with a beautiful ruddy complexion, cooking herrings galore. The smell in the study was very appetising, and decidedly thick. Reilly and Kerruish were dishing up the herrings, making the tea, and rendering themselves generally useful. The four juniors walked in cheerfully.

"Faith, and here you are!" exclaimed Reilly hospitably. "What do ye think of the herrings, darlings?"

The chums of No. 6 cast an appreciative glance at the big pile of herrings in the dish on the table. Fatty Wynn was cooking still more, and the supply seemed unending.

"Jolly good!" exclaimed Blake. "Have you discovered a gold mine, and invested the proceeds in herrings?"

Reilly chuckled.

"Sure, and it was a tip from my uncle in Belfast," he said. "Sit down, and make yereselves at home, kids."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Sure, I'm sorry that I haven't got silver forks for ye, Gussy——"

"Pway don't mention it, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, with perfect seriousness. "I'm sure it is all wight!"

And the juniors sat down to tea.

They had just started when the study door opened, and Lorne came in. Lorne sniffed at the smell of herrings smote him, and stood scowling at the cheerful tea party.

"Top of the afternoon to ye," said Reilly sweetly. "Are ye hungry? Find a chair."

Lorne sniffed again.

"Prime, isn't it?" said Kerruish, pretending to misunderstand. "Are you fond of herrings, Lorne?"

"I want to do my preparation," said Lorne.

"Aftter tea, alauns!"

"I don't want to wait."

"Sure, we haven't asked ye to be a waiter, have we?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here! I don't like all this mucking in my study," said Lorne savagely. "I don't see why you can't have tea in hall."

Reilly's eyes began to gleam.

"You can do your prep after tea," he said. "And you can either have tea, or get out of the study. Take yere choice."

"I want that table cleared!"

"Go hon!"

"And if you don't move that muck I'll jolly soon pitch it into the grate!" said Lorne.

"Eh?"

"Do you hear me?"

The juniors gazed at Lorne in astonishment. It seemed incredible to them that the weedy, supercilious fellow should really imagine that he could treat St. Jim's fellows in this high-handed way.

"Oh, he's off his rocker!" said Kerruish. "Pile in."

"Faith, and he's dotty intirely," said Reilly. "Look here, Lorne, if ye can't behave yereself, we won't have you in the study at all. You hear me?"

"I want that table!"

"Oh, get out!"

Lorne strode towards the table, and caught hold of the edge of it, and raised it about an inch from the floor. The crockery began to slide. Reilly jumped up in a fury.

"Leggo!" he roared.

"Sha'n't!"

"Will you get out?"

"No!"

"Lave go that table!" shrieked Reilly.

"Will you clear it, then, and turn out these fellows who don't belong to the study?" demanded Lorne.

"Bedad, and I won't!"

"Then here goes!"

Lorne jerked up the table, and the crockery, the dishes, the herrings, all shot to the floor together. There was a wild yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as half a dozen greasy herrings alighted upon the knees of his beautiful trousers.

"Yawooh! My twousahs! Oh!"

"Yah!"

"Great Scott!"

"Stop the cad!"

"Collar him!"

The juniors simply hurled themselves upon Lorne. The new boy went with a bump to the floor, with two or three juniors sprawling over him. He roared and struggled. Reilly sat astride of his chest, pinning him down. Everybody had hold of him somewhere. Blake & Co. had completely forgotten their benevolent intentions towards him. They were as infuriated as the owners of No. 5.

"Bump him!"

"Squash him!"

"Hould on!" gasped Reilly. "He's spoiled the feed. The

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herrings are all on the fire. He shall have them now, whether he likes them or not. Hand them over."

"Hear, hear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Reilly, regardless of the grease, took handfuls of herrings in both hands and jammed them over Lorne's face. The other fellows lent their aid.

Lorne wriggled, and gasped, and yelled, and struggled. But it was in vain. Herrings were squashed upon his features, and jammed down his neck between his shirt and his skin. He was fishy from head to foot in a few minutes, and smothered with grease. He was so fishy that they did not care to touch him.

The juniors released him, and left him rolling in herrings and grease. Lorne sat up.

"Oh, you villains!" he groaned. "Ow! Groo! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you like fish?"

"Have some more herrings?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lorne scrambled up.

"I'll go straight to the Head like this!" he yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The Head will know what you've had for tea if you do!"

"Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You'll go out of this study, anyway!" said Reilly, throwing open the door. "Get out before I kick ye out, ye—ye polecat!"

Lorne staggered through the doorway. Two or three feet lunged out to help him, and he rolled into the passage, leaving greasy marks upon the linoleum wherever he touched it.

Reilly slammed the door upon him.

"Sure, and I'm sorry the tea's mucked up, darlings," he said ruefully. "Sure, it wasn't our fault."

"Wathah not, deah boy."

"Some of the herrings are all right still," said Fatty Wynn.

"I think I'll go on."

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Faith, it's rotten," said Reilly. "I won't have that cad in this study. If the spalpeen shows his nose here again, I'll knock it off. You fellows can have him in No. 6, as you seem to be fond of him."

"No fear!" said Blake promptly. "We've done our best, and I'm done with him for one."

"And I for another," said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! I am afraid that it is quite impos- sible to stand by that uttahn wottahn any more," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, shaking his head. "Look at my twousahs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't wegard it as a laughin' mattah. My twousahs are uttahn wuined. If you will excuse me, I will go and change them."

And Arthur Augustus left the study, carrying a scent of herrings with him. Meanwhile, the new junior had marched directly to the Head's study, which he entered without the formality of knocking at the door first. Dr. Holmes glanced at him in surprise, and sniffed at the scent of the herrings.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "How came you in that state, Lorne? How dare you enter my study in that disgusting condition?"

"I've been mucked up like this by a gang of rotten hooligans," howled Lorne. "I want them all punished."

"Go and clean yourself at once!" rapped out the Head.

"I tell you—"

"That is not the way to address me, boy. Take a hundred lines for coming into my study in that state. If you have any complaint to make, come when you are cleaner. Go!"

And Lorne went.

He retired to a bathroom; but it was a very long time before he was clean; and for the rest of the evening a lingering scent of herrings hung about him, and would not depart.

CHAPTER 12.

Tom Merry Interferes!

DURING the next two or three days Eric Lorne was left very much to himself.

Study No. 6, as Blake declared, had done with him.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy passed him without speaking when they came across him. They had done their THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 241.

best to please Cousin Ethel; but, as D'Arcy said, it was impossible to have anything to do with such an utter outsider.

The other fellows in the Fourth Form followed their example. Reilly and Kerruish declined to have him in their study, and Lorne had to do his preparation in the Form-room by himself.

But probably he preferred that, as he was too sullen and moody to want to share a study with anybody else in the Form. He had dropped into a sulky, sullen manner that never left him.

He had learned not to "cheek" the prefects, and he went to bed at bedtime with the rest; but he made himself as unpleasant as he could venture to do.

The Terrible Three had little to say to him. Tom Merry was still hoping to be able to do something for him, but Lorne was very difficult to help.

Figgins & Co. were as "fed up" as Blake was; but while Kerr and Wynn were quite out of patience, Figgins did not give in.

Figgins persisted in being extremely courteous to the new fellow, in spite of the rudest replies and most irritating ways.

Figgins persisted that, as he put it, there must be some good in the beast somewhere, and he was determined to bring it to light.

"You see, he must have a spark of decency, or Cousin Ethel wouldn't have spoken up for him," Figgins said argumentatively.

That was a conclusive process of reasoning to Figgins's mind.

But Kerr and Wynn were not so easily satisfied. Fatty Wynn could not possibly forgive a fellow who had mucked up a feed.

"A fellow who would waste good herrings would do anything," said Fatty Wynn declared in the study in the New House. "He's simply an utter outsider."

"Utter!" said Kerr.

Figgins nodded.

"You're right," he said. "Only——"

"Only rats!"

"Only there must be a good spot in the beast somewhere," said Figgins.

"How do you know?"

"Cousin Ethel thinks so," said Figgins simply.

Kerr sniffed. Fatty Wynn snorted.

"Look here," said Figgins, "suppose we had him here?"

His chums stared at him.

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Kerr.

"He doesn't get on in the School House. He might do better over here," said Figgins feebly.

Fatty Wynn gave a yell.

"What! Here—in the New House?"

"Yes."

"What awful rot!"

"We might take him right under our wing, you know," argued Figgins. "We could cure him with kindness. He might turn out quite decent."

"We're jolly well not having him in this study," said Kerr.

"Well, to please Cousin Ethel, you know," urged Figgins.

"Oh, blow—ahem! Cousin Ethel doesn't understand what a rotter he is, or she'd never have spoken up for him."

"No fear!" said Fatty Wynn. "If he came into this study by the door, he'd leave it by the window, jolly soon."

"But I say——"

"Rot!"

"I put it to you——"

"Bosh!"

And Figgins gave it up.

Tom Merry was the only fellow in the School House who tried to stand by Lorne. Lowther and Manners soon declared themselves fed up. But Tom Merry emulated Figgins's noble example, and tried to give the new junior another chance.

On Monday afternoon he met him coming out of the Sixth Form passage, clasping his hands painfully together, and with thunder in his brow. It was evident that he was coming away from a prefect's study, licked. Tom Merry stopped to speak to him.

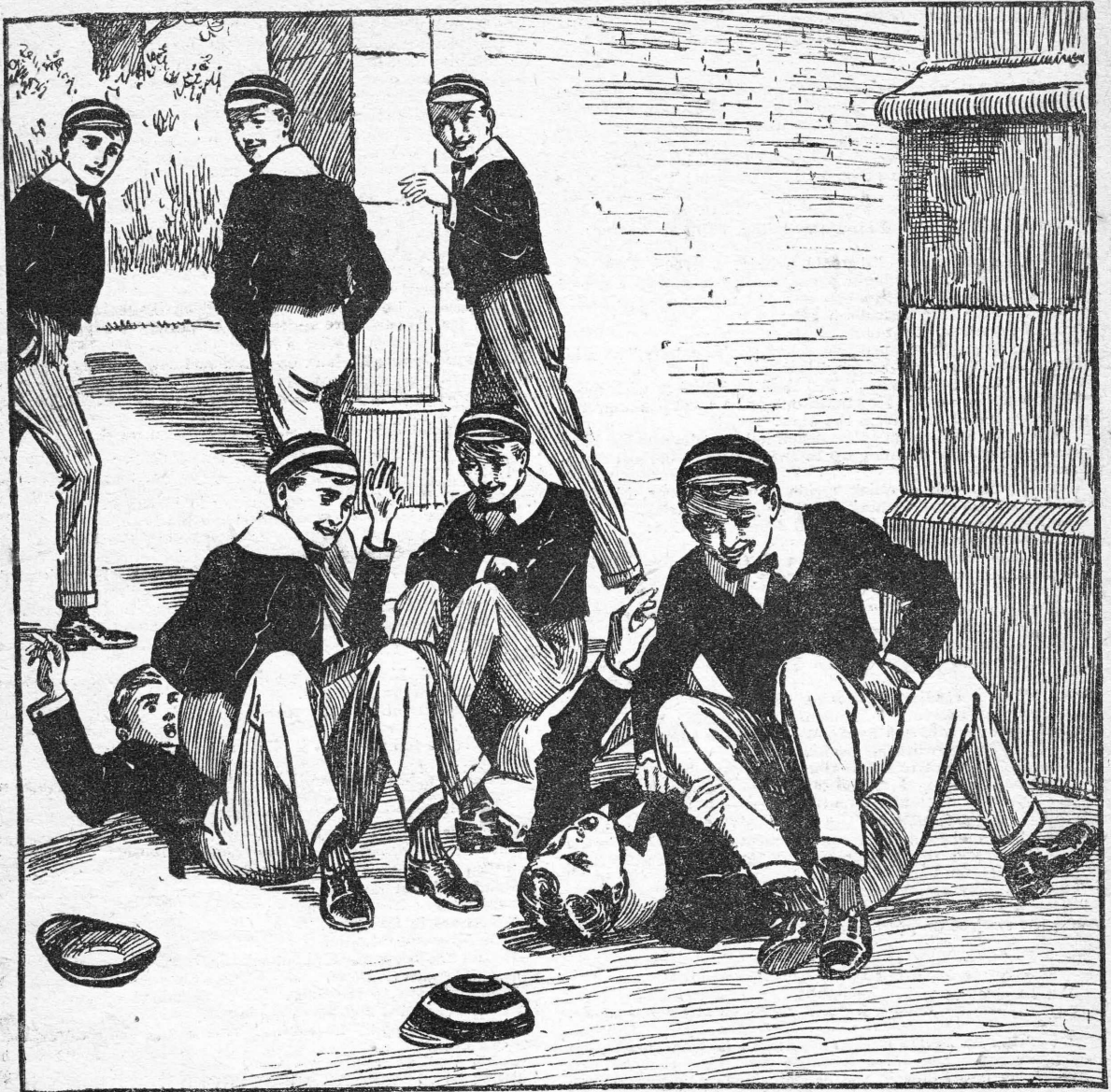
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"Sit on 'em!" said Figgins serenely. "Reddy, I depend upon you to keep these School House youngsters out of mischief while we go and meet Cousin Ethel." "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Redfern. "Anything to oblige! What-ho!" (See Chapter 2.)

