

PUBLISHED IN TOWN
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COMPLETE STORIES
FOR ALL, AND EVERY
STORY A GEM!

THE NEW CAPTAIN

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Tom Merry stood on the table in the Junior common-room. He was addressing the juniors of both Houses. "Gentlemen, why shouldn't a junior be Captain of the school?" he roared. "Fuggles has suggested that I should be a candidate!" "Hear! hear! Bravo!" yelled the crowd. (See Chapter 13.)

CHAPTER I.

The Unexpected Happens.

HERE'S something's gone' on, dear boys!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's imparted that information with a sage shake of the head.

Tom Merry and Messers and Lowther, the Terrible Three of the Shell, were talking footer, but they politely left off as Arthur Augustus made his remark. The swell of the Fourth Form was looking very serious indeed.

"Well, what's the news?" asked Tom Merry.

"I'm afraid it's something serious."

"Your tailor sent his bill in?" asked Messy Lowther.

"Was it?"

"By no means the order gone forth that juniors' collars are to be sized to a height of six inches—"

"Really, Lowther—"

"Nothing happened to your monocle, I hope!" asked Messy, with an expression of real concern.

"Fray don't be an ass, Lowther," said D'Arcy, with some severity. "I wish you could be serious at a time, and on serious subjects. It's something to do with old Kiddare."

"Kiddare!"

The Terrible Three were interested at once. Kiddare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, was the idol of the lower School. Certainly, he sometimes came down rather heavily on the backs of the Shell, but not more than half as often as they deserved. And, although he had a really

"lady" way of laying on the cane when he used it, the Terrible Three never faltered in their loyalty to old Kiddare.

"What's happened?" asked Messy.

"In the first place, a telegram arrived—"

"That's happened before, and no bones broken," Messy Lowther remarked. "I've had telegrams myself."

"Fray don't talk wet, Lowther. Kiddare looked frightfully worried when he read the telegram, and Lowther says he heard him say, 'My poor uncle!'"

"His uncle?" said Lowther reflectively. "Aha, that lets in a light on the matter! 'Oh, my prophetic soul, my uncle!'"

As Hamlet remarks, Kiddare has been putting his Sunday topper up the spout, and that wire was from his "uncle" to remind him that the ticket was up! Poor old Kiddare!"

"You mean, ah, it could not have been that kind of uncle. Aftah that, Kiddare went at once to the Head."

"What did he say to the Head?"

"How should I know, you duffah!" demanded D'Arcy.

"Didn't Lowther hear anything? Couldn't he get anywhere near the arsehole?"

"I really do not know; and in any case I should refuse to listen to anything's hears at a boyhole," said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "But, aftah that, Kiddare hurried like anything" to his study, and started packing."

"Packing!" exclaimed the Terrible Three in a breath.

"Yass! Lowther says he's packing" his bags."

"Kiddare again!" grinned Messy.

"But what is he packing his bags for?" said Lowther, with

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"CAPTAIN TOM MERRY!" AND "SECRET SERVICE!"

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a perplexed look. "Is he going somewhere where he will require a change of trousers?"

"You silly duffah!" exclaimed D'Arcy, exasperated. "When I say his bags, I do not mean his bags, I mean his legs, you see!"

"I must say!" commented Lowther. "Levison says he is packing two bags—"

"A pair of bags!" suggested Lowther.

"Two terrible bags!" howled Arthur Augustus. "Travelling bags, you duffah. Not trunks—travelling bags! That looks as if he is going away! That's why I say there's something serious going on. I suppose even you enjoy a good regard if as serious if old Kildare checked off."

"By Jove! I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "But why should he be going? If he's had had news—"

"I really think it's up to us to go to him and express our sympathy," said Arthur Augustus; "that's what I was thinking of. At the same time, we can ask him what's on, you know."

Jack Blake of the Fourth came down the passage with Dicky and Herring—all three looking rather excited.

"You fellows hear!" asked Blake.

"They say Kildare's leaving!" said Dicky.

"Levison says—" began Herring.

"Yes, we've just heard from D'Arcy that he's packing his traps!" said Lowther.

"His traps!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"Sense that. I suppose when a chap starts packing his traps, it means that something serious has happened."

"Went on Lowther imperceptibly. "Let's go and ask him."

"Rather a cheek, don't you think?" said Blake.

Lowther added calmly.

"Certainly, but we're famous for our cheek. Come on!"

And Monty Lowther led the way towards Kildare's study. In spite of his humorous remarks, Lowther was as concerned as the others at the idea that old Kildare might have had bad news. But he could not resist the temptation to pull the satirical tag of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There was a group of juniors in the passage outside Kildare's study, talking somewhat excitedly. Evidently the news had spread. Levison was the centre of the group, and he was the object of interest. Levison, as usual, had gained information by eavesdropping to the keyhole.

"He looks awfully cut up," said Levison, "and he's shoving the things anyhow into his bags. He's going—cheer a bit."

"If he goes for good, there will be a new captain wanted for St. Jim's!" remarked Gore of the Third.

"Chance for Kwan!" chorused Moffish.

"Or Cutts of the Fifth!" said another. "Cutts came very near getting up for election last time, you know."

"Oh, raise a Fifth-Former!" scoffed Reilly of the Fourth. "We're not going to have a Fifth Form chap for captain of the school—especially Cutts."

The next moment Reilly gave a yell, as a finger and thumb closed like a vice upon his ear. Gerald Cutts of the Fifth Form had come down the passage just in time to hear his observation.

"What's that, Reilly!" said Cutts pleasantly, as he compressed his grip upon the junior's ear. "Taking my name in vain, eh?"

"Oh, yes," yelled Reilly. "Listen, you beast! I said we wouldn't have you for captain of the school at any price, and we won't! Indisputably! You-ow!"

Cutts gave his ear another twist, and smiled genially and walked on. Reilly looked after him with a sophisticated expression.

"The beast!" he said, rubbing his ear. "The bully's beast!"

"Well, you asked for it!" grizzled Levison. "Why shouldn't Cutts be captain of the school? I think it would be a pleasant change after Kildare."

"You're a rotter," growled Jack Blake. "You'd like

another rotter to be captain of the school, of course. Shut up!"

"Look here—"

"Shut up!" roared Blake.

And Levison considered it more judicious to shut up.

"But Kildare isn't gone yet," remarked Tom Merry.

"You're rather precious in seeing the point. Let's speak to Kildare."

"I was wondering whether we should be justified, at all, in worrying Kildare at a time like this."

"Go on worrying, Gansy?" said Monty Lowther genially, and he knocked at Kildare's door.

"Come in!"

Lowther opened the door, and the chains of the School House crowded in. There were certainly many signs of departure in Kildare's study. Two large travelling bags were wide open, half-packed, and all sorts of articles were strewn about on the chairs, the table, and the floor. Kildare, in his short-sleeves, was looking red and hurried, as he jammed another article into the bags.

"Excuse us, Kildare, dear boy!" said Arthur Augustus genially. "We are awfully concerned about you. May we venture to inquire whether you have had any bad news?"

"Yes," said Kildare concisely.

"Aur'y sorry?"

"Very sorry, Kildare," said Tom Merry; "but you are not going!"

"My uncle in Ireland is ill," said Kildare quietly. "It may be very serious. I'm going at once; I'm catching the next train at Ryecroft."

"But you're coming back?" exclaimed Tom, in dismay.

"Yes, I'm coming back, but I don't know when. It may be a week or two—or months," said Kildare. "It all depends."

"Oh, crumb! How are we going to get on without you, Kildare?"

Kildare smiled.

"I dare say the school will run on without me, Merry. Of course, there will have to be an election for a new captain. I hope you kids will vote for the right man."