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

Lorne glared at him.

"It's Kildare!" he muttered, thickly. "I'll pay him out!"

"What has he done?" asked Tom Merry, trying to look sympathetic, though he felt pretty certain that whatever the Captain of St. Jim's had done, Lorne fully deserved it.

"He has caned me."

"What for?"

"Because I hadn't done my lines."

"Is that all? They are generally doubled if they're not done," said Tom Merry.

"I told him I wouldn't do them."

Tom Merry whistled.

"Oh, I see! You couldn't expect a prefect to take that, you know."

Lorne snarled.

"He'll take something else pretty soon," he said savagely.

"I—I—say, what are you thinking of?" asked Tom Merry, alarmed by the expression upon Lorne's face. "You can't go for Kildare, you know."

"Can't I? You'll see?"

"What are you going to do?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Find out!"

And Lorne strode away.

Tom Merry remained looking very perplexed and troubled. It looked to him as if Lorne had some desperate thought in his mind; and after the incident of the stone thrown at Blake, there was no telling what the new fellow might or might not do. Tom Merry followed the new junior into the quadrangle and saw him stooping under the elms. He guessed what that meant, and he ran towards him. Lorne straightened up.

"What have you got in your hand?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Mind your own business."

"Is it a stone?"

"I sha'n't answer you."

"Look here, Lorne," said Tom Merry earnestly, "you can't do it, you know. If you were to chuck a stone at Kildare, you'd be flogged, and perhaps expelled."

"All the better; I'd be glad to go."

"What about your people?" said Tom Merry.

"Hang my people!"

"Oh!"

"They sent me here," snarled Lorne. "I didn't want to come. I'd be glad to be sent away. My pater couldn't send me again, anyway."

"You might be sent to a worse place."

"I don't believe there is any worse place. I hate this school,

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Let me alone. What does it matter to you what I do?" exclaimed Lorne passionately.

"You're not going to throw that stone," said Tom Merry.

"I shall please myself."

"I tell you—"

Lorne swung away suddenly from Tom Merry. Kildare and Darrel had just come out of the School House, and were sauntering unsuspectingly across the quadrangle. Lorne's hand tightened upon the stone.

Tom Merry sprang towards him, and grasped his wrist.

"You mad fool!" he exclaimed. "Drop it!"

"Let me go!"

"Drop it!"

"I won't!" shrieked Lorne, struggling.

Tom Merry's lips set.

"Then I'll make you!" he said, grimly.

He squeezed the new junior's wrist. Lorne uttered a cry of pain, and a heavy, jagged stone dropped from his fingers into the grass. Tom Merry kicked it away.

Then he released the young rascal.

"You'll be glad I stopped you, when you're calmer," he said.

Lorne faced him, trembling with rage.

"You cad!" he hissed. "You dare to interfere with me—to lay hands on me!" He struck out as he was speaking, and Tom Merry reeled back from the blow.

There was a shout from half a dozen fellows who saw the blow struck. They came running up to the spot from several directions.

Tom Merry took a quick stride towards Lorne, his fists clenched and his eyes flashing. But he did not strike.

"Smash him, Tommy!" shouted Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry remained still.

Lorne gave him a savage look, and turned upon his heel with a sneering smile, and strode away. Tom Merry let him go.

"What are you doing?" yelled Manners. "Are you letting that chap punch you without hammering him?"

"Yes," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Funk!" said Crooke of the Shell, with his unpleasant snigger.

Tom Merry turned upon Crooke. The cad of the Shell had spoken at an unfortunate moment for himself. Tom Merry was boiling inwardly, and he wanted to punch somebody. He strode up to Crooke with his fists clenched.

"I've promised not to lick that cad," he said, "but I haven't promised not to lick you, Crooke. Put up your hands."

"I—"

"Put them up, I tell you!"

Crooke had to obey, and the next moment he was rolling in the grass. He stayed there. Tom Merry thrust his hands deep into his pockets and stalked away.

"You're a silly ass, Tommy!" growled Lowther.

"I know I am. Shut up!" said Tom Merry.

And the subject dropped.

CHAPTER 13.

Chalky!

ERIC LORNE looked a little more cheerful—or, rather, a little less sullen—that afternoon. His triumph over Tom Merry, as he regarded it, had had a salacing effect upon him. He did not realise just then that he had alienated the last fellow in the School House who was willing to be on friendly terms with him. Tom Merry followed the way of all the others now. After what had happened in the quad, he refrained from licking Lorne as he deserved, but he could not have anything more to do with him.

Lorne had tea in hall as usual. About half the fellows were there, and not one of them spoke to Lorne. But he did not notice that particularly, for he seldom spoke to them, and he had been growing more taciturn than ever during the past few days.

After tea he went up to No. 5 Study in the Fourth Form passage. He was tired of doing his preparation in the Form-room in the evening. The evenings were growing dark and cold now, and a big, lonely Form-room was not a pleasant place to work in, in solitary state.

Lorne had thought the matter out, and decided to forgive Reilly and Kerruish, and condescend to share their study with them. He was about to make the painful discovery that it takes two sides to agree to a bargain.

Reilly and Kerruish were busy with their preparation when the new junior came into the study, with his books under his arm. They looked at him, without speaking, in a peculiar, fixed sort of way.

"I want some room on that table—" said Lorne.

No reply.

"I'm going to do my prep. here."

No reply.

"Will you make room?"

Reilly and Kerruish exchanged significant glances, but did not speak. Lorne grew impatient. He began to push Reilly's

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books to one side, and laid his own upon the table. Then the boy from Belfast jumped up.

He did not speak; but he grasped the new boy by the shoulder, swung him round, propelled him towards the door, and pushed him into the passage. Lorne staggered across to the opposite wall, and Reilly returned to the study table. The astonished Lorne looked in the next moment, his face crimson with rage.

"What do you mean?" he roared.

No answer.

"This is my study as well as yours!"

Silence.

"Why don't you speak?" shrieked Lorne. "Are you mad? What game are you playing now?"

Reilly looked very thoughtfully at the new junior. Finally he rose, took a chalk from his pocket, and chalked on the door.

"Go away!"

Lorne stared at the inscription.

It amazed him. He cast a glance almost of dread at the Irish junior, fearing seriously for the moment that Reilly had taken leave of his senses. Why a fellow who was endowed with the gift of speech should chalk upon a door instead of speaking was undoubtedly a great mystery.

"Wh—what does this mean?" stammered Lorne. "Are you dotty?"

Reilly pointed in silence to the inscription on the door.

"Why don't you speak?"

Reilly shook his head.

"Has anything happened to your tongue, idiot? Why don't you speak?" shouted Lorne, turning to Kerruish.

The Manx junior grinned and shook his head.

Jack Blake looked into the study in passing, and Lorne turned to him for explanation.

"What's the matter with these two fellows?" he exclaimed. "They don't seem to be able to speak, or they're gone dotty."

To his surprise, Blake stared him straight in the face, and then turned away as if he had not heard him and went into his own study. Jack Blake also seemed to have lost the power of speech.

Reilly and Kerruish grinned, but still in silence. Lorne turned upon them furiously.

"I suppose this is some rotten game!"

Silence.

"Will you tell me what it all means?"

Silence.

Lorne clenched his hands, but he unclenched them again. It was evidently useless to think of assailing two sturdy juniors, either of whom could have knocked him into the middle of the next week, or still further along the calendar, without the slightest difficulty.

"You utter idiots! Tell me what this means!" he hissed.

Reilly had recourse to the chalk again. He chalked across the door:

"You are in Coventry."

"Oh!" gasped Lorne.

He did not know much about schools, but he knew what being sent to Coventry meant.

Reilly pointed to the door. Lorne remained where he was, his hands clenched and his eyes blazing.

"I'm not going!" he said. "This is my study, and I'm staying here!"

Reilly chalked again:

"BUZZ OFF! YOU ARE SENTENCED BY THE HOUSE."

"Blow the House!" said Lorne savagely.

Reilly and Kerruish pointed to the door solemnly.

"I won't go!" shrieked Lorne. "And if I'm shoved out of this study, I'll go straight to the Head and complain that I'm not allowed to work in my own study!"

Reilly almost broke silence at that; but he restrained himself, and chalked:

"Sneak!"

"Sneak or not, I'm going to have my own study to work in."

Reilly looked at Kerruish, and Kerruish looked at Reilly. If Lorne laid the matter before the Head, there was no doubt that they would be ordered to admit the new boy to the study, and to allow him to work there. They could not get rid of him if he chose to invoke the authority of the Headmaster. But there was another resource.

Reilly chalked once more.

"YOU CAN STAY HERE BY YOURSELF, THEN."

Lorne laughed angrily.

"I'd like that better," he said.

Reilly nodded.

The two juniors to whom Study No. 5 belonged gathered up their books and papers, and solemnly quitted the study. Kerruish went into Bishop's study, and Reilly into Study No. 6. Lorne was left in sole possession of No. 5.

He was satisfied with his victory. He had the whole study to himself, with a comfortable armchair, chairs and a table, and a cheerful fire in the grate. He sat down in the armchair, and toasted his feet at the fire. But he was not left long in peace.

Kerruish and Reilly, having deposited their books, came back

for their other properties. At St. Jim's the fellows furnished their studies at their own expense, only the chair, table, and a square of carpet being found by the school. Lorne stared at the two juniors as they entered. He did not know anything about the ownership of the furniture, and he was far from guessing what they had returned for.

"So you've come back!" he sneered.

Reilly caught hold of the back of the armchair and signed to him to rise. Lorne sat still. Reilly waved his hand. Lorne did not move.

"You're not going to take this chair, if that's what you mean!" said Lorne defiantly. Out came the chalk again.

"That chair is my property," Reilly chalked on the looking-glass.

Reilly did not waste any more chalk on the subject. He tilted up the back of the chair, and Lorne shot out upon the hearthrug. Reilly and Kerruish carried the armchair between them out of the study, and it shrieked along the passage linoleum on two castors and a half. Lorne picked himself up in a fury, breathing vengeance.

In three minutes the juniors came in again. They solemnly carried off the fender and the coal-box under the glowing eyes of the new boy. Lorne made a furious movement towards them, and at that instant Reilly happened—or did not happen—to swing the fender round, and it caught Lorne behind the knees, and he doubled up and sat down.

They left him sitting there, and found him still sitting on the carpet, rubbing his leg, when they came in again. This time they brought Bishop and Herries with them to assist in the moving.

Each of the juniors picked up some article to carry off. One of them took the clock, and another the fireirons, another the bookcase, and another the remains of the fire, in a dustpan.

The study was beginning to present a decidedly bleak and barren appearance by this time.

Lorne's victory was rather an empty one.

"Look here," he roared, as the four juniors came in again with solemn faces, "what are you taking those things away for?"

Silence.

"They don't belong to you!"

Silence.

"Where can I get some more coal, then?"

Silence.

"It's cold here without a fire. Where do they keep the coal? Is there a porter to bring it up here?"

Still frozen silence.

Lorne had a great mind to charge at the juniors and hit out, but the thought was hopeless. He could not have tackled one of them successfully, let alone four. He had to watch them with glowering eyes, unresisting, while they despoiled the study of everything it contained, excepting the study table, one rickety chair, and a square of extremely worn carpet. Then, with the remains of the fire dead in an untidy grate, and the stars peeping in at a curtainless window, Lorne was left to enjoy his victory. He did not enjoy it.

CHAPTER 14.

By Sentence of the House.

MOST of the School House juniors were in the common-room, just before bedtime, when Eric Lorne came in. Some of them looked at him, some of them studiously looked another way. Some smiled, and some frowned. But no one spoke.

Lorne came sullenly into the room, and walked towards the fireplace. Two or three fellows, who were leaning on the big, old-fashioned mantelpiece, elaborately detached themselves from it and moved away.

Lorne bit his lips. He had, until this day, assumed in his manner that he had St. Jim's at his feet; that he could speak as rudely and unpleasantly as he liked, and never want for an answer; that there were plenty of fellows to be friendly if he chose to extend friendship to them. He was finding out his mistake now.

Cousin Ethel's request had caused Tom Merry and Co. to be very patient with him, but they had reached, and passed, the limit of their patience now. And the other fellows disliked him so much that most of them were inclined to take more active measures than sending him to Coventry.

Lorne glanced at Tom Merry, and tried to catch his eye. The captain of the Shell turned away his head.