"Oh, you can rely on that!" said Blake promptly. "We'll take jolly good care that a School House chap gets in, and that it isn't left to a New House boy!"

"Yes, wathah!"

"Depend on that, Kildare?"

"I don't mean exactly that," said Kildare, laughing. "The right man might be a New House fellow."

"Oh, indeed, dear boy?"

"Yes, indeed, the School House, of course," said Monty.

"We'll keep the rotters out!" said Blake emphatically.

"I'll put up for captain myself, rather than let a New House rotter sneak in!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Well, you'll have to settle it for yourselves," said Kildare. "Buzz off now, will you? I'm rather busy."

"Can't we help you pack?" asked Blake.

"Thanks! I can manage."

And Kildare, who had not ceased packing while he spoke, turned away, as a very plain hint to the juniors that their presence was not required. Tom Merry & Co. left the study, and closed the door.

"Well, that's news, and no mistake!" said Tom, with a whistle. "There's going to be some excitement now. An election for a new captain will break things up."

"Yes, wathah! You chaps remember that I put up for captain once—"

"We remember!" agreed Blake. "But if you start being funny like that again, we shall take you into a quiet corner and suffocate you!"

"Yes, rotter!"

"Wathah, you fellows—"

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "Gentlemen, we're going to give old Kildare a send-off, and then we'll meet in committee and decide upon our candidate."

"Hear, hear!"

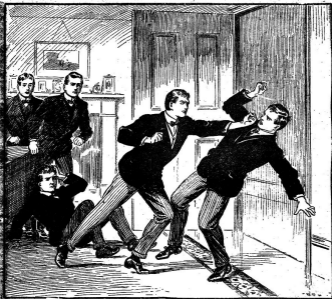
And when Kildare started for the station, with his bags, in the trap driven by Taggles, more than half the school gathered at the gates to see him off, and sent a thunderous cheer after him. And when he was gone one great quarrel was debated in every corner of the old school with its keenest interest, one question that interested everybody from the head prefect to the smallest and laziest lag in the Lower School, the question as to who was to take of Kildare's place as captain of St. Jim's!

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Curtis's right came out in a flashing upper-cut, and Baker rolled over on the floor. Gray advanced at the same moment, just in time to get Curtis's left in the eye, and he sat down on the floor with a gasp. (See Chapter 1.)

CHAPTER 2.

The Crisis!

FIGGINS of the Fourth rushed into his study in the New House at St. Jim's, his face blazing with excitement.

Kerr and Wynn were there, looking quite calm and cool, and nothing unusual was happening.

Kerr was working out some weird problems in mathematics, and did not even look up as Figgins rushed in. Kerr did that kind of thing for pleasure. He was built that way. Fatty Wynn was despatching a bag of tarts, which was his way of taking pleasure. That was the way he was built.

"Have you heard?" gasped Figgins.

No reply. Kerr was deep in his problem, and Fatty Wynn had his mouth full of jam tart. Reply was impossible under the circumstances.

Figgins started.

"Wake up, you silly asses!" he shrieked. "Talk about Julius Caesar fiddling while Hemo was burning—"

That woke Kerr up. He looked up from his problem.

"It was Nero, you ass!" he said.

Then he looked down again, and resumed his mental heights.

"I don't care whether it was Nero or Julius Caesar, or Lloyd George!" howled Figgins. "Wake up! Put that id away!"

And the excited and energetic Figgins jerked the paper away from the table before Kerr, and tossed it into the study

fire, and then grabbed Fatty Wynn's bag of tarts, and leaped it out of the window.

Both juniors were upon their feet in a second.

"You ass!" yelled Kerr.

"You silly chapp!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Collar him!"

"Bump him!"

"Stand up!" shouted Figgins. "Can't you understand? I tell you this is the chance of a lifetime for the New House to score, and here you sit eating mathematics and working out tarts—I mean, eating tarts and working out filthy mathematics!"

"What's happened?"

"Don't I keep on telling you!" howled Figgins. "It's our big chance, the chance of a giddy lifetime!"

"You haven't told us anything so far," remarked Kerr.

"I think I'll buzz out and look for my tarts," said Fatty Wynn, making for the door. "I'll hear your news when I come in, Figger."

Figgins grasped his fat chum by the shoulder, whirled him away from the door, and plumped him into the armchair with a compassion that shook the whole study.

"You'll hear it now, fathead!" he roared.

"Ow!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Gooch! Oh!"

"Has anything happened?" asked Kerr, interested at last. It was not like Figgins to be so wildly excited over nothing.

"Anything happened!" hooted Figgins. "If you hadn't been sticking here in the study like a pair of—of—of Chinese insidians you'd have heard. The New House might go to the top of the tree. The New House—No. 111. The Gem Library.—No. 111. Another Splendid Long, Coquette School Vale of the Champs of St. Jim's. Order Early.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"CAPTAIN TOM MERRY!"

the siddy bow-down, and the School House score all along the line, for all your care, so long as you had plenty of Siddy facts and disgusting mathematics."

"Those facts were prime!" said Fatty Wyan warmly. "Mrs. Taggles made 'em fresh to-day, and they were two-penny ones."

"Choose 'em! If you say facts again I'll bump you on the floor!" said the indignant Figgins.

"But those facts— Oh! Oh! Yarsoob!" Figgins was as good as his word. He grasped the fat Fourth-Former, hauled him out of the armchair, and bumped him on the hearthrug. Fatty Wyan roared.

"Or, or, or! You silly ass! You—oh!" "There!" cried Figgins. "Now perhaps you'll listen, and stop talking about facts. I tell you this is the time of our lives, the time to get a New House chap in as captain of St. Jim's."

"What?"

"News to you, of course," sneered Figgins. "You don't know that Kildare has gone—"

"Kildare gone!" ejaculated Kerr.

"Kildare gone!" gasped Fatty Wyan, as he scrambled up, and in his astonishment forbore to rush upon Figgins and hammer him in return for the bumping on the hearthrug.

"Of course you didn't know. So long as you have plenty of siddy—"

"Oh, ring off, and tell us the news!" said Kerr. "What has Kildare gone for?"

"His aunt, or something, is ill in Ireland or Scotland or somewhere," said Figgins, rather vaguely. "He's gone, and he'll be a long time away. Perhaps won't come back at all."

"Sorry for that."

"Yes, yes; I'm sorry, too. But this is a time to be up and doing! Don't you see, this is where we get a New House chap in as captain of the school?" said Figgins excitedly.

"It is the chance of our lives. Don't you see? We'll put up Mantish or Baber or somebody as candidate. It doesn't matter whose, so long as the New House scores."

"Is there going to be an election?"

"Haven't I told you as fifty times?" demanded Figgins. "Of course there is! And what do you think, those School House rufflers are scheming already to get a School House chap in as captain. I call it disgusting! Old Kildare hardly out of the place, and they're laying plans to get a chap of their House into his shoes."

"Ha, ha, ha!" sneared Kerr.

Figgins glared at him.

"What are you chuckling at, you loopy?"

"Ain't you planning to get a chap of our House into his shoes, then?" grinned Kerr.

"That's different, of course, quite different. I suppose you'll agree that the School House ain't going to have a walk-over in this election," said Figgins hotly.

"Yes, rather!"

"Now House hasn't trash chance," said Fatty Wyan, with a shake of the head. "There are nearly twice as many fellows in the School House, and the rufflers will stick together like glue to keep an eye on our side."

"Yes, that's like them!" gasped Figgins. "Tom Merry & Co. are always up against Blake & Co., but they'll stick together as thick as thieves to keep the election in the School House. I call it disgusting the way they do it. Still, if we all stand together over here, and vote as one man, we may pull it off. United we stand, divided we fall, you know, and every fellow must back up his own House. What are you sneering at, Kery, you blithering ass!"

"Oh, nothing!" said Kery blandly. "I agree with you. We've got to get a New House candidate, and get him in. New House for ever!"

"Eyes, knees!" said Fatty Wyan hoarsely. "And if there's more than one candidate on the School House side the vote will split, and we shall have a look in."

"That's just it," said Figgins eagerly. "I've heard already that two School House chaps are going to put up—Knox of the Sixth and Cotts of the Fifth. They'll divide the vote in the House, while we shall vote solid for one man."

"Cotts has a good many friends in this House," Kerr remarked thoughtfully. "A lot of the New House seniors are in his set."

"If any New House chap votes against his House he'll be ragged and banged, drawn, and quartered!" said Figgins darkly. "Snealer or jaxier, no chap is gung to be allowed to go back on his House. That's settled! Why, it's dog's age since a New House chap was captain of St. Jim's. Those rufflers over the way claim to be sock-House because they always elect a School House chap captain. We're going to alter that this time. This is where we come in."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. hoarsely.

"In fact, I was thinking that we might call on Tom Merry, and put it to him as a man and a brother," said Figgins.

"The Old Liberator—No. 37.

"Nobody wants a cad like Knox or Cotts as captain of the school. We could point out to Tom Merry that our man—Mantish—is just the man that's wanted."

"We could point it out," agreed Kerr, "but I don't feel sure that you'd get Tom Merry to see it."

"He's on fighting terms with both Knox and Cotts," said Figgins.

"That wouldn't make any difference, when it's a question of backing up his own House against this side," said Kery sagely.

"Well, it ought to," said Figgins warmly.

"Perhaps it might, but it won't. You'll see—"

Kerr was interrupted by a knock at the door.

"Oh, come in!" rapped out Figgins.

The door opened, and the Terrible Three came in. Figgins & Co. looked at them rather grimly. They had come just in time for Figgins to put it to Tom Merry as a man and a brother, as he expressed it.

CHAPTER 3.
A Peaceful Visit.

"AHEM!" said Tom Merry.

"Well!" demanded Figgins.

"Ahem!"

"Got a cold?" asked Kerr, with concern.

"A cold? No!"

"Then what are you coughing about?"

"Ahem!"

"Don't hurry," said Figgins kindly. "There's lots of time—though you might get your vocal exercises over before you pay a visit. But take your time."

Tom Merry coloured a little.

"Ahem! You see, we've come to speak to you chaps on a rather important matter. The fact is, Figgys, I've come to talk some to you."

"Rather a chaw—eh?" said Figgins.

"Look here—"

began Tom Merry warmly. But Mamma touched him on the arm, and he coughed again, and became exceedingly polite. "The fact is, Figgys—ahem!"

"Go it!" said Figgins encouragingly. "Only I'm afraid you'll wear out the inside of your neck at this rate. But don't mind me."

"You know Kildare has gone—"

"I saw him off."

"And we're going to have a new election for captain—"

"I suppose so."

"It's a matter on all hands," continued Tom Merry, "that the captain of St. Jim's is always selected from the School House."

"Is it?" said Figgins grimly.

"Oh, yes. Now, I've come to talk to you like an uncle," said Tom Merry. "It occurred to me—ahem!—that you fellows might have got some wild idea into your heads of putting up a New House chap for captain."

"Barely possible, ain't it?" said Figgins sarcastically.

"My idea," went on Tom, "is that we should all stand together—all St. Jim's as one man, you know, on this question. Union is strength. United we stand, divided we come a quack. The whole school ought to stand shoulder to shoulder at a time like this, and elect the right candidate, irrespective of the House he belongs to."

Figgins chuckled ribbly.

"Now you're talking house-eras!" he exclaimed heartily.

"I agree with you all along the line. That's just what I think."

"Oh, good!"

"I was only just saying to Kerr that I was going to suggest that very thing to you," said Figgins. "You've got a lot of influence with the kids on the other side, and lots of them will follow your lead. You do the right thing, and we'll get the right man in as old Kildare's place."

"Figgys, you're a jolly sensible chap!" said Tom Merry admiringly. "I must say I never expected you to take such a sensible line of the case."

"I never expected it of you, for that matter," said Figgins. "We seem to be in agreement. The right man has got to go in, and blow what House he belongs to."

"Hear, hear!" said the Terrible Three unanimously.

"And you'll vote for our man?" asked Figgins.

"Eh?"

"Our candidate—"

"But you haven't got a candidate," said Lorrher.

"E're getting on here one."

"Not a New House chap!"

"Yes, a New House chap, of course!" said Figgins warmly. "Haven't you just said that the right man has got to go elected, irrespective of his House?"

"Yes; but of course he's going to be a School House chap," said Tom Merry. "That's understood."

Figgins sneered.

"Oh, yes! There you go again! Our opinion is that it's time a New House chap was captain of the school, and we're going to get our head prefect, Mousteth, to put up. What have you got to say against Mousteth?"

"Oh, nothing, except—except that he isn't the right man." "Why isn't he?" demanded Figgins.

"Alas! We've got a lot of better fellows on our side—Darrel, or Blandish, or Langton!"

"Bosh! Mousteth's the man!"

"Now look here, Figgie! This is a time for all St. Jim's to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, and—"

"And elect your man?" sniffed Figgins.

"Well, yes, I suppose it comes to that," admitted Tom Merry. "I want to put this to you, as a reasonable chap."

"I was going to talk to you as a reasonable chap, but it doesn't seem much good," said Figgins. "You chaps have a weird idea in your heads that the School House is coth-house of St. Jim's."

"Well, isn't it?" demanded the Terrible Three with one voice.

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Figgins crossly. "Besides, what candidates have you got? Knox of the Sixth—a rotten bully—and Cutts of the Fifth—a beauty blackguard. You know as well as I do that Cutts is a gambler, a pishant, a regular black sheep. Nice kind of a captain for St. Jim's, I must say!"

"We don't want either Knox or Cutts," said Tom Merry promptly. "There will be a better man put up. These lads' been time yet."

"And the better man will belong to this House," said Figgins.

"If Figgins cannot take the matter seriously—" began Manners.

"It's you silly ass who's not taking it seriously!" roared Figgins. "We won't have Knox or Cutts at any price!"

"But what about Darrel or Langton?"

"How Darrel and Langton?"

"Besides, they won't put up, most likely," said Kerr. "Darrel's working for an examination now, and he won't have the time, and Langton never shows himself forward in anything. All the good ones are on our side—Mousteth, or Webb—"

"But—"

"We've got two candidates," said Figgins, "and they're the rottenest you could spare up even in that old cannal ward you call a House. You can't say that either Knox or Cutts would make a good captain of the school."

"Admitted," said Tom Merry.

"Then you'll vote for our man?"

"No fear! Must be a School House chap!"

"I suppose I was an ass to think for a moment that you could talk sense," said Figgins disdainfully. "You'd rather have a cad like Cutts, or a bully like Knox, than a really decent one from this side."

"Well, your Mousteth is rather a bully, if you come to that. You've had plenty of rows with him yourself," said Lowther.

"One forgets little personal differences at a time like this," said Figgins loftily.

"Then we can forget our little personal differences with Cutts of the Fifth."

"That's different."

"How is it different?" demanded Lowther.

"No good talking sense to a silly ass!" said Figgins. "There's none so blind as those who won't see. Any silly chap could see at once that Mousteth is the right man."

"That accounts for your seeing it, I suppose!" Lowther remarked reflectively.