The new junior strode towards him angrily.

"Look here, Merry," he exclaimed, "what does this mean?"

Tom Merry's lips moved, when Lowther jerked him by the arm.

"Shut up!" he murmured.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Will you answer me?" shouted Lorne.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"What is this silly game?"

Reilly of the Fourth chuckled, and drew a stump of chalk

from his waistcoat pocket. He chalked on the blackboard: "BUZZ OFF! YOU ARE IN COVENTRY. YOU ARE SENTENCED BY THE HOUSE."

There was a yell of laughter from the juniors.

Lorne gritted his teeth. Hostile faces were on all sides of him; not from a single direction did he receive a friendly look.

"That means that you won't speak to me?" he demanded.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Well, I don't want you. You've been trying to be friendly, and I wouldn't be," said Lorne. "I suppose this is because I wouldn't have anything to do with you."

There was a laugh. Reilly chalked again:

"RATS!"

Lorne turned towards him, clenching his fists. But he restrained himself, and strode out of the common-room, stamping as he went with ill-treasure.

A yell of mocking laughter followed him into the passage.

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"It's the only way," he said. "I'm sorry for him. The poor beast has been rottenly brought up, and spoiled, till he doesn't know what to do with himself. But he can't expect us to stand his airs and graces."

"Wathah not?"

"I think we've done our best for Cousin Ethel's sake," said Tom Merry.

"Everything we could do," said Blake. "That chap's the limit. We simply can't stand him, and it's no good trying to."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The juniors did not see Lorne again till bedtime. When the School House portion of the Fourth Form went up to bed, they found the new junior already in the dormitory. He seemed to have been spending some time in pacing about the dormitory to keep himself warm. He bestowed a glare upon the juniors as they trooped in, and sat down on his bed to take his boots off. After the trouble with Kildare of his first night at St. Jim's, Lorne had made no difficulties about going to bed at bedtime.

The juniors talked and chatted after lights out, and called good-night to one another. Nobody spoke to Lorne, and nobody said good-night to him.

The new boy lay in troubled wakefulness long after the other fellows had fallen asleep.

It began to dawn upon his obstinate mind that he had made a fool of himself.

So long as fellows were trying to keep on good terms with him, he had held his nose high in the air, and compelled them to eat humble pie, or to leave him alone.

It had never occurred to him that the time must speedily come when their patience would be exhausted, and they would decide to leave him severely alone.

The time had come, and the prospect before him was dreary.

But Lorne's passionate and obstinate spirit was far from conquered yet.

He did not mean to admit himself in the wrong, or to ask pardon for wrong-doing. Besides, it was easier to achieve unpopularity than to undo it afterwards. He had made a bad beginning, and it was doubtful whether he would be able to set himself right with the fellows again.

He fell asleep at last, and slept uneasily till rising-bell.

When the Fourth Form turned out in the morning, the sentence of the House was rigidly enforced. No one spoke to Lorne; few even glanced at him. He might not have existed at all, for all the difference his existence made to the School House fellows.

Lorne went down to breakfast with a sullen brow.

At the breakfast table it was the same, and as there appeared to be plenty of room at the table, the seats on either side of Lorne were left empty.

At morning lessons, when the New House joined the School House in the Form-rooms, Lorne was left sitting alone at the end of the Form, fellows crowding up to give him plenty of room.

The New House juniors were evidently backing up the School House fellows in the matter. Lorne had made himself more obnoxious in his own House, of course; but the New House juniors had seen enough of him to dislike him, and the whole school knew of the stone-throwing incident. Blake's big bump was still very much in evidence. During the last few days it had turned almost all the colours of the rainbow; and now it was diminishing in size, and seemed to have settled upon a pale purple for its final hue.

The only fellow who gave Lorne a compassionate look was Figgins.

Figgins was thinking of Cousin Ethel, and how disappointed she would be if she learned that Lorne had fallen into such bad odour at St. Jim's after her efforts on his behalf.

Figgins had a very tender heart, and Cousin Ethel usually occupied a great deal of his thoughts.

The other fellows felt that they had done all, and more than could be reasonably expected, for the new boy, and now they had washed their hands of him.

Not so Figgins.

But Figgins kept his thoughts to himself for the present.

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His hint to Kerr and Wynn that they should take up the new fellow had been received so very unfavourably that Figgins hesitated to broach the subject again.

During the remainder of that day Lorne was made to feel fully the results of his own folly.

He was too proud and obstinate to make any overtures of peace, and the sentence of the House was growing into a settled thing now, and fellows were falling into the habit of deliberately ignoring him.

In the Form-room, at the dinner-table, in the common-room in the evening, it was the same grim silence.

Once or twice Lorne spoke to Tom Merry or Blake or D'Arcy; but they did not answer him, and he was left biting his lips with anger.

The following day was Wednesday, a half-holiday at St. Jim's. In the afternoon, the juniors of both Houses went down to footer practice, but Lorne was not asked to join in it. He had said that he had hated football, and that was one item in the long account against him.

He strolled moodily into the quad, wondering what he could do with himself, and feeling bitterly the loss of the companionship he had so rudely rejected when it was offered.

He went into the school tuck-shop out of sheer boredom, and while he was there Figgins came in. Figgins had made up his mind.

He gave Lorne a nod.

"Have a ginger-pop?" he asked.

Lorne started.

"Eh, what!" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Have a ginger-pop?" said Figgins hospitably.

Lorne stared at him.

"So you've stopped that fool-Coventry business?" he said.

"I have," said Figgins.

"And you want to make it up to me, do you?"

Figgins coloured. He realised that the new boy would be extremely difficult to get on with. But he stuck to his guns.

"Not exactly that," he said mildly. "But—but I—I thought you might be feeling a bit lonely, you know."

"I'm not lonely."

"Oh!"

"They can send me to Coventry if they like. I don't care twopence. There's nobody in this rotten school that I'd care to speak two words to."

"Oh!" repeated Figgins.

"I hate the place," said Lorne. "I hate everybody in it. I've written to my pater to take me away, but he won't. It's sickening!"

"Why not try to make the best of it?" urged Figgins gently.

"If you play the game, you know, the fellows will come round in time. If you don't get on in the School House, you might ask the Head to transfer you to the New House. You could say you have a friend there."

"What friend?"

"I'm willing to be your friend," said Figgins.

"What are you driving at?" demanded Lorne. "Are you hard up?"

Figgins turned crimson.

"No," he said. "Do you think I want your rotten money?"

"What else do you want, then? What are you laying this scheme to get me into the New House for?" demanded Lorne suspiciously.

Figgins looked at him fixedly.

"I think you'd better stay in Coventry!" he said. "I'm not surprised that your own House can't stand you. What I'm surprised at is that they haven't suffocated you!"

And Figgins walked away, boiling with indignation.

CHAPTER 15

Figgins Makes the Plunge.

"HOW long are you going to be reading that letter, Figgy?" Figgys started, and looked up, and coloured.

It was several days since his interview with Lorne in the tuck-shop, and since then he had not spoken to the new boy; neither had anyone else, for that matter. Just now Kerr and Wynn were waiting for Figgins to come down to footer practice after last lesson, and they had already waited ten minutes. As Figgins had just had a letter, and had read it six or seven times, and seemed inclined to go on reading and re-reading it for ever and ever, Kerr felt that it was time to speak.

"I should think you knew it by heart by this time, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn.

"It's from Cousin Ethel," Figgins explained.

Kerr grinned.

"I could guess that," he replied. "Is she coming to St. Jim's?"

"No."

"Any news?"

"No."

"Then six readings are enough," said Kerr. "Come down to footer."

"Ahem!"

"Oh, come on!" said Fatty Wynn. "We've got to do some practice before tea, you know, and I'm getting hungry already."

"Lorne has written to Ethel," said Figgins.

"Has he? The cad!"

"She's disappointed."

"Yes; I suppose so. I suppose he's given her a long list of complaints, and tried to make trouble between her and us," said Kerr savagely.

Figgins nodded.

"She doesn't say so, but I fancy it's something like that," he said ruefully.

"She doesn't ask us to take the cad up again, and coddle him, I suppose?" growled Kerr.

"Oh, no! She says she's sure that we did our best, and she's much obliged to us for having done it, and she's sorry it wasn't any good."

Kerr's face cleared.

"Oh, that's all right!" he said. "That's just like Cousin Ethel. She wouldn't let that cad put her back up against us. She takes it very decently."

"Very decently," said Fatty Wynn.

"Yes, only it makes me feel that—that we might have done a little more," said Figgins hesitatingly. "As I said before, the fellow must have some good in him—"

"Better get a microscope and look for it, then."

"And we ought to find it out, if we can, and—and give him a chance."

"We've done that. You can write back to Cousin Ethel that he's an unspeakable toad, and nobody can stand him. Come down to the footer."

Figgins thrust the letter into his pocket, and sighed, and followed his chums down to the junior football ground. But he was very thoughtful during his practice, and he failed several times in easy shots, which showed how absent-minded he was.

After the practice, while Fatty Wynn and Kerr went into the tuck-shop to get the supplies for tea, Figgins strolled away by himself. He made his way into the School House, and looked into No. 5 Study.

He found a junior sitting there moodily alone.

Figgins tapped at the door and entered, and Lorne did not look up.

"I—I say—" began Figgins.

Lorne raised his eyes then, and stared at him unconpromisingly.

"Feeling a bit down?" asked Figgins.

"No!" growled Lorne.

Figgins coughed.

"Look here, you are getting on pretty badly in this House," he said. "Why don't you ask the Head to change you over?"

Lorne was silent.

"You could come into my study," said Figgins.

"What for? What do you want me for?"

"I don't want you," said Figgins frankly, "but—but I don't like to see you like this. You'll never get out of Coventry if you don't make a change, and you must have found it pretty rotten by this time."

Lorne's lip quivered.

"I've been miserable ever since I came here," he said. "Nobody likes me here. I don't know that I've done anything so very much amiss."

Figgins suppressed a smile. If Lorne did not realise that he had done anything very much amiss, Figgys felt that he must be very obtuse indeed.

"Well, come into the New House, and make a fresh start," he said. "Everybody in this House knows that you're in trouble, and the Head will be willing to change you over. Ask him."

"But—but what do you want to do this for me for?"

"To help you on a bit."

"Why do you want to help me?"

"Because—because—well, I think perhaps you're not wholly a rotter—ahem!—I mean, I can't help thinking there's some good in you, and I want you to have a chance."

Lorne's eyes gleamed for a moment. He was upon the point of bursting out in his old fashion; but adversity had tamed him by this time. The sentence of Coventry in the School House was enforced as rigidly as ever, and it was weighing terribly upon the new junior's spirits. He had learned his lesson to some extent, and he would have done a great deal to escape from the position he had placed himself in. More than once he had regretted having rejected Figgins's kindly advance in the tuck-shop. He had sense enough not to make the same mistake twice.

For once he held his unruly temper and awkward pride in check, and did not throw away the last chance that was offered him.

"I dare say I've been a bit uppish," he said. "Things were very different here from what they were at home. I've always had my own way, and I used to order my tutor about just as I pleased."

"Well, that wasn't any good for you," said Figgins. "It's not right for a boy to be able to order a man about, and the poor beast must have felt pretty rotten over it."

"I changed my tutor pretty often," said Lorne.

"I have no doubt you did."

"Look here, if you fellows will treat me decently, I'll come into the New House," said Lorne; and his tone implied that he felt that he was doing Figgins a great favour. The old Adam was not dead in Eric Lorne yet.

Figgins swallowed something down, and nodded.

"Righto!" he said. "The Head's in his study now, and you can go and ask him. Tell him that I've asked you to come into my study, if you can change Houses."

"All right."

And Lorne, looking more cheerful, made his way to the Head's study. Figgins remained in Lorne's room, drumming upon the table with his fingers. The door was opened, and the chums of No. 6 passed it as they came up to tea.

"Bai Jove!" said Augustus D'Arcy. "What are you doin' here, Figgy, old man?"

Figgins flushed.

"I'm waiting for Lorne," he said.

"Not speaking to him, are you?" demanded Jack Blake warmly.

"Well, yes."

"Look here—— Hullo, here he is!"

Lorne came into the study. He had not been long with the Head.

"It's all right," he announced.

"You're coming over?" asked Figgins.

"Yes."

"Good!"

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Herries.

"Lorne is changing into the New House," Figgins explained.

"Hurray!"

"Bai Jove! You're welcome to the wottah, Figgay."

"You'll soon get fed up with him," said Digby.

"What do Kerr and Wynn say?" Blake asked.

"I—I haven't spoken to them yet," said Figgins. "It will be all right. Come on, Lorne! I'll help you carry your things."

"Bai Jove! I weally think you must be off your wockah, Figgy."