And Tom Merry and Manners chuckled.

"If you're looking for a thick ass, Mousty Lowther, you've come to the right shop!" said Figgins dully. "In fact, if you fellows are going to play the giddy or over this side, it would be a bad idea to start by giving your silly good-will some sense into them."

"Might knock some sense into them," asserted Kerr.

The Terrible Three looked wistful at once. They, too, were exasperated by their rivals' obstinate view of the case.

"We came here on a reasonable errand," said Tom Merry warmly. "But we're quite ready to wipe up the study with you chaps, if you come to that."

"Pile it, then!" said Figgins defiantly. "Here's the study, and here's us!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

"For two pence I'd wipe up the floor with you, Figgins!" roared Tom Merry.

Figgins promptly searched on the mantelpiece, found two pins, and extended them to the captain of the Stiel.

"There you see!" he snarled.

"You silly ass!"

"You scolding chump!"

No more was said. Tom Merry's left arm was embracing Figgins' neck the next moment, and his right was very busy. Both Figgins' hands were busy. And in less time than it takes to tell, as a mobbed-up lot, Kerr and Wynn and Manners and Lowther were mixed up in a wild and whirling tangle.

Trump—trump—trump!

"Oo, you rooster!"

"Goo! You fathead!"

"Yow-ow! School House cad! You!"

"New House better! Goo!"

"Chuck the cads out!" roared Figgins.

Manners went out first, and landed in the passage with a bump. But it was Figgins who followed him, charged out of his own study, Kerr and Lowther came whirling out to seize, and stumbled over Figgins and Manners, and made a wild and wriggling heap in the passage.

Tom Merry and Fatty Wynn staggered out after these—whirling one another out. The uproar in the passage was terrific, and the excited janitors did not hear steps upon the stairs.

Mousteth of the Sixth, the head prefect of the New House, came up the stairs three at a time, with a cane in his hand.

He did not stop to talk. There was no need for words. Action was required, and the prefect's actions were prompt and emphatic.

"Whack! whack! whack! whack! whack!"

"Yow-ow! Oo! Yawcock!"

The combatants separated suddenly. Figgins & Co. halted back into their study, and slammed the door. The Terrible Three ran for the stairs, with Mousteth behind them, still lashing out with the cane.

Tom Merry and his chums were feeling decidedly flustered by the time they crept from the New House and fed across the quadrangle. Mousteth grinned at them from the doorway.

"And that's the rooster Figgins wants us to vote for!" growled Mousty Lowther, as they dodged into the School House.

"Cautious as voting for him!" sniffed Manners.

"Blissed if I wouldn't rather have Cutts!" growled Tom Merry.

"Seems to me we've had out—too many of them," said Lowther.

"Oh, don't be funny now!"

And in Figgins' study in the New House the Co. were rubbing their injuries, and growling with emphasis.

"Mousteth is rather a handy beast with the cane," Figgins remarked.

"Rotten!" growled Fatty Wynn. "I get three!"

"And I get two!" growled Kerr. "Blissed if I haven't had a mind to vote for a School House man, after all."

But Figgins shook his head.

"We're going to vote for Mousteth, if he skies us!" he said. "It's up to the New House."

And the Co. grunted and agreed.

CHAPTER 4.

A Most Important Meeting!

"THREE giddy candidates!" Jack Blake remarked.

It was the morning.

The previous evening the St. Jim's fellows had discussed the question of the vacant captaincy in all its bearings.

The School House fellows were almost unanimously of opinion that the new captain must be a School House chap. They really felt that the stern in their courses would object to anything else. That was a rule as firmly fixed as the axle system, or the laws of Moses and Pericles.

The New House fellows, on the other hand, were perfectly unanimous in declaring that the time had come for a change, and that it was high time the New House did a look in.

A popular candidate on the School House side, standing alone, would have been assured of an easy victory. For the School House had nearly twice as many occupants as the smaller House over the way.

But it had to be admitted that neither Knox nor Cutts was popular.

Also, the candidates split the vote.

With the School House divided between the two, the New House had an excellent chance of getting their man—especially as many School House fellows in the senior Forms undoubtedly preferred Mousteth to either Knox or Cutts.

Cutts, the sandy of the Fifth, was popular with a certain set, but he was a black sheep, and all the more distinguished.

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fellows were against him. Kner was a bully, and very much disliked in the Lower School.

Master of the New House had his faults, but he was a good footballer, a good captain of his House, and he had a great deal of influence. He was likely to make a better captain of the school than either of the others. As Tom Merry remarked, if he had only been in the School House there wouldn't have been any doubt about the election; they'd have planned for Mansell, and left both Coits and Kner out in the cold.

As it was, the matter was in great doubt. After morning lesson, Tom Merry called a meeting in the junior common-rooms to discuss the election. The meeting was well attended. Most of the juniors looked to Tom Merry to give them a lead.

"The question is, are we going to vote for a cad like Coits, or a brute like Kner, or let a New House chap romp home?" said Lumsley-Lumsley of the Fourth.

"It's withak a difficult matter," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked thoughtfully. "We don't want that bossard Coits, and we don't want that brute Kner—but, above all, we don't want a New House fellow."

"Hear, hear!"
"Some way out of it," said Jack Blake: "but we can't let the New House men get in, that's a dead cert."

"Yes, withak!"
"Gentlemen—" began Tom Merry. There was a buzz of talk, and Mervy Lowther rapped on the table.

"Silence for the chair!" he shouted.
"Who's the chair?" demanded Blake.
"I'm chairman of the meeting!"
"Who made you chairman?" a dozen voices inquired at once.

Rep, rep, rep!
"Order!" Gentlemen, Tom Merry will now address the meeting—"I have some remarks to make myself. Lowther—"

"You can go out into the passage and make them, D'Arcy. Tom Merry will now address the the honorable meeting—"

"I refuse to go out into the beastly passage and make my remarks—"

"Order!"
"I refuse to order!"
"Check that heckler out!" shouted Lowther. "Blessed if he isn't worse than a blessed sassafrilla. Beat him out!"

"You wotab—" "Silence!" shouted Mansell. "Pile in, Tommy!" "Gentlemen! I—" "I was going to say— Oh, you! Leggo, Mansell, you sly ass, or I shall strike you."

"Order!"
"Yes, shut up a bit, Gussy," said Blake. "You can have your whack after Tom Merry's finished!"

"Wot! Let Tom Mervy have his whack with I an finished!"
"But you never are finished, you know," remarked Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Wotab, I wotab—" "Silence!"

The united efforts of Blake and Herries and Digby reduced Arthur Augustus to indignant silence at last, and Tom Merry proceeded:

"Gentlemen, we have now reached an important and unequalled crisis in the history of St. Jim's—" "Hear, hear!"

"The good old school is in danger of falling from its high estate, and, in plain English, of sliding off to the giddy bew-woes."

"Is that plain English?" said Blake, in astonishment.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Silence!"

"We are in danger," resumed Tom Merry, "of getting a New House chap as captain of the school. Gentlemen, that calamity must be warded off! Such a state of things must never occur to pass. Every fellow must back up and keep the New House man out. Is anyone here who would have a New House bouncer be captain of the school? If any speak, for him have I offended. Is any here who would give his own House the go-by, and let in a rotter from over the way? If any speak, for him have I offended!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Give Shakespeare a rest, and come down to business," implored Blake.

"Gentlemen, if there are none here who would go back on their own House, and let in a bouncer from the rival show, let me speak, for none have I offended," went on Tom Merry, who had prepared that speech in advance, and was naturally determined to deliver it in its entirety. "Gentlemen, I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon, than such a Roman!"

"Hear, hear!"
"It is settled, therefore, gentlemen, that a School House chap must grace off with the Poet Prawn—"

"Hear, hear!"
"And any outsider who tries to wedge in must get it where the chickens got the chopper—in the neck!" said Tom Merry, waxing more eloquent as he proceeded, "but behold—"

"Well, that's a good word!" murmured Blake.
"Behold, at this crisis in our history, there is a split in the House. Two candidates have put up to divide the vote. And it must be admitted, that neither candidate possesses the confidence of this House."

"Vow twice—" "Yes, rather; pair of rotters."

"I guess that's so," said Lumsley-Lumsley; "but any old thing is better than having a New House man."

"Yes, withak! That would be the howl's light!"
"Gentlemen, there is therefore only one thing to be done—"

"Pile in!"
"What's the whooz?"
"There must be another candidate found!"
"Oh! I said the meeting is surprise."

"We must discover a candidate more acceptable to the feelings of this House," said Tom Merry firmly. "Some more respectable and respected person must be made to come forward, and then Kner and Coits will get the marble eye."

"Purvey allow me to speak—" "Order! Silence! Shut up!"
"I insist upon sayin' a word—" "Beat him out!"

"I refuse to be booted out. I have a candidate to suggest." Members of the meeting are allowed to suggest candidates," said Tom Merry graciously. "Back up, Gussy, and give him a name."

"You chaps wotabak that I put up as captain once—" "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wotab regard myself as a night and propah person to be skipkap of this coil. I have the honour to propose myself for the suffragens of this honourable meeting," said the swell of the Fourth, with dignity.

"Order!"
"I propose!"
"Kick him out!" roared the meeting.

Business was interrupted for a few moments, while Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was deposited in the passage on his neck. Kangaroo of the Shell slammed the door upon him, and his indignant voice was no longer heard.

"Now to business," said Tom Merry briskly. "Gentlemen, there are plenty of Sixth Form chaps in the School House in whom we have confidence. I may say that no person could possibly make a good captain of the school who did not possess the confidence of the juniors."

"Hear, hear!"
"Old Kildare was the right sort." "Good old Kildare!" chorused the meeting.

"Unless the Lower School backs up, I fear there will be a wome come in his place," said Tom Merry. "Gentlemen, I suggest a deputiation of the Lower School to wait upon a resper candidate, and make him come forward. Dared of the Sixth in our man."

"Dared is holdin' his light under a bushel at present. But this isn't a time for him to blush modest and waste his sweetness on the desert air. At this crisis in our history he has got to come forward, and if he won't come he's got to be made."

"Hurray!"
"Gentlemen, I appoint myself chairman of a deputiation—" "Like your cheek!" said Blake.

"I select Lowther, Mansell, Blake, Kangaroo, Herries, Digby, Rolly, and Lumsley-Lumsley as members of the deputiation."

"Good egg!" said all the juniors roused, with hearty concurrence.

"And as there is no time like the present, I vote that we

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strike the iron while it is hot, and get to Darrel at once. He's in his study now, sweating over some filthy exam. or other. Let's have him out."

"Hear, hear!"
"At a time like this, with the fate of the old school trembling in the balance, it's no time for Darrel to do the thinking of disgusting examinations."

"Shouts!"
"It's up to us to point out his duty to him and see that he does it. Gentlemen, the deputation will now accompany me to Darrel's study, and all the other fellows can come along and stay in the passage, and cheer when I give the signal."

"Good egg!"
Tom Merry's proposal was carried unanimously. The captain of the Sixth marched off, followed by the deputation; and the rest of the meeting marched after them like an army. And in a few minutes the Sixth Form passage was swarmed, and banging like a hive of bees.

CHAPTER 5. No Luck!

KNOX of the Sixth looked out of his study doorway. Knox's face was unusually amiable.
As a rule, Knox was what the juniors described as a beastly body, and if he found a junior within reach of his hand, that was generally, without reason for Knox to call him. That little habit of Knox's did not endear him to the Lower School.

But Knox the body, and Knox the candidate for the captaincy, were two quite different persons. Knox was very keen to get in as captain of the school. And he knew that he had not the slightest chance of getting in unless he could ingratiate himself with the juniors and obtain their votes.

So Knox treated his unimposing countenance into an unrepentant grin as he looked at the juniors in the Sixth Form passage.

"Hallo, what are you kids after?" he asked.
Blake winked at his comrades. He could not resist the opportunity of pulling the leg of the unpopular prefect.

"We're a deputation," he said gravely.
"Oh, are you?" said Knox amiably. "About the election, I suppose?"

"That's it. We've come to see the Sixth Form candidate."
"Oh, good!" said Knox.

"We want to impress upon him that he's going to get all our votes, and that it's his duty to keep all rival candidates out," explained Blake.

Knox nodded with satisfaction.
"That's right," he said. "You back up the Sixth Form candidate. It's simply ridiculous for Cutts to put up for election. There never was a Fifth-Former captain of St. Jim's, that I know of."

"That's what we all say," remarked Monty Lowther, entering into Blake's little joke. "Cutts is simply out of it."
"Certainly," said Knox.

"Like his chack to put up, don't you think so, Knox?"
"Decidedly."

"Besides, he isn't the kind of captain we want."
"Of course he isn't," agreed Knox.

"What we want is a really straight, out-and-out fellow—a chap one can rely on—a fellow who's as good as his word, and can always be depended on to play the game," said Mazzera.

Knox grinned again; a little uneasily. That description did not apply to him, and he knew it, and he was surprised to hear Mazzera speak like that. But it had not yet occurred to him that the deputation had come to the Sixth Form quarters to see anybody but himself.

"Yes, exactly," said Knox.
"You approve of our views, Knox, I hope!" asked Blake solemnly.

"Most certainly," said Knox.
"Then you'll come with us to ask Darrel to put up!" said Blake innocently.

Knox's jaw dropped.
"Darrel!" he ejaculated.

"Yes; we want Darrel to put up as a candidate—that's what we've come here for," Blake explained, apparently not noticing the change in the Sixth-Former's face.

Knox's teeth gritted together, and his eyes gleamed with fury.
"Yes—you've come here to ask Darrel to put up!" he shouted.

"Yes; didn't you know?" said Blake, with angelic innocence.
"You—you young rascal!"

"Why, just now you said you agreed with us and approved!" exclaimed Blake in astonishment. "There seems to be no pleasing you, Knox."

"You—you—I thought—I mean—"
"Won't you come with us to ask Darrel to put up!"

"No, I won't!" snarled Knox. "Get out of this passage at once. How dare you lads crowd round the senior studies like this!"

"But we've come to—"
"Clear off at once!"

There was a hoarse laugh from the crowd of juniors. Knox's charge of attitude, so soon as he discovered that the deputation was for Darrel and not for himself, was very striking. But the juniors did not mean to be ordered off. They had come there to interview Darrel; and they meant to interview Darrel.

"Sorry!" said Tom Merry, with great politeness, as Knox repeated his angry order. "We're here on business, you know, and we're not going just yet."

"I order you to clear off!" shouted Knox.
"You're not a prefect now, you know," said Blake coolly.

"The Head sacked you from that, after you went to the races!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"We take orders only from prefects," said Monty Lowther. "You are a bad boy, Knox, and we don't take any notice of you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"If you don't clear out of this passage, I'll come and boot you out!" roared Knox furiously.

"Well, if you can boot fifty chaps out, you're welcome to try it on," said Jack Blake, laughing. "I fancy somebody will get hurt, and I suspect that it won't be us. But come and begin the booting, Kasey!"