"Right off it," said Blake. "Anyway, you're welcome to Lorne. You'll be sick of him pretty soon, but you'll have to keep him on your side. If you try to send him back we'll get up a deputation to the Head, and protest against it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the chums of No. 6 stalked away. Lorne looked uneasily at Figgins.

"Look here," he said, "is this going to get you into a lot of trouble—sticking to me in this way?"

Figgins was surprised by the question. Lorne had never displayed any concern before as to whether anybody might get into trouble or not. It occurred to Figgins that this was a little glimpse of the atom of good which he had persistently declared must exist in Eric Lorne somewhere.

"Oh, that's all right," said Figgins, with a confidence he was far from feeling, as he thought of Kerr and Wynn. "We shall get on somehow. Buck up, we want to be in time for tea over there."

And he helped Lorne to carry off his personal possessions, and they crossed the quadrangle to the New House.

From the window of Study No. 6 Blake & Co. watched them go. Blake whistled expressively.

"Figgy is looking for trouble," he said. "Kerr and Wynn will be as mad as hatters if he takes that toad into his study."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"They'll fire him out," said Herries. "But everybody on this side ought to back up, and see that he doesn't get back into the School House."

"Hear, hear!"

In the quadrangle, Figgins and Lorne encountered the Terrible Three. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther simply stared at the sight of the ill-assorted two.

"Hullo! Found a new friend, Figgy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Lorne's changed into the New House," Figgins explained.

"Bravo!" said Manners.

"And you're taking him up?" demanded Lowther.

"Yes."

"You'll be sent to Coventry yourself, then."

"Oh, hosh!"

"You're a silly ass, Figgy," said Tom Merry warmly. "You can't say that we haven't given him every chance here. He's simply outside."

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins.

And he marched Lorne into the New House, and into his study.

CHAPTER 16.

Quite Right.

"HERE you are!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, as he marched into the study and deposited a goodly parcel on the table. "Got the eggs all right, Kerr?"

"Right as rain," said Kerr.

Then the two juniors paused.

They had just caught sight of Lorne in the study.

They fixed upon him glances that were far from agreeable. Lorne had sat down in the armchair, and put his feet on the fender.

"What's that fellow doing here?" asked Kerr.

Figgins coughed uncomfortably.

"He's changed into the New House," he explained.

"Oh, has he?" said Kerr. "I suppose they haven't had the frightful cheek to stick him into this study, have they?"

"I—I asked for him to be put here."

Kerr and Wynn gave a simultaneous jump, as if they had touched the same electric wire at the same moment.

"You—you asked!" gasped Kerr.

"You asked for him?" yelled Fatty Wynn.

"Yes."

"Doesn't that seem to you a bit like cheek, Figgy?" asked Kerr grimly. "This is our study as well as yours, you know."

Figgins turned red.

"I wish you wouldn't put it like that, Kerr. I thought my own chums would stand by me when I'm trying to do the decent thing," said Figgins.

"Decent thing be blowed! We don't want that rank outsider here."

"And we won't have him!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"He's fixed in the House now," urged Figgins. "He'll have to be in some study. It wouldn't be fair to plant him on other fellows when I brought him over."

"Then you can have him all to yourself," howled Kerr. "I won't share a study with that rotter. I'll ask Pratt to let me dig with him."

"Same here," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll pig in with Dibbs."

"Look here," said Figgins, his temper beginning to rise, "who's chief of this Co.? Who's head of this study—eh?"

"You can be head of the study, and have it all to yourself," said Kerr, with deadly earnestness. "You've no right to spring a thing like this on us, and you know it. As for the Co., the Co.'s busted. I'm off."

And Kerr stalked out of the study.

"Look here, Wynn!" said Figgins pathetically.

"I'm off, too," said Fatty.

"You're not going to back up against an old chum, Fatty."

"You've backed up against me, in taking up that rotter," said Fatty Wynn. "When you fire him out we'll come back. Not before."

"Then you won't come at all!" shouted Figgins. "Go and eat coke."

"Rats! Rot! You're a silly ass, Figgy, and you know you are!" yelled Fatty Wynn. "You've no right to do what you've done. It's rotten! Yah!"

"If you want a thick ear, Fatty Wynn——"

"Yah!"

"Oh, get out of this study," said Figgins. "Clear off, and be hanged!"

"I'll clear off jolly soon, if you prefer that beastly outsider to me," said Fatty Wynn, almost stuttering with wrath. "I hope you'll be satisfied with him. Perhaps he'll bash a stone at your napper some day, same as he did at Blake's, the cowardly cad. Yes, I'll clear off fast enough, Figgins."

And Fatty Wynn stamped out of the study in such a state of agitation that he actually forgot the supplies he had just laid upon the table.

Figgins remained very red and angry.

A NEW COMPANION PAPER TO "THE GEM" LIBRARY IS COMING!

SEE YOUR EDITOR'S MOMENTOUS ANNOUNCEMENT ON PAGE 28.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 241.
 NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE PREFECT'S PLOT!" A Splendid New Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"I—I say!" Lorne rose to his feet. "This is pretty rotten for you, Figgins. I didn't know I was going to make all this trouble."

"It's all right," said Figgins heavily.

"I'll get out if you like."

"You can't. You can't ask the Head to change you back to the School House same day you've asked him to change you over here," said Figgins. "He would think you were pulling his leg."

"I could get into some other study, though."

Figgins shook his head.

"They wouldn't have you," he said.

"But if your pals don't come back?" said Lorne.

"I dare say they'll come round in time. If they don't, they needn't," said Figgins bravely. "I believe I'm doing what's right, though I'm not surprised at their getting their backs up. You see, what you did to Blake has made the fellows wild; they can't get over it, and you can't expect them to."

"I—I know it was rotten," faltered Lorne, "I—I acted without thinking, then. Only—only a chap can't say he's sorry."

"I don't see why he can't, if he is sorry," said Figgins curtly.

"Well, there's a chap's pride to be considered."

Figgins's lip curled.

"I don't see any pride in being an obstinate ass," he said.

"Hold on! Look here, Figgins, if you're going to begin

"Oh, never mind," said Figgins. "You don't understand. I dare say you will in time. Let's have tea. Can you make toast?"

"I've never tried," said Lorne. "Couldn't you tip one of the servants to make the toast?"

"Well, I could, if I were a purse-proud, uppish swanker," said Figgins. "But I'm not, so I'll make it myself."

"I don't see any sense in doing servants' work, if you've got the money to make somebody else do it," said Lorne sullenly.

"Well, you've got a lot to learn yet, then."

Figgins cut the bread and stirred the fire. Lorne watched him with a moody brow as he impaled the bread upon a toasting-fork.

"Give it to me," said Lorne.

"Oh, I'll do it."

"Rot! Give it to me," said Lorne, taking the toasting-fork from Figgins. "I—I didn't mean to be swanking, Figgins, I didn't really. I suppose it's just my way."

Figgins nodded.

"The mater always let me do as I liked," said Lorne unasily. "Pater has only just come back from India. Perhaps it would have been better for me if—if he'd been at home. I wonder!"

"I don't!" said Figgins. "But wasn't there an uncle, or an elderly cousin, or somebody, to give you a licking when you wanted one?"

Lorne coloured.

"I wouldn't have taken a licking from anybody," he said; "my mother wouldn't have allowed it, either."

Figgins snorted.

"You've had some since you've been here," he remarked.

"Nice chap you are to order a tutor about, and to make servants do every little thing for you. What right have you to give orders if you can't obey 'em?"

"Oh!" said Lorne, "I—I never looked at it in that light before."

"Time you did, then," growled Figgins.

"I suppose it is," said Lorne quietly.

Figgins glanced at him curiously.

"Excuse me," he said, "I'm a bit rusty. Fatty Wynn and Kerr going off like that worries me. Don't mind what I said."

"Oh, you can pile it on," said Lorne. "I'm beginning to see that I've played the giddy goat; but I never meant to be such an ass. It was a big change coming here, after the way I used to live at home. It's taken some time to get used to it. The worse of it is, that my pater won't take me away; he actually wrote to me that all the hard knocks I get here will do me good, and that if the fellows have sent me to Coventry, he hasn't the slightest doubt that I deserved it."

Figgins grinned.

"Your pater seems to know a thing or two!" he remarked.

"Ye—es," said Lorne, very slowly, "I suppose he does."

And he was silent.

He made the toast very carefully, and tended the fire, and washed up teacups. He seemed bent upon making himself useful. They sat down to tea. Figgins missed Kerr and Wynn very much, and he could not quite get the cloud from his face, although he wanted to be genial to Lorne. They ate almost in silence, each of them busy with his thoughts. They had nearly finished tea, when Redfern of the Fourth looked into the study. He bestowed a sniff upon Lorne, but no other sign of recognition.

"I hear from Kerr and Wynn that they're changing out of this study," he said. "Have you really taken up with that chap, Figgins?"

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"Yes, I have," said Figgins shortly.

"Sticking to him?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you haven't forgotten that he's in Coventry!" demanded Redfern wrathfully.

"No, I haven't forgotten."

"The fellows are very ratty about it. If you stick to him, you'll get sent to Coventry too," said Redfern gravely.

"Let 'em send me, then."

"I think you're off your rocker, Figgy."

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here!"

"Go and eat coke."

Redfern retired, and slammed the door after him. Lorne slowly finished his tea, and then rose to his feet. He collected up his books.

"What are you going to do?" asked Figgins, looking at him.

"I'm going to get out!" said Lorne quietly.

"Where?"

"Oh, anywhere. Do you think I'm such a cad as to let you be sent to Coventry for me, and to part you from your own chums?" asked Lorne. "I'm afraid I've been a bit of a rotter in some respects, but I'm not quite such a rotter as that. You've been jolly good to me; but I'm not cad enough to let you suffer for it. I'm grateful to you, and—good-bye."

Figgins started to his feet.

"Look here, Lorne, I'm standing by you," he said. "You haven't a friend in the school, and you'd better stick to me."

"It's my own fault, and I shall have to stand it," said Lorne. "I suppose I can't go back into the School House. But I have my locker in the Form-room; and I can do my prep, there, and I sha'n't come into this study, Figgins. I mean it. Don't think I've got my back up. I haven't! But I couldn't be such a cad. And you'd better not speak to me again; you'll only get into trouble with the other chaps. I wish I'd had sense enough to make a better start here. But it can't be helped, and I shall have to stand it the best I can, without dragging anybody else into it."

"But—I say!" stammered Figgins.

"It's settled. Good-bye."

And Lorne left the study.

Figgins remained alone, with a look of wonder on his face—wonder that was mingled with satisfaction. His persistent belief that there was good in the new junior somewhere had been justified at last. The good had certainly been a long time in coming to light; but it had come to light at last. Cousin Ethel had been right! It only required sufficient patience to bring out the better side of Eric Lorne's character, and Figgins had succeeded in bringing it out. Figgins felt very much inclined to pat himself on the back.

Figgins remained alone a long time. The door of the study opened presently, and Kerr and Wynn came in.

"Well?" said Figgins.

"We haven't come to stay," said Kerr. "We want our books, that's all. We're going to do our work in Reddy's study."

"You can stay!" said Figgins. "Lorne is gone."

"Gone for good?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Yes."

"Oh, good! You decided to turn him out, then?"

"No."

"Then why has he gone?" asked Kerr, puzzled.

"He's turned himself out. He's going to do without a study, and work in the Form-room, and he's told me to leave him alone."

"Why?"

"Because he won't drag me into his troubles."

"Oh!" said Kerr.

There was silence for some moments.

"I suppose you're not pulling our leg," said Kerr, at last. "No. Didn't I tell you Cousin Ethel was right—that there was some good in the chap?" demanded Figgins. "He's chucked up his only friend, because he won't get me sent to Coventry on his account. And it's jolly decent of him."

"In that case, he—he can't be such an utter rotter after all," said Kerr slowly.

"I told you Cousin Ethel said——"

"Oh, blow!" said Kerr peevishly. "Cousin Ethel isn't a giddy oracle, you know."

"She is!" said Figgins, with conviction. "I knew she was right. She always is. And I think you chaps have treated Lorne badly. He's decent enough if he has a chance, and he can see that he's made a muck of things. He would be all right now if the fellows would give him a look-in."

Kerr looked uneasy.

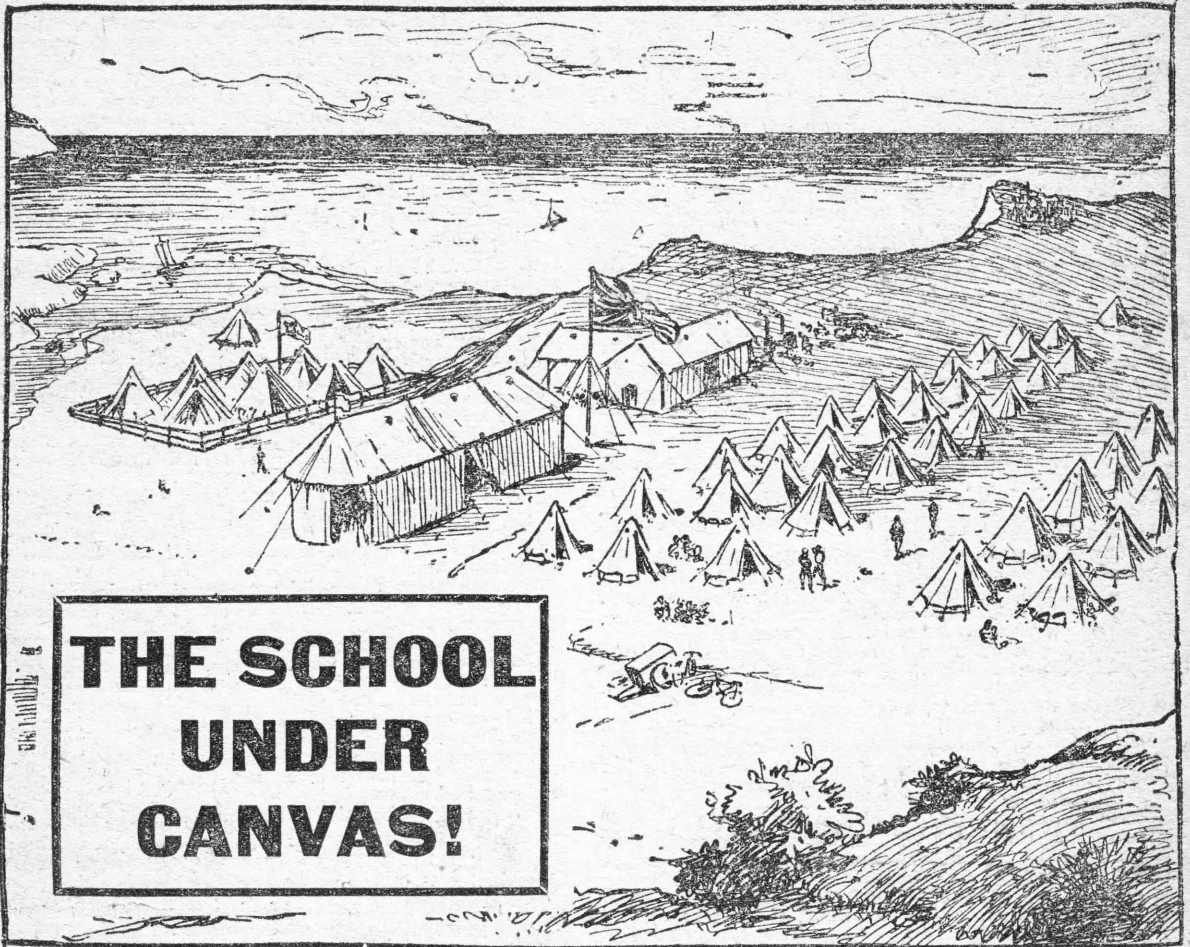
"Well, I don't want to be the one to be hard on him," he said uncomfortably. "We don't want him in this study. But if you think he might be decent, we might speak to the fellows, and get them to let him have a fresh start."

"Just what I was thinking," said Fatty Wynn.

"Done!" said Figgins. "You won't be sorry for it. Come on!"

(Concluded on page 27.)

THE MOST EXCITING SCHOOL SERIAL EVER WRITTEN!



THE SCHOOL UNDER CANVAS!

**A Rousing, New and Original School Story of Gordon Gay, Frank Monk and Co.
By PROSPER HOWARD.**

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 Rylcombe 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. Just at this time the ranks of the Fourth Form are reinforced by Gustave Blanc—immediately christened Mont Blong—a new boy from 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. During the first few days Gordon Gay discovers that there is more in Mont Blong than at first meets the eye, and that the French junior can speak English

fluently. Gordon Gay and Frank Monk & Co. one day see Herr Hentzel in secret conversation with two German military officers in a cave on the seashore. They are surprised to hear from Mont Blong that the three are spies, and that the French junior himself is a Secret Service agent. Before long Herr Hentzel misses some important papers, and suspects Gordon Gay of taking them. To get them back, the German even goes to the length of having the Cornstalk Co. kidnapped by his confederates, but the juniors make their escape by a combination of luck and pluck. One evening Herr Hentzel sends Mont Blong to the village photographer's shop, which is kept by a fellow-countryman named Franz Pfalz, to get some negatives. The French junior goes willingly enough, scenting fresh revelations; but, having escorted him out of the camp, Herr Hentzel rubs his hands together in villainous satisfaction. "There is a surprise in store for that young spy!" he mutters.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Disappearance of Mont Blong.

Herr Hentzel sat down at his camp-table to write a letter. A few minutes later Gordon Gay of the Fourth looked into the tent.

"Vat is it tat you vant, Gay?" asked Herr Hentzel sharply.

"Can Blanc come now, sir?" asked Gay.

"Blanc? He is not here."

Gordon Gay looked surprised.

"I thought he was with you, sir. He was coming back to tea."

"He have ask me for permission to go to te village, to

buy someting for tea," said Herr Hentzel. "I giff him leave."

"Thank you, sir."

Gordon Gay departed.

"Where's Mont Blong?" asked Wootton major, as Gay came into the Fourth-Form tent.

"Gone to the tuck-shop in Netherby."

"Oh, good! We shall have something for tea, after all. Carker has made a muck of most of the stuff we had."

"Good; we'll wait for Mont Blong."

Gordon Gay & Co waited for Mont Blong, but the French junior did not come. They had their tea at last without

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 241.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: **"THE PREFECT'S PLOT!"** A Splendid New Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

him. The sun had gone down over the low hills inland, and darkness was falling upon the sea.

"The blessed ass is a long time," said Gordon Gay. "He won't be back for calling-over. There goes the bugle."

"Blessed if I know what's keeping him!" said Jack Wootton. "He could have bought up the whole shop and brought the stuff here by this time."

"Yes, rather!"

The chums of the Fourth went to take their places for calling-over. Delamere of the Sixth was taking call-over, and he did not call out Blanc's name. The omission surprised the chums of the Fourth.

But later in the evening, when bedtime for the juniors came, Delamere of the Sixth looked into Gordon Gay's tent.

"Has Blanc come back?" he asked.

"I haven't seen him," said Gay.

"Herr Hentzel gave him leave to stay out till eight," said Delamere. "He ought to have been back before this, though."

"He went to the tuck-shop in the village," said Gay.

"Yes; he ought to be back. You kids get off to bed."

"Right-ho!"

The captain of the Grammar School walked away. Gordon Gay and his comrades exchanged an anxious look.

"It's jolly queer that Mont Blong hasn't come back," said Wootton major.

"Jolly queer!" said Gordon Gay, wrinkling his brows.

"I—I suppose nothing can have happened?" said Wootton hesitatingly.

"Hardly. He's safe enough in the village."

"Only it was Hentzel said he'd gone there. Perhaps——" Gordon Gay shook his head.

"Hentzel wasn't suspicious of Mont Blong," he said. "It was us he suspected of taking his papers. Besides, he hasn't been out of the camp himself. He's been in all the time. He can't have followed Mont Blong."

"No; I suppose he's all right. It's queer, though."

Gordon Gay & Co. went to bed at the same time as the rest of the Fourth. But the Cornstalks did not sleep.

It was very strange that the French junior had not returned, and they could not help feeling uneasy.

Was it possible that Herr Hentzel had discovered or suspected that it was the apparently inoffensive French junior who had taken his papers, and was this a new trick of the gang of spies who infested the neighbourhood of the camp? After the kidnapping of the Cornstalk Co. on the German steamer Gordon Gay was prepared for anything.

The camp became more silent as the night advanced. Gordon Gay, unable to endure the anxiety, rose from his bed at last and dressed himself. Jack Wootton sat up.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Only to ask if anything's been heard of Mont Blong."

"Good!"

Gordon Gay left the tent.

The school under canvas was dark and silent. Only in some of the masters' tents there was still a light burning. Gordon Gay caught the sound of voices, and drew back into the shadow of a tent as he caught sight of Delamere in conversation with the Head.

"Well, Delamere?" Dr. Monk asked.

"I've been to the tuck-shop in Netherby, sir," said the Grammar School captain. "Blanc did not go there, as he was supposed to do. They have seen nothing of him. I inquired in two or three places in Netherby, but nobody seems to have seen him."

"Then the boy could not have gone to the village," said the Head.

"I think not, sir."

"It is very curious. He stated to Herr Hentzel that he wished to go there to purchase provisions at the shop."

"He must have altered his mind, sir, or else he was taking Herr Hentzel in. I hope he wasn't duffer enough to go wandering round the headland."

"He might have been caught by the tide in that case!" exclaimed the Head anxiously.

"That's what I was thinking of, sir."

"He had better be searched for, Delamere. If he has met with an accident, he must be found. If this is a foolish prank, he shall be severely punished for giving us this trouble and anxiety."

Gordon Gay stole back to his tent, his face very pale.

"Any news?" asked the two Woottons together, peering at Gordon Gay in the darkness, as he came into the tent.

"Yes," muttered Gay. "Delamere's been to Netherby for him. He hasn't been to the tuck-shop, and nobody's seen him in Netherby."

"My hat!"

"It's some new trick of Hentzel's," said Gordon Gay tensely. "Get up, you fellows. We're going to look for Mont Blong!"

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In the Hands of the Enemy.

Mont Blong arrived in the village of Netherby, and made his way at once to the little shop of the German photographer. Herr Franz Pfalz did a photographing business in the village, and sold views of the coast to tourists—a very clever cover for his real occupation in the Secret Service of Berlin. The German was in his shop when Gustave Blanc entered with the letter from Herr Hentzel.

Pfalz looked at the French junior with keen eyes in which there was a peculiar glitter.

"Vat it is, young gentleman?" he asked. "You vant to buy a camera?"

"Thank you, no."

"You have te films tat you vish me to develop, ain't it, den?"

Mont Blong smiled.

"No, sir. I have brought you a letter from Herr Hentzel, and I am to wait for some negatives you have for him."

"Oh, is tat it? Please step into te parlour and wait a few minutes," said the German photographer. "I will see if te films are finished."

Mont Blong nodded, and entered the parlour behind the shop. The room was used as a showroom by the photographer, and there were photographs and enlargements on all the walls. Herr Pfalz had apparently been just about to close his shop. He turned out the light in the shop as he followed the French boy into the back room.

"Goot! Pray take tat chair."

Herr Pfalz turned away to examine a string of negatives that lay upon a table near at hand. He bent over them, scanning them; and Mont Blong sat down in the chair to wait. He had his back towards a door that led into an adjoining room.

Although Mont Blong did not suspect treachery, he was always on the alert, and the sound of a slight creak made him turn his head.

The door into the adjoining room had opened softly.

Two men came into the showroom, and at the sight of them Mont Blong sprang to his feet. They were advancing towards his chair, and their intention to seize him from behind was only too evident in their manner.

The French junior understood.

He made one spring towards the door into the shop. But Franz Pfalz was nearer to it, and with a swift movement he interposed.

"Nein, nein!" he said, with a sarcastic grin. "Tat is not so easy."

"Let me pass!" shouted Mont Blong. "Laissez moi passer! I——"

"Nein; I tink not."

The two Germans were springing towards Mont Blong. The French junior made a desperate rush to dash Pfalz aside, and rush past him through the shop into the street. The German photographer grasped him and held him fast in spite of his struggles.

He shouted to his two confederates.

Mont Blong struggled furiously, and he almost succeeded in tearing himself from the grasp of the photographer.

But before he could do so the other two rascals were upon him.

Three pair of hands grasped the French boy, and he was whirled off his feet and borne back into the room. He shouted for help.

"A moi—a moi! Help—help!"

"Stop tat!" growled Pfalz, striking the boy a savage blow across the mouth. "Tat you are silent."

"Ciel! Help! A moi!"

Herr Pfalz crammed his handkerchief into the junior's mouth, and Mont Blong's cries died away in choked silence. The photographer muttered something in German, and one of his confederates drew straps from his pocket, and buckled them about the ankles and wrists of the French junior. Mont Blong, with his hands and feet strapped and helpless, stood powerless in the grasp of the spies.

Herr Pfalz grinned.

"I tink tat ye have you now!" he remarked.

Mont Blong's eyes glittered with rage, but he could not speak.

"Take him down," said Pfalz, in German.

The two rascals raised Mont Blong in their arms, and carried him into the further room. Franz Pfalz took up a lamp, and opened a door upon a dark and evil-smelling stone staircase. The prisoner was carried down, Herr Pfalz holding up the lamp to light the way. Down the stairs into a deep, dark cellar Mont Blong was borne, and thrown roughly upon the brick floor.

"Tat is all right."

The German photographer grinned down at his victim.