Knox did not come and begin the booting. Since he had been deprived of his prefectship by the Head his authority was gone, and as for using force, the juniors were rather too good for that to be successful. So Knox went back into his study and slammed the door forcibly; and the juniors chuckled with glee.

"This is where Kasey takes a back seat," Blake remarked. "Now let's get on with the washing. Here old Darrel out!"

Tom Merry thumped at Darrel's door, and opened it. Darrel of the Sixth was seated at the table, with books and papers round him. He did not look pleased at the intrusion as the junior deputation marched into his study.

"Hallo, what do you young chaps want?" said Darrel, which was not encouraging for a beginning. But Tom Merry did not waste.

"We want you, Darrel!" he said directly.
"Eh, what's that?"

"You've wanted to get up as captain of St. Jim's in the election now, haven't you? We're a deputation from the Lower School, and we've come to ask you."

Tom Merry made a signal to the crowd in the passage, and there was a roar of cheering at once.

"Harro!"
"Darrel captain! Harro!"

Darrel of the Sixth hurried and shook his head.
"Sorry," he said. "I've decided not to stand."

"Yes, we know that," said Tom Merry. "But we want you to alter your decision, you see."
"Sorry!"

"You admit, Darrel, that it won't do to let in rascals like Knox and Cutts—?"

"You mustn't talk of rascals like that, unless you're looking for a thick one," said Darrel frowning. "But if you're not satisfied with Knox and Cutts, there's another candidate—a really good man—Monty of the New House."

"Oh, cut!"
"What!" exclaimed Darrel, rising. Darrel was a Sixth-Former and a prefect, and he was not accustomed to such reproaches to his remarks.

"Ahem! I don't mean rate!" said Tom Merry hastily. "That was a slip of the tongue. What I mean is, that we can't have a New House founder as captain of the school."

"Monty's just fitted for the post," said Darrel. "I'm going to vote for him myself."

"You are!" gasped the juniors.
"Certainly! I think he's the best man."

"But he's a New House chap!" howled the deputation.
"Why about that?"

"Well, it's up to the School House, you know."
"Nonsense."

"Who's not!"
"Vote for Monty!" said Darrel. "He's the right man, in my opinion. And I think it's time the New House had a show, too. The school captain has always been elected from the House. Turn about in fair play."

"Then, too, Brains!" said Monty Lowther tragically.
"Oh, draw it mild, Darrel," said Tom Merry, in indignant expostulation. "Hardly you can see that we simply must get a School House chap in."

"I don't see it at all."

"You're not going back to your own Home, are you, Darrell?" howled Blake.

"Staff!" said Darrell. "Why shouldn't a New House chap be captain? You can't expect the Sixth to take notice of your blessed rag now."

The deputation gazed at Darrell in speechless indignation. Their great warfare with the New House described as "rag now!" The terrific importance of getting a School House fellow elected as captain regarded as nonsense! They could scarcely believe their ears. As Blake said afterwards, more in sorrow than in anger, he never would have believed it of old Darrell. The only possible explanation was that Darrell had been working too hard for that blessed exam., and had gone off his chump.

"Well," said Tom Merry, at last, in almost tragic tones. "I never expected you to speak like this, Darrell. If you can't see the importance of having a School House chap as captain of St. Jim's, there's no more to be said."

"Quite so," said Darrell. "Close the door after you, will you?"

It was disclosed with a vengeance. Tom Merry had said that there was no more to be said; but he had intended to say a good deal more, all the same. But Darrell stood with his hand on the open door, and there was nothing for it but to go. The deputation filed slowly and sorrowfully out of the study.

"Well," said Gave, in the passage, "is this where we sleep?"

"No, it isn't," snapped Tom Merry. "Shut your silly head."

And he led his followers anxiously away.

CHAPTER 6.
Declined with Thanks.

LANGTON of the Sixth was on the footer ground, chatting with Rashden, when he noticed quite an army of jassies marching up on him. Lascous glanced at them in surprise, and Rashden whistled. The two Sixth-Formers waited for the army to come up. Tom Merry and his change were in the lead, and more than fifty School House jassies brought up the rear. And they were all looking very merry.

"Hallo, what is it—horse on fire?" asked Langton.

"Ahem! No. We're a deputation," Tom Merry explained.

"My hat!"

"We've come to speak to you, Langton."

"File in!" said Langton genially. "No extra charge!"

"We've talked it over," said Tom Merry, with a wave of the hand towards his supporters, "and we've decided that you are not the kind of fellow to let the old school go to the dogs, if you can help it."

Langton looked astonished.

"Certainly not!" he agreed. "If I see St. Jim's on the move in the direction of the bow-windows I will hold it back with both hands. Any signs of it?"

The deputation looked a little uncomfortable. It was such an awfully serious matter that they really wished old Langton wouldn't take it in this humorous way.

"The fact is," said Tom Merry, after a brief pause, "there's going to be an election for a new captain, now Kidder's looked it."

"I believe I've heard something of it," asserted Langton. "There are three candidates—one of them a New House chap, and the others two awful cutters; the whole crowd quite impossible," Tom Merry explained. "We want you to come to the rescue, Langton."

"We want you to put up as skipper," said Blake.

Tom Merry raised his hand as a signal to his followers, and they burst into a cheer, as previously arranged.

"Langton captain! Hurry!"

Langton stared at them.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "You may as well save your breath. There are three candidates already, and I don't want to stand in their light. I haven't the slightest intention of putting up as captain."

"Never mind standing in their light," said Tom Merry. "That's what we want you to do. You know Knox is no good as captain."

"Well?"

"And Cutts is in the Fifth. Now you'll admit that we don't want a captain out of any Form but the top Form in the school."

"Yes, I do think that!" agreed Langton.

"Good! And Monteith is a New House chap, so he's barred. You see, some other chap must put up. You're the man!"

And the crowd cheered again.

"Langton for captain! Hurry!"

"But I'm not going to put up," said Langton calmly. "I'm not ambitious, and I think Monteith's a good man. Personally, I'm going to vote for Monteith."

"What about the prestige of the School House?" demanded Blake hotly.

"Oh, the jassies can look after that," said Langton genially. "It will be quite safe in your hands."

The deputation looked a little sheepish.

"We're not going to have the New House man at any price," said Tom Merry flatly. "We'd rather have even Cuz of the Fifth. You ought to put up, Langton."

"Thanks, so!"

"We're a deputation!"

"You've told me that before!"

"And we've come to put it to you, as a decent chap."

"Oh, cut off!"

"It's your duty—"

"Stuff—"

"Very well," said the chairman of the deputation, with dignity. "There are others! If you don't want to be captain of St. Jim's, Langton, there are other fellows who do, and we can find 'em!"

"Yes, rather?"

"Find 'em, then, and give 'em a rest," yawned Langton.

Tom Merry looked to Rashden, who was listening with a grin on his face. All the deputation and the crowd turned to Rashden, too, giving Langton the cold shoulder, which did not seem, however, to worry Langton very much.

"Rashden," said Tom Merry, "as a member of the Sixth, and a prefect, and a good footballer, you are just the chap to be captain of St. Jim's."

"I?" ejaculated Rashden, in surprise.

"Yes, you! We're a deputation of the Lower School—"

"My hat!"

"And to request you to stand for election!" Tom Merry raised his hand to the crowd, and they burst into a ringing cheer once more.

"Rashden for captain! Hurry!"

Rashden burst into a roar of laughter. The situation seemed to strike him as funny. He put his hands to his sides, and yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry regarded him indignantly. The crowd looked restless and wolfish.

"What are you looking at?" demanded Tom.

"Well, it struck me as humorous," said Rashden. "Thanks awfully for your good opinion, and for giving me the second offer after Langton; but I'm really not looking out for glory. Declined with thanks."