"I tink tat you are ferry cunning," he said. "But I tink tat dere are odders tat are more cunning, ain't it?"

He turned to his companions, and spoke in German.

"Go and inform Herr Hentzel."

The two ruffians left the cellar.

Leaving the French junior lying bound upon the floor, Herr Pfalz followed his confederates up the stairs, and the door above closed, and Mont Blong heard a key turn.

He was alone, in the darkness.

He lay for some moments, exhausted by his struggles with the German spies, and recovering his breath.

Then he struggled up into a sitting posture.

He realised that he was a helpless prisoner; that he was utterly at the mercy of the scoundrels who had kidnapped him.

The cellar evidently had no outlet save by the staircase, and there was a locked door above. The heaviness of the air showed how ill the ventilation was. But if there had been another outlet, the French junior could not have sought for it. The straps were buckled round his wrists and ankles with cruel tightness, and he could not even stand upon his feet unaided.

He wriggled his way along the floor to the wall, and sat there, leaning back against the cold, chilly bricks.

His face was very pale now.

The action of the kidnappers was a warning that they knew him in his true character, and he knew that he had everything to fear from them. He had understood what Pfalz said to his confederates in German; he knew that Herr Otto Hentzel had been sent for. He was to expect a visit from the German master. It was Herr Hentzel who had planned this from the beginning. The pretended message to the photographer was a trick to lure him into the power of the kidnappers.

Mont Blong's eyes glittered with rage as he thought of it.

He had fallen easily into the trap. The German master had said that Pfalz would give him a packet of negatives to take back to the school camp; that had been an additional bait. It enraged the junior to realise how he had been deceived by his wily enemy. But there was no help for it now.

He knew what Herr Hentzel wanted—the missing papers—those papers which, as Mont Blong realised with a feeling of exultation now, were already in the hands of the British War Office authorities.

The junior waited.

The cold contact of the bricks in the damp cellar chilled him; the straps were cramping his limbs, but he waited with unflinching courage.

There was a sound at last on the stone stairs. He heard the door above unlocked, and then there came the glimmer of a light.

There were footsteps on the stairs.

The door was unlocked above; and then the footsteps came down, and the light glimmered into the dark cellar.

Mont Blong's eyes were fastened upon the dim figure as it appeared behind the descending lamp upon the stairs.

It was Herr Hentzel.

The German master stepped into the cellar, and placed the lamp upon a ledge on the wall, where the rays fell upon the white face of the prisoner. Then he turned upon Mont Blong, and regarded him with gleaming eyes.

"I tink I reckon mit you now," he said between his teeth.

Mont Blong looked at him in silence. The gag in his mouth prevented utterance. Herr Hentzel stooped, and plucked it from his mouth.

"Now you can speak!" he snapped.

"Zank you, sir," said Mont Blong. "Zank you zat you come to set me free. I zink zat ze photographer have gone mad, and he play zis trick on me."

Herr Hentzel smiled disagreeably.

"Tat is no use," he said. "You cannot bluff mit me, Blanc. You know vy it is tat you are here. You are a prisoner—the same as on te Sherman ship, but tis time you not escape."

"What have I done, sir?"

"You have stolen mein papers, mein photographs," said the German master, bending towards him, his eyes gleaming. "I vant dem back."

"I, sir?"

"Ja, ja, you! I know you now. You have deceive me for ferry long. Vunce or twice it come into my mind tat you vas a spy—but den you seemed so foolish and so infantine, I tink not, tat is not possible. But now I know!"

"A spy, sir!" exclaimed Mont Blong, apparently in the greatest astonishment.

The German master nodded.

"Ja, ja!" he said. "I have found you out. It is not tat Australian who take my papers; it is not Gordon Gay, as I have tink. It is you."

"Monsieur?"

"Vere are mein papers?"

"Oh, monsieur!"

The German master clenched his hand.

"Listen to me," he said. "No vun knows vere you are. No vun suspect. If you die here, in dis cellar, and you are bury under dem bricks, no vun vill know. You understand?"

"Oui!"

"Your life for te papers!" said Herr Hentzel.

"Monsieur!"

"You tink tat I am not in earnest?" said the German master, grinding his teeth. "I tell you tat I know you, poy. I know tat you are te son of a French detective employed by the Quai d'Orsay; I know tat you are sent to England, to show tat tere are Sherman spies at work on te coast here, tat te sleepy British Government never suspect. I know all tat now, though I not know him before. I know tat you have my papers, and tat you know dey are my ruin unless I find dem. Vere are dey?"

Mont Blong was silent.

"Your life for dem papers!" said Herr Hentzel. "Give dem up, or you perish in dis cellar, and no one vill know!"

"You dare not!"

The German gritted his teeth.

"You vill see!" he said, his eyes burning. "Mind, not a morsel of food, not a drop of drink for you till dem papers are in my hands! Tat is all. I leave you now to tink of it. I see you vunce more in te morning, and you tell me vere to find te papers!"

Mont Blong did not reply, and the German master picked up the lamp and left the cellar. Once more the French junior was in darkness and solitude.

He set his teeth. He knew that Otto Hentzel meant every word he said—that unless the papers were given up the terrible threat would be fulfilled. But there was a factor in the problem upon which Otto Hentzel did not reckon. Already the incriminating papers were in the hands of the authorities; already the warrant was issued for the arrest of the German spy. Would the arrest come in time to save Mont Blong? Upon that question now hung the issues of life or of death for the French junior!

A Surprise for the School.

Gordon Gay & Co. came back into the school camp tired and weary, and troubled in mind. They had searched for Mont Blong as well as they could in the darkness of the lonely shore, but they had not found him. It was long past midnight when they gave up the search, and returned to their tent in the school camp. Tadpole was sleeping soundly, and he did not waken as the three juniors came in.

Gordon Gay sank down upon his bed.

"Where can he be?" he muttered.

"Goodness knows!"

"It's Herr Hentzel's work," said Gay, with conviction. "Herr Hentzel sent him away from the camp—I know that. It's another trick like that they played upon us in the German steamer, only they've got Mont Blong by himself this time."

"They can't have—have——" Wootton major faltered.

"No; I don't think they'd dare to hurt him. He is a prisoner somewhere, the same as we were on the steamer. They want the papers, you know."

"What are you going to do?"

"Blessed if I know. If he doesn't turn up by the morning, I think we ought to go to the Head, and tell him plainly what we know about Herr Hentzel."

"He won't believe it," said Wootton major, with a shake of the head. "We've got no proof."

"We must do our best."

It was not very far from morning now. The juniors threw themselves upon their beds to rest, and in spite of their anxious thoughts they fell asleep from sheer weariness.

The call of the bugle, blown by Corporal Cutts, called them back to the waking world ere long, and they rose. The morning sun was shining over the school camp. Gordon Gay hurried out of the tent. He met Delamere in the camp, and stopped him.

"Has Blanc come back yet?" he asked.

The captain of the Grammar School shook his head.

"No," he replied. "Do you know anything of his whereabouts, Gay?"

"No. But I have a suspicion what's happened to him," said Gordon Gay. "I want to see the Head as soon as he rises."

Delamere looked at him sharply.

"You think that something has happened to the French kid?" he asked.

"Yes. You remember what happened to us on the steamer?"

Delamere started.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE PREFECT'S PLOT!" A Splendid New Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"But those rascals are gone," he said. "The police have been searching for that steamer, and there is no trace of it to be found. It must be in a German port."

"Those rotters may be gone, but they've left other rotters behind them," said Gordon Gay; "and they've got Mont Blong."

"Come with me," said Delamere abruptly.

He led Gordon Gay to the Head's tent. The Head was already up, and his kind old face was very anxious and worn.

"No news of Blanc, Delamere?" he asked.

"None, sir."

"This is terrible," said the Head. "I cannot help thinking that something has happened to him."

"Gay thinks so, sir, and he thinks he can tell you something about the matter," said the Grammar School captain.

Dr. Monk looked inquiringly at Gordon Gay.

"What do you know about the matter, Gay?"

Before Gordon Gay could reply Corporal Cuits put his head into the tent.

"Inspector Keen, sir," he said.

"Dear me! Show him in," said the Head, puzzled.

"Pray wait a moment, Gay."

Inspector Keen entered the tent. He was a short, thick-set man, with very sharp grey eyes and a ruddy face. The Head bowed to him.

"Please excuse me, Dr. Monk," said the inspector. "I am sorry I have come upon somewhat unpleasant business. You have a German master in this school, by name Otto Hentzel?"

"Yes," said the Head.

Gordon Gay started. Outside the tent he caught sight of a constable in plain clothes—easily recognised as a constable in spite of the plain clothes. The Cornstalk understood. The blow was falling upon the spy of Berlin!

"I have a warrant for his arrest, sir," said the inspector.

"What?"

"Here is my authority."

The Head looked dazed.

"The—the arrest of Herr Hentzel!" he exclaimed. "But—but what—what is the charge against my German master?"

"He is charged with being a spy in England, in the employ of a foreign Government, sir."

"Good heavens!"

"My hat!" murmured Delamere. "Herr Hentzel a spy! Great Scott!"

"It—it must be a mistake!" exclaimed the Head. "Herr Hentzel came to me with the best recommendations. I have every reason to believe that he is a most respectable man."

The inspector smiled.

"Unless he gave that impression here, sir, he would not be of much use to his employers as a spy," he said. "The case is quite complete against him—maps, plans, and photographs which he has taken for the service of his Government are now in our possession, together with letters he has written and received."

"Dear me!"

"Where is he?"

"I think he has not risen yet," said the Head. "This is most amazing. I am sure Herr Hentzel will be able to clear himself from this charge—I sincerely trust so. But of course you must do your duty. Delamere, will you see if Herr Hentzel is in his tent?"

"Certainly, sir."

"I will go with you, young gentleman," said the inspector, with a smile. "I do not wish to give him an opportunity of bolting."

"This way, then, sir."

"My hat!" murmured Gordon Gay, following them out of the Head's tent. "The giddy Deutscher has come a cropper at last. We shall find Mont Blong now."

"What's the row?" asked Wootton major, catching Gordon Gay by the arm.

"That's an inspector of police, and he's come to arrest Herr Hentzel."

"Oh, good!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "It's come at last. Where's Mont Blong, you fellows? He ought to be on in this scene."

Gay's face clouded.

"He's been missing all night," he said.

"Great Scott! Herr Hentzel will have to account for that!"

"Yes, rather."

"Come on," said Lane. "Let's be in at the death. The policemen may want somebody to lend a hand."

The chums of the Fourth hurried towards Herr Hentzel's tent. The German master was up; and he was standing

in the opening of the tent, looking out, as the inspector arrived, with the plain-clothes constable at his heels.

"Herr Hentzel?" said Inspector Keen inquiringly.

"Ja, ja, mein Herr."

"I have a warrant for your arrest."

The German master staggered back.

"Mein Gott! Vat?"

"I'm sorry I shall have to put the handcuffs on," said the inspector. There was a clink of steel. "I cannot afford to run risks. But I have a closed cab waiting near at hand. You had better come quietly."

"But—but dis is an outrage!" exclaimed Herr Hentzel. "It is all right—I know tat I cannot resist. But vat is to charge?"

"Spying for a foreign Government."

"It is false."

The inspector smiled.

"You will be given a fair trial, of course," he said. "Everybody gets that in England. You had better be careful what you say, as it may be used in evidence against you. Hold out your wrists, please."

"But—but I protest—"

"Come, sir; I have no time to waste."

"Very well. But run question I ask—is dere any evidence on dis subject, or else is it only suspicion?"

"Heaps of evidence, from what I know," said the inspector. "I'm afraid the game is up, my man."

"Ach!"

The German master held out his wrists for the handcuffs; and then with a sudden spring he rushed at the inspector, thrust him aside, and sprang past him. The apparent submission of the German had taken Inspector Keen off his guard; he staggered and fell, and the plain-clothes man behind him made a clutch at the German a moment too late. Herr Hentzel dashed away at top speed, running like a deer.

There was a yell from Gordon Gay.

"After him!"

The Arrest of Herr Hentzel.

"After him!"

The Fourth-Formers rushed in pursuit.

Gordon Gay and the two Woottons, and Monk and Lane and Carboy, dashed after the fleeing spy, and Delamere of the Sixth joined in the chase.

Herr Hentzel might have escaped the inspector and the constable; but he was not likely to escape the finest runners in Rylcombe Grammar School.

He was outside the school camp in a few seconds, hatless, breathless, running like a deer, with the seven Grammarians strung out on his track.

Herr Hentzel glanced back as he reached the shore.

He gritted his teeth at the sight of the captain of the school and the half-dozen juniors tearing along furiously after him, with the inspector and the constable, further behind, also running their hardest. The inspector's face was red with rage.

"Stop him!" he roared.

"What-ho!" shouted back Gordon Gay.

The German master tore on. He was taking the path along the shore to the headland. Behind them, the canvas camp, crowded with staring fellows, vanished, as they swept round the base of the headland, the wet sand grinding under their boots. The tide was going out, and the sand was covered with pools of water and masses of seaweed.

Gordon Gay guessed where the German was going. In his desperate position, the spy had no choice. To seek his confederates in Netherby was simply to draw his own fate upon them as well; and his only chance was to reach the cave in the headland, where there were many hidden recesses in which he might hope to elude pursuit. But it was a long run, and the German was close pressed.

Closer and closer came the juniors to the fleeing spy.

Lane had dropped behind, and then Carboy, breathless from the race. Jack Wootton was the next to give in. They fell back, and ran more slowly with the two policemen. But Gordon Gay and Frank Monk were forging ahead, and Delamere was just behind them; and the trio were closing in on the desperate spy.

Herr Hentzel shot a glance over his shoulder.

Gordon Gay was within a dozen yards; the fleet Cornstalk was well ahead of his comrades now. And though the junior was, of course, no match for the burly German when he overtook him, there was no doubt that he would be able to hold him long enough for the others to come up.

Otto Hentzel's eyes blazed with fury.

He halted, his boots grinding in the sand, his breath coming in short, fierce gasps. He swung round, his hand

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going into the inside of his coat. It came out again with something in it that flashed and glittered in the sun.

"That you stand back!" he panted. "Stop, or I shoot!" Gordon Gay halted involuntarily.

It was a revolver that gleamed in the desperate man's hand, and the barrel bore full upon the Cornstalk junior.

"Back!" shrieked the German.

Gordon Gay stumbled and fell upon his knees, his hands clawing at the sand. Delamere and Frank Monk stopped dead. But Gordon Gay's stumble was a trick which the German did not guess in time. His hand closed upon a jagged stone, and without rising he hurled it with deadly aim. Before Otto Hentzel knew that it was coming, the heavy stone struck his arm, and the revolver went flying from his grasp. Herr Hentzel uttered a yell of pain, and clasped his arm with his left hand.

"Good for you, Gay!" yelled Delamere. "Come on." They rushed at the German.

Otto Hentzel made a spring towards the revolver, which had fallen into the sand. But he had no time to seize it. Even as he stooped for it, Gordon Gay struck him, and he rolled over on the ground.

Delamere and Monk were upon him in a second more, pinning him down.

Gordon Gay picked up the revolver, and jerked it out of reach of the struggling German.

"Hold him!" he panted. "We've got him now."

Herr Hentzel was struggling furiously with Frank Monk and the captain of the school. But the two together were more than a match for him, and in a few moments Wootton major came up and piled on the spy. Inspector Keen and the constable panted up and found the German, breathless and exhausted, still struggling feebly in the grasp of his captors.

Click!

The German's wrists were dragged together, and the handcuffs clicked fast upon them.

Herr Hentzel ceased to struggle.

The game was up now, and he attempted no further resistance. The juniors released him and he lay handcuffed on the sand, panting for breath. Inspector Keen took the revolver from the hand of Gordon Gay.

"This will be useful as evidence," he remarked. "I think you've about reached the end of your tether now, you beauty!"

"Ach! I have done my duty to my country!" snarled Herr Hentzel.

"Rats!" said Gordon Gay contemptuously. "Spying isn't any man's duty. Men do that kind of work for money, not from duty. Rats!"

"What-ho!" said Frank Monk. "Rats—and many of 'em!"

The German ground his teeth.

"We'll get this beauty to the station," said the inspector.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Gordon Gay.

"What is it?"

"You got the information about this villain from Mont Blong—Gustave Blanc, I mean," said Gay.

The inspector looked at him curiously.

"What do you know about it?" he asked.

"We're in the secret."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. We were in the cave up here when this villain was showing a German officer about," said Gordon Gay. "We've seen him signalling to a German ship. Mont Blong had to let us know that he was doing detective work looking after this scoundrel."

"Ach!" murmured Otto Hentzel. "And I never knew!"

"Mont Blong has disappeared," said Gordon Gay. "Herr Hentzel sent him out of the school last night, and he never came back. I'm certain that Herr Hentzel knows where he is. It's a trick to get his papers back."

The inspector laughed.

"The papers! They were in the hands of the authorities before the warrant was issued for Hentzel's arrest," he said.

"But this is serious about Blanc. Do you know what has become of Blanc, Hentzel?"

The German smiled sourly.

"I answer no questions!" he said.

Inspector Keen frowned sternly.

"You had better tell us where to find Gustave Blanc," he exclaimed.

"I say nothing."

"Do you know where he is?"

"Find out!"

"Do you know if this rascal has any accomplices in this district?" he asked. "I understand that he has—"

"Yes," exclaimed Gordon Gay immediately. "He's very thick with a German photographer in Netherby, named Franz Pfalz."

"We have that name from Blanc," said the inspector with

a nod. "I think we will put this scoundrel in safe keeping, and pay a visit to Herr Pfalz."

"Good!" exclaimed Gordon Gay. "May we come? We may be able to lend assistance, sir, if it is needed."

"Certainly, if you have your master's permission."

"We can stay out till chapel, anyway."

"Come, then."

Inspector Keen raised the handcuffed German to his feet. With the constable's hand upon his arm, and the inspector watching him like a cat, the captured spy was walked away to where the inspector's cab was waiting. The German was put into it with the policeman, whom Mr. Keen instructed to take the prisoner to the railway-station, there to wait for him.

"Now show me where this man Pfalz's place is," said the inspector.

"This way!" said Gordon Gay eagerly.

"Not open yet," said the detective with a smile, as they halted before the little photographer's shop. "Well, we'll soon after that."

He struck a heavy, rattling blow on the door.

A window above opened, and the head of Franz Pfalz was put out.

"Vat is it?" he exclaimed, looking in amazement at the ruddy inspector, with the crowd of juniors round him, outside the shop door.

"You're wanted," said the inspector tersely.

"But—but vat—"

"Come and open the door at once!"

The German's eyes were glittering. He understood, and his first thought was that the inspector had a warrant for his arrest in his pocket.

"Vait vun moment," he exclaimed.

He closed the window.

Several minutes passed, and the inspector knocked at the door again. Gordon Gay and Wootton major passed round the side of the house, suspecting very strongly that the German photographer was making use of the interval to make his escape. Gordon Gay gave a shout as he caught sight of Pfalz in the garden. The German was leaping the fence at the end of the garden, and as Gay shouted he disappeared among the trees.

"He's gone!" yelled Gordon Gay.

The inspector joined him.

"I anticipated that," he said. "I have no authority to touch him. But as he is gone I think we may take the liberty of looking into his house."

And the inspector passed in at the back door, which had been left open by the German photographer in his flight. The juniors followed him in fast. Inspector Keen stopped at the locked door at the top of the cellar steps. He turned the key, and looked down the dark, narrow staircase.

"Get a light," he said briefly.

Gordon Gay found a lamp and lit it. The inspector took the lamp in his hand, and descended the stairs. Gordon Gay & Co. followed.

"Mont Blong!" called out Gordon Gay. "Mont Blong, old man! Are you here?"

There was a faint voice from the darkness.

"My shum!"

Laying the Snare.

GORDON GAY rushed down the narrow stairs. The light of the lamp revealed his unfortunate chum, stretched on the floor in his bonds.

"My shum! Zank goodness zat you have come!"

"Poor old Mont Blong!"

Gordon Gay knelt beside the French junior, and unfastened the straps that secured his wrists and ankles.

Mont Blong groaned with the pain as he tried to stretch his cramped limbs.

"Ciel! Zis is verry bad!" he murmured. "But I sall soon be all right."

"Let me help you up."

Mont Blong with some difficulty stood upon his feet. He exchanged a nod with Inspector Keen; it was evident that they had met before.

"You've been in the wars, sir," said the inspector. "I suppose it was Otto Hentzel who fixed you up like this?"

"His confederate Pfalz and two ozzor rascals," said Mont Blong. "But vere is Herr Hentzel? He had not escaped?"

The inspector chuckled.

"No fear! We've got him safe."

"Zat is good."

"And there'll soon be a warrant out for Mister Pfalz," said the inspector. "I shall leave a man in charge of these premises. Your friends will see you back to the school."

"Good!"

Mont Blong walked with some difficulty as his chums helped

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him out of the cellar. But in spite of the pain in his cramped limbs, he was in high spirits.

"Zat rascal is arrested," he said, as they left the photographer's shop and emerged into the street. "He vill do no more mischief. I zink zat ven ze papers are all examined zere vill be trouble for Herr Hentzel. Ze prison is ready for him. And as for me—my vork is done here."

Gordon Gay looked alarmed. "You're not going to leave the Grammar School, Mont Blong?" he exclaimed.

"You sha'n't!" said Wootton major warmly. "We'll jolly well keep you, whether you like it or not! We can't afford to lose you, kid."

"Not quite!" said Carboy.

Mont Blong grinned. "I should like to stay," he confessed. "I came to zis country to do my vork, but now zat it is done I like mooch to stay at ze Grammar School. I zink zat I ask my fazzer zat I stay here."

"Good egg!" said Gordon Gay. "And we'll send him a round robin, if you like, explaining that you can't go, any-way."

"I do not like to leave my dear shums," said Mont Blong affectionately. "You have save me from to starve. Zey give me no food."

"Poor old Mont Blong!" said Monk. "Here's a tuck-shop. Come in!"

And the rescued junior was marched into the village shop, and the juniors piled up the good things round him, with a really reckless disregard of expense.

Mont Blong did justice to the feed. Then the chums of the Fourth walked back to the school under canvas. They were late for first lesson, but under the circumstances that little omission was likely to be overlooked.

They marched Mont Blong in triumph into the camp, and the French junior hurried at once to the Head's tent.

"Here he is, sir," announced Gordon Gay. "We've found him, sir."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "I am very glad to see you again, Blanc. Where have you been?"

Mont Blong explained.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Monk. "What an utter rascal the man was! I was hoping that the charge against Herr Hentzel might turn out to be a mistake; but I am afraid I must give up that idea now. If you do not feel well enough for lessons this morning, Blanc, you shall be excused."

"It is all right, monsieur. I not suffair mooch," said Mont Blong; and he went into the Fourth Form marquee with Gordon Gay & Co.

Mont Blong was the cynosure of all eyes that morning. His kidnapping by the German was the talk of the school camp, and it added an interest to the amazing news of the arrest of Herr Hentzel upon the charge of being a spy in the service of the Berlin Government.

After morning school, Mont Blong was surrounded by eager crowds of fellows, who wanted detailed accounts of his adventures from the beginning to the end, and Mont Blong did not have a moment to himself till dinner-time.

In the mess-tent he found time to whisper to Gordon Gay. "You vill come viz me affair dinnair, I zink."

"Certainly," said Gordon Gay. "Whither?"

"I zink zat I make ze search in ze cave on ze headland," said Mont Blong. "I zink zat perhaps zere is somezing zere zat Herr Hentzel have left, n'est-ce-pas?"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Gay, with a nod. "But you won't find it easy to get away from the fellows after dinner. We shall have to dodge them."

"I zink so."

After dinner there were many inquiring youths looking for Mont Blong, and when he strolled out of the school camp with Gordon Gay & Co., quite a number of them accompanied him. The French junior was almost provoked out of his usual urbane politeness. He did not want to take a crowd of the Fourth to visit the cave on the headland.

"Chuck it till to-night," Gordon Gay advised; and Mont Blong assented.

There would have been a German lesson that afternoon, and the Fourth Form felt the absence of Herr Hentzel, but they did not deplore it.

As Wootton major remarked, the afternoon passed ripingly without him, and he hoped that the Head would be a long time getting a new German master.

The chums of the Fourth had tea in Gordon Gay's tent, and after that, they found an opportunity of leaving the camp without attracting attention.

They sauntered along the shore towards the headland, and Gordon Gay smiled grimly at the sight of a steam launch in the inlet.

"It's the German boat," Wootton major remarked.

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"They must have heard about Herr Hentzel's arrest by this time," said Jack Wootton. "I shouldn't wonder if they're hanging on here till dark, if there's anything left in the cave."

Mont Blong nodded. "Zat is vat I zink," he said. "Zey not dare to go zere in ze daylight, as zere are detectives watching. But at night—"

"We shall be there first!" grinned Gordon Gay.

"Zat is so."

It was already growing dusk as the Grammarian juniors reached the cliff under the opening of the cave above. The tide was coming in fast, and the launch was now nearer the shore. But in the dusk it was impossible for the Germans aboard to observe the juniors on the face of the cliff.

Gordon Gay & Co. climbed the cliff, as they had done upon the night when they were caught by the tide, and ere long they found themselves in the mouth of the cavern.

Wootton major took a bicycle lantern from under his jacket. Mont Blong tapped him on the arm.