"Now, look here, Rashden—"

"Nuff said!" yawned Rashden. "Buzz off!"

And he walked away with Langton, to put an end to the interview, leaving the deputation standing where they were, and looking decidedly wolfish and very disappointed.

"Well, this beats the band!" said Money Louther. "All the blessed Sixth have grown very modest all of a sudden, and want to kilt their giddy Hibernation under a bushel."

"They don't want to stand in Monteith's way," growled Blake. "That's what it is. As for the prestige of the House they don't care tuppence for it. Disgusting, I call it!"

And the disappointed deputation walked away, and the crowd broke up. Evidently there was nothing doing.

Arthur Angustus was not the angry and excited deputation as they came into the School House. His eyes glared at them angrily.

"Well, has it gone all right?" he asked.

"No," growled Blake.

"Wasn't the Sixth-Form boyshead stand?"

"They won't!"

"Then you will have to come back to my proposition," said Arthur Angustus firmly. "You had better resolve to elect me as captain of St. Jim's, and— Yab! Oh! Yawoooooh!"

The deputation were fed-up. If Langton hadn't been a Sixth-Former and a prefect they would have banged him on the footer-ground. If they were either a Sixth-Former or a prefect, and he had happened along just in time to provide the angry deputation with a victim. They seized the arm of St. Jim's, and in disregard of his pain of protest, banged him in the doorway, and rolled him down the steps.

Then, somewhat relieved in their feelings, they went their way, leaving the arm of the Fourth in a dazed and dishevelled and breathless state at the foot of the School House steps.

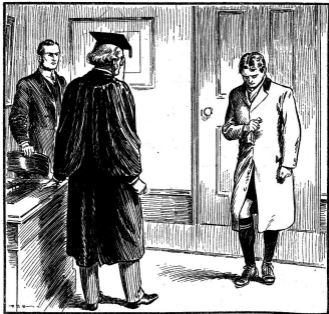
ANSWERS

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CHUCKLES, 14.



Monteth felt the Head's stern, grave glance upon him, and he strove to recover himself. He could only statch the toll-tale letter, and stare at the floor. "I am waiting for your explanation, Monteth," said the Head. (See Chapter 15.)

CHAPTER 7. A Sporting Offer!

GERALD CUTTS of the Fifth Form came along after lessons that day, and looked into Knorr's study.

Knorr of the Sixth was sitting at his table, with a pencil in his hand and a paper before him. Cutts grinned as he noted that the paper contained a list of names. The Sixth-Former was evidently going over the list of his possible supporters in the forthcoming election.

Knorr smiled and hid the paper with his hand as he saw Cutts looking in.

"It's a common custom to knock at a door before shoving oneself into another fellow's room," he remarked.

"Oh, we needn't stand on ceremony with one another!" said Cutts, coming into the study, and closing the door after him. "We're pals, you know."

"Not much like an old pal, setting up against me in this election," growled Knorr. "I never expected it of you."

"It's the unexpected that always happens, you know," said Cutts pleasantly. "It's the election I've come to speak to you about."

"Are you going to stand down, then?"

Cutts laughed.

"Not much."

"Then I don't see that there's anything to be said."

"I do. You know Monteth is putting up on the other side, and he will get a lot of support in this House. Most of the Sixth will plump for him. They don't want a Fifth-Former to be captain, and they don't want you, Knorr."

"They may have to have me, whether they want me or not!" snapped Knorr.

"We're splitting the vote on this side," resumed Cutts. "It looks to me as if the New House man will get in if we keep it up like this."

"Stand out, then!"

"I might as well ask you to stand out."

"You can ask if you like," said Knorr grimly.

"Can't we come to some arrangement?" Cutts asked.

"Look here, we're both opponents! Will you toss for it?"

Knorr stared at him blankly.

"Toss up for it!" he repeated.

"Exactly! We can't both get in as captains, that's a dead cert, and if we remain rivals for the House vote we shall most likely both get left, and the New House candidate will rump home. I'm willing to toss up for it—a single check or best two out of three!"

"Well, my hat! You are!"

"I think it's a fair offer. You've as much chance as I have, and it would be a sporting way of settling the point," said Cutts.

Knex felt in his pocket for his double-headed penny, and, finding it dead there, he shook his head.

"I don't believe in settling things that way," he said. "I'm going to stand for the election, and get in if I can. I think I've got a pretty good chance. You're really out of it being in the Fifth. The captain of St. Jim's has always been a Sixth Form."

"And a perfect," added Cutts. "You're not a perfect now."

"I shall get round the Head to give that back to me when I'm elected. Anyway, that's not essential. I can be elected without being a perfect. It was your fault I lost it. Your rotten scheme of an afternoon at the races?" growled Knex.

"Considering that you're in the Head's black books just at present, I fancy he won't be very pleased at your candidature."

"I don't care whether he is or not. He can't interfere. It's always understood that the fellows elect whomever they please as captain of the school."

"Yes; but you've elected a junior once," grinned Cutts. "The Head would have interfered, though, I think, if the kid hadn't got out of his own accord."

"He can't interfere with me. He might with you."

"Oh, rats! You won't come to an amicable arrangement, then?"

"I won't toss up for it, if that's what you mean. I think the Head's idiotic."

"You're not a sport," said Cutts, with a shake of the head. "Now, look here, Knex, I want very much to get in as captain, and if you don't split the vote I think I shall win it hands down. What will you take to stand out?"

"What will I take?" said Knex, in wonder.

"Yes, I'm in funds now. I had good luck over my last little speculation on the Turf. Will you take a tenner to stand out?"

"Keep your beastly money!" said Knex, with a fash.

"I'll see that you become vice-captain," said Cutts, unheeding. "I'll make you my right-hand man if you back me up. We'll change everything when we get the thing into our hands. I'll make it easy for you to pay off your old grudge against Tom Mory and his friends, and we'll have a regular fight on the 15th of February. There have been very serious water-kilners' rags. The loss of fellows has been very heavy."

"I'm in a work or two we'll make such a charge that Kildare won't know the school if he comes back. I've got all sorts of plans in my head. You back me up—"

"You back me up, if you come to that," said Knex. "Go and tackle Monteth. He may be willing to stand aside to oblige you, I don't think. Offer him a ten-pound note to stand out—if you want to leave the New House on your neck."

"I don't know," said Cutts thoughtfully. "Monteth is Kildare's other self now, but he used to be one of the boys. We were very much together once, and he knew what it was to go on the razzle after lights out. I think I'll go and have a little talk with him about old times. If he'd stand aside and get me the New House vote I should beat you hollow, Knex."

"You're welcome to try," growled Knex.

"Thanks, I will!"

Cutts of the Fifth swung out of the study. He crossed the quadrangle towards the New House with a thoughtful brow. He had a pleasant smile on a cheery and, however, for everyone he met. He was fully alive to the value of easy vote. And Cutts, masked as he undoubtedly was, was popular in a way. He was a rich, handsome, well-dressed, and the leader of fashion in the Middle School. Many fellows were anxious to get into Cutts's "set." Not to know Cutts was to be oneself unknown, as it were. It was an honor that was much appreciated to be asked on a "Sunday walk" with Cutts of the Fifth. And the stories that were whispered about Gerald Cutts made him a sort of mysterious and romantic figure in the eyes of many of the juniors. There were something very impressive, in a way, in the whispered rumors that Cutts "kept it up" at night with a card-playing set in the village, that he gave bridge parties in his study with the door locked, that he smoked cigars, and kept a bottle of whisky in his locker. A fellow who ran daily the risk of being expelled from the school must possess plenty of courage and nerve, and there was no doubt that Cutts did not know the meaning of the word fear. And, reckless and dissipated as he was in the hidden portion of his life, outwardly he was frank and genial, a generous fellow with his money, and a first-class footballer and cricketer. There were a large number of fellows, especially in the Fifth Form, who considered that Cutts would make a first-rate successor to Kildare in the captaincy of St. Jim's.