"Ne pas encore," he murmured. "Not yet! Zey vill see it from ze launch."

"Right-ho!"

Gordon Gay's eyes gleamed. "My hat!" he whispered. "I've got a wheeze."

"Vat is zat?"

"You remember the German officer who came ashore, the night we were hidden here, and jawed with Herr Hentzel in the cave?"

"Oui, oui!"

"He came in that launch. Herr Hentzel made signals to him from the ledge outside the cave."

"Zat is so."

"You understand that light signal bizney—you said so."

"Quite right, my shum."

"Well, couldn't you make the signals?" asked Gordon Gay eagerly, his eyes gleaming. "You've got an electric lamp, and you know the code."

Mont Blong looked puzzled.

"Zat is quite truc," he said; "but—"

"They must know that Herr Hentzel has been arrested. But suppose you signal to him to come ashore—same as Hentzel was doing last time. He will take it that you are Hentzel, and that you have escaped."

"Mon Dieu!"

"They don't know that we know anything about this cave, or their meetings here," Gordon Gay went on excitedly.

"If the German sees the signals, he'll come, as sure as a gun, and we can bag him. It would be ripping to have the ringleader—the chief of the whole bizney, who has superintended all the spy work here."

"Ciel! My shum!" exclaimed Mont Blong, rushing at Gordon Gay, and embracing him. "My lofed shum! It is you zat have ze excellent ideas!"

"Yow! Leggo!"

"Ciel! I must kees my shum—"

"Ow!"

Mont Blong kissed Gordon Gay enthusiastically on both cheeks. The Cornstalk made a wry face. Nothing could induce him to get used to that very Gallic custom.

"My shum! Ve vill do zat zat. I make ze signals quite easy," said Mont Blong.

"Hold on," said Jack Wootton. "Suppose two or three of them come, and they have revolvers, if they cut up rusty—"

"The officer will land alone, same as he did before," said Gordon Gay. "We shall collar him. We can easily prevent anybody else getting into the cave from the boat. And there's a way out on the land side. We can find it."

"Good egg!"

"If the German chap has a pistol, we shall have to chance it. We're not afraid."

"No fear. But—"

"We can biff him on the napper with a rock if he cuts up rusty."

"Oh, good!"

"Time to signal the launch, Mont Blong."

"Zat is so, my shum."

Mont Blong took out his electric lamp, and stepped upon the ledge outside the cave. In the deep dusk the light flashed to and fro. Mysterious enough to the eyes of the Grammarian juniors, who did not understand the code; but as easy as the alphabet to Mont Blong, and to the Germans on the launch.

(Another long instalment of this thrilling serial story next week. Order a copy of "The Gem" Library in advance. Price one penny.)

THE SENTENCE OF THE HOUSE!

(Continued from page 20.)

The gas was burning in the Fourth Form room. A junior sat solitary at a desk, bending over his work. There was no fire in the Form-room, and the autumn evening was chilly. The room looked dull and desolate in the light of the single gas burning. Lorne sighed a little over his work. The thought of the cheerful study, the cheerful companions he might have had but for his own folly and obstinacy, obtruded itself into his mind, though he tried to keep his thoughts upon his work.

The door of the Form-room opened quietly.

Lorne did not hear it, and he did not look up. Quite a little crowd of juniors came in. There were Tom Merry and Manners, and Lowther and Kangaroo of the Shell, and Blake, and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy and Figgins, and Kerr and Wynn, and Reilly and Kerruish, of the Fourth. Lorne started out of his moody reverie, as they came up to the desk where he was sitting, and glanced at them in surprise.

"It's all right, Lorne," said Figgins, cheerily.

"What do you mean, Figgins?"

"The sentence of the House is reversed," said Tom Merry.

"We hear from Figgy that—that—"

"That you're not such a rotter as you've made yourself out to be," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah."

"And we're chucking up the sentence of Coventry, to give you a trial," said Lowther.

"Faith, and we'll give you the run of the study, and see how you turn out," said Reilly.

"I wegard that as a good ideah, deah boys. I consider——"

"You see!" said Kerr.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Kerr, deah boy."

"Yes, I know that, Gussy. You see, Lorne!"

"Weally, Kerr!"

"You see, if you mean to be decent, we don't want to be rough on you," said Kerr. "I believe in giving everybody a chance. You're a dog with a bad name at present; but if you like to toe the line——"

"And be decent!"

"Or try, anyway!"

"It will be all right for you."

"Yaas, wathah."

Eric Lorne rose to his feet. He did not speak for a moment, and his voice was a little husky when he did speak at last.

"This is jolly decent of you fellows," he said. "I don't mind admitting that I've felt simply rotten the past week. And—and I know that it was all my own fault. I've played the giddy goat. I didn't know the ropes, that was what it was. And—and I don't think you'll ever find me playing the ass again in such a way."

"Bravo, deah boy."

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, a chap can't do more than own up!" said Blake. "Blessed if I ever expected to hear you talk such sense, Lorne—excuse me."

Lorne smiled faintly.

"I shouldn't have expected it myself," he said, "but I've learned a few things since I've been here. That's all."

"Bai Jove! It's all wight. An apology frowm one gentleman to another is quite suffish, undah any cires," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard Lorne as havin' made the amende honorable, and I am willin' to extend my fwiendship to him."

"Hear, hear!"

"Sure, and ye're a broth of a bhoys, intirely," said Reilly. "Come on, you belong to our study, and you're coming back, March!"

And in the midst of the crowd of cheery juniors, Lorne was marched out of the gloomy Form-room and back to the study in the Fourth-Form passage. His face was very bright. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn walked home to the New House, all of them looking pleased, and especially Figgins.

"Didn't I say that Cousin Ethel was right?" he demanded.

"You did!" said Kerr, giving him a slap on the back that made him stagger. "You did, Figgy, old man; and you were right to. Hurray!"

And that evening—the happiest in Eric Lorne's life—was only the prelude to many happy days that were in store for the fellow who had had such an extremely bad time under The Sentence of the House!

THE END.

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns will be from those readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scotch, 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.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, 23, Bouverie Street, London, E.C., England."

A. Downes, P. O. Box 2269, Johannesburg, S. Africa, wishes to correspond with a reader interested in stamp collecting.

C. S. Merrett, P. O. Box 696, Christchurch, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age about 16 years.

T. A. Summerville, Greta, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader of "The Gem" in England.

V. Prentis, care of Mrs. Neill, Rose Bank, Royal Terrace, Kingsland, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a Russian reader.

L. G. Williams, 401, Coriston Buildings, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader of about the age of 14.

L. O. Comeau, P. O. Box 192, Amherst, Nova Scotia, Canada, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader of "The Magnet," age about 16.

G. Atkinson, 96, Courtney Street, N. Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a reader in England.

V. Thompson, 472, Seigneur Street, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with an English boy or girl reader, age 14.

L. L. Stanyson, 180, Indian Road, Toronto, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader in England, age about 16.

F. P. Kenny, of Collins Street, Drysdale, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader in England.

G. Race, P. O. Box 2580, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with an English girl, age about 16.

G. H. Glassen, 81, Wellington Street, S. Woodstock, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age about 16-17.

C. Noel, 343, Rivard Street, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader living in England, about 16 years of age.

W. B. Kelly, 304, Boom Street, Pretoria, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a reader interested in stamp-collecting.

J. Kyryk, 1125, Pritchard Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader of "The Gem" living in England.

W. M. Hardinge, 43, St. Mezzodi, Valetta, Malta, wishes to correspond with a boy or girl reader, aged 16, living in England.

D. Shimmis, 13, Rue Rollo, Alexandria, Egypt, age 19, wishes to correspond with a girl Gemite in England.

R. M. Fillmore, Amherst, Nova Scotia, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers of either sex in England.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "THE PREFECT'S PLOT!" A Splendid New Long, Complete School Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



YOUR EDITOR'S SPECIAL MESSAGE TO HIS CHUMS.

I have a glorious piece of news for my readers this week—news which all my friends will receive with as much pleasure as I feel in being able to give it. The earnest and oft-repeated entreaties of thousands of enthusiastic Gemites and Magnetites have had their effect at last, and in a few weeks' time a

New Companion Paper

to the popular twin libraries, the GEM and "Magnet" will make its appearance. One of the principal features of the new story-paper will be a

Complete Story of Tom Merry and Co.,

relating the many enthralling and amusing adventures of their early schooldays, specially compiled by Martin Clifford.

In addition to this grand series of weekly school stories, which alone is sufficient to ensure for the new paper instant and abiding popularity, the list of contents includes a

Magnificent Detective Story,

dealing with the most thrilling and amazing incidents in the career of that most famous of detectives, Sexton Blake. Thirdly, that talented author, S. Clarke Hook, will be called on to relate, in a series of splendid complete tales, the most exciting and amusing of the early adventures of the three famous comrades known throughout the world as

Jack, Sam, and Pete.

This, then, is the bill of fare which will every week be set before the readers of our New Companion Paper, and I ask my chums to pause a moment and consider whether such a magnificent range of really wholesome, first-class reading matter is, or even can be, offered to them by any other paper in the world. After many months of reflection, I have satisfied myself that it is impossible to offer my chums anything better than the feast of superb reading matter I have outlined above, so that it is with perfect confidence that I ask for their

Enthusiastic and Whole-Hearted Support for my new venture, which I have undertaken entirely at the earnest and insistent request of many thousands of GEM and "Magnet" readers.

And now for that most important matter, the title of our Grand New Companion Paper!

"THE PENNY POPULAR"

a title which I pitched on at once, in view of the absolute confidence that I feel in its immediate and unqualified success. With such a table of contents as I have outlined above, our new paper is bound to spring into world-wide popularity with the issue of the first number, and for that reason I consider

"THE PENNY POPULAR"

to be the most appropriate title that can be bestowed on it. "The Penny Pop."—as it will no doubt be immediately christened—will be published towards the end of each week, and will therefore be hailed with extra delight by the great army of my chums who tell me, in their letters, that they find

"The Week-end Gap"

between Thursday's GEM and Tuesday's "Magnet" so dull and hard to bear.

Everything that human brains and foresight can do will be done to make

"THE PENNY POPULAR"

worthy of its title and its two splendid companion papers, the "Gem" and "Magnet" Libraries, and it will only require the staunch support and universal encouragement of my Gemite and Magnetite chums, who have always

hitherto backed up their Editor so splendidly, to make our new venture into a huge success.

I am proud to say that, in the light of my experience as Editor of the two most popular companion libraries on the market, I do not feel the slightest doubt in the world that that same staunch support and universal encouragement will be freely and generously given, and that within a week of the issue of the first number

Everybody will be Reading "THE PENNY POPULAR."

FOR NEXT WEEK. "The Prefect's Plot,"

by Martin Clifford, is the title of the magnificent long, complete tale of school life contained in next Thursday's "Gem" Library. Tom Merry, the hero of the Shell, goes through a very bad time, and the deepest disgrace comes upon him that can befall a public schoolboy. Needless to say, however, his chums stand by him staunchly, and, with the help of little Joe Frayne, manage to bring to light

"The Prefect's Plot."

All Gemites should make a special point of reading this exceptionally powerful tale of school life by

Ordering in Advance.

See Column One.

The stream of letters, holding always upon one and the same subject, continue to roll in upon me in a steadily increasing volume; but the more I get the better I like it, for at last I am able to return a definite and satisfactory answer to my loyal readers' entreaties. At last I am able to say to them

"THE PENNY POPULAR' IS COMING,

and in its pages you will find just what you want!" The letter I have just received from Master George R. S., of Ontario, Canada, is one of those which I have decided can only be fully and effectively answered by "The Penny Pop."

This is what Master George says:

"Dear Editor,—I have often seen it suggested on the 'Chat' page of our splendid companion papers that the early adventures of Tom Merry & Co. should be brought out again for the benefit of those who have not read them, and I am writing specially to tell you that this is just the finest idea I have ever heard of. I have read "The Gem" for a long time, but I missed a great many stories of Tommy's early days at St. Jim's, and I am just longing to have the chance of reading them some day. I should love to read the first ones I read over again, too—they were such lovely stories. Please do let us hear about Tom Merry when he first came to St. Jim's, dear Editor, either in a new book or in "The Gem." If you brought out a new book containing the tales it would sell like hot cakes out here, and everywhere else, I should think.—With best wishes from

"GEORGE R. S. (aged 14½)."

Thanks, Master George R. S.! And to all that you say, my reply is—see column one of this page.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"True Gemite" (Yorks).—Thank you for your letter. With regard to your query concerning the "Correspondence Exchange," you should write direct to the advertiser, stating that you are doing so in answer to the advertisement published in "The Gem." I cannot conduct readers' correspondence through the medium of this office.

"Constant Reader."—Thanks for your letter and suggestion, which may be carried out at some future date.

THE EDITOR.