That was Cutts's great ambition, and if he succeeded, there was certain to be a big change after the Kildare regime. Kildare had kept down the fast set in the Upper Ten Girls Library.—No. 217.

School with an iron hand; but under Cutts's leadership they would have everything their own way.

And to be captain of the school while still in the Fifth Form—this was a distinction that was worth a struggle.

Cutts entered the New House, and he grinned as he heard a loud buzz of voices from the common-room at the end of the passage. He guessed that an election meeting was going on. Both Houses were in a buzz of excitement over it. He could hear Figgins's voice addressing the juniors, and he caught his own name.

"Plenty of canvassing, that's the watchword!" Figgins was saying. "We've got to point out to all the School House fellows that they simply must vote for our man, or else they'll be landed with a belly like Knex or a maskguard like Cutts."

"Hear, hear!"

Cutts grinned, and went on to Monteth's study, and knocked at the door. There was a burst of voices in the prefect's study at once. Monteth called out to the new-comer to enter, and Cutts went in. Baker and Gray and Webb, of the Sixth, all New House fellows, were with the prefect, and they were evidently talking over the election.

"Hallo! One of the giddy rival candidates!" said Baker, as Cutts came in.

"I hope I'm not interrupting," said Cutts smoothly. "I wanted to have a few words with Monteth; but another time—"

"Oh, that's all right," said Baker, rising. "We're only jangling over the election. Give you a look in later, Monty."

"Right!" said Monteth.

The three seniors scowled out of the study. Monteth looked inquiringly at Cutts. He did not know what the younger School House candidate could want with him.

"Spout down!" he said. "What is it? Are you going to resign from the election?"

"Not much!"

"What is it, then?"

"You see, we've landed in a three-cornered contest," Cutts remarked, coming to business at once. "We've got an overwhelming vote on our side, but it's split."

"All the better for me," remarked Monteth.

"Yes, though I don't think you'll get in, all the same." Monteth shrugged his shoulders.

"Most of the Sixth are for me," he said. "Darrel and Langton and Binkley have been over to tell me that they are going to vote for me, and a lot of your fellows will follow their lead."

"I've come over to propose an arrangement," said Cutts.

"Go ahead!"

"You used to be rather a sport, Monty. It's not so very long since we used to go down to the little parties at the Green Man together, and I haven't forgotten that there used to be sounds of revelry by night in your study."

The New House prefect frowned.

"That's all over, he said quietly. "That's quite finished with. I checked that kind of thing for good some time back."

"Honest Injun?"

"Yes; honest Injun."

"I wish you joy of your good resolutions," said Cutts, with a yawn. "By the way, I made thirty quid on the races last week."

"How much did you lose the week before, and the week before that?" asked the prefect sarcastically.

Cutts did not reply to the question.

"If you weren't so dead set on your new resolutions, I could give you a tip—"

"If you have the kindness to remember that you're talking to a prefect, Cutts?" said Monteth, with a gleam in his eyes. "I'll treat what you've just said as said in confidence, only don't talk like that any more. If I become captain of St. Jim's, I shall put my foot down on all that kind of thing. Any senior discovered mixed up in betting will be reported to the Head, and sacked."

"Banan rebuking sin!" grinned Cutts.

"You can get it how you like, but I'm going to carry on Kildare's work just where he left it off if I can. The fellows know it, and that's why they're backing me up."

"Then it's not much good my making you a sporting offer," said Cutts.

"Oh, you can make it."

"Will you toss up which of us withdraws from the election? Chag who loses stands out, and does his best to back up the other party?"

Monteth laughed.

"I'm not likely to settle a matter of this kind on the toss of a coin," he said. "No, I won't do anything of the kind."

"You won't get in as captain," said Cutts between his teeth. "That's a fair and sporting offer, and if you had any of the sport in you, you'd accept."

"Then we'll take it that I haven't. Goodbye!"
 "I'm not done yet. I'll make it impossible for you to get to an captain if you refuse my offer."
 "And how will you do that?" asked Monteith contemptuously.
 "Some of the things you have forgotten might be revived," said Catts meaningly. "You were never so careful in covering up your tracks as I was. Bits of paper with your name on them may still be in existence."
 "What?"

"If the Head knew about your little games of old, I fancy he would come down pretty heavy on your candidature."

Monteith looked fixedly at the Fifth-Former.

"Do you know what you're doing?" he asked.

"Talking business," said Catts.

"It's what people would call blackmail."

"Call it what you like. If you don't stand me fair, and square, you'll find me a dangerous enemy," said Catts. "I'm willing to settle the matter like a sportsman, and you refuse. Then look out for trouble. The offer's still open." Catts took a sovereign from his waistcoat pocket. "Now, then, be a sport—head or tail! If you guess right, I'll stand out of the election and back you up all along the line. If you're wrong, you stand out and back me up. Call it!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort."

"Then, look out for squalls!" said Catts, returning the coin to his pocket.

Monteith made no reply; but he rose, crossed to the door, and threw it open. Baker and Webb and Gray were talking in a group in the passage, and Monteith called to them.

"Will you fellows come here a minute?"

"Certainly!" said Baker. And the three seniors, somewhat surprised by Monteith's look, came back to the study.

Catts had risen to his feet, looking a little alarmed.

"What are you going to do, you fool?" he muttered crossly.

Monteith did not seem to hear him.

"Catts has just made me an offer, and I want you fellows to hear it," said the New House prefect. "He offers to top up which stands out of the election. If I refuse, he is going to try to take up some old stories to disgrace me with the Head and get a stopper on my candidature. That's his programme."

"My hat!" said Baker.

"The filthy old!" said Webb.

"Kick him out of the House!" said Gray.

The three Sixth-Formers came towards Catts, who faced them with glittering eyes. He had not expected for a moment that Monteith would have the nerve to give him away in this manner, and even the cool and acute blackguard of the Fifth was a little at a loss.

"You needn't trouble to kick me out," he said calmly.

"I'm going. Monteith has exaggerated a little."

"I've repeated exactly what you said," said Monteith.

"and I defy you to do your worst. I won't make any terms with you."

"Shall we chuck him out, Monteith?" asked Baker. "The cat can't come here and insult our captain and get off scot-free. He ought to go out on his rock."

"Keep your hands off!" said Catts disdainfully. "There isn't a fellow in the New House who could chuck me out."

"By Jove! I'll jolly soon show you!" exclaimed Baker. He made a spring at Catts. Baker was a bigger fellow than the Fifth-Former, but Catts was a master of the boxer's art, and he was as quick as lightning. His right came out as a flashing upper-cut, and Baker called out as on the floor, feeling as if his jaw had been knocked through the top of his head. Gray had advanced at the same moment—just in time to get Catts's left in the eye, and he was down on the floor with a gasp. Catts made a leap for the door and gained the passage.

"Ta-ti!" he said, with perfect coolness.

And he walked down the passage rather quickly, and strode into the quadrangle whistling.

CHAPTER 8.

Ten to Ten.

BEFORE half an hour had passed the effray in Monteith's study was the talk of the school.

Jameson of the Third had seen it from the passage, and he had told his dear Wally D'Arcy, and D'Arcy raised the School House generally.

The cause of the trouble was not known, but the trouble itself was discussed in every study with great interest and hot-headed excitement.

The story grew at each repetition.

Ever long all the School House finally believed that Catts of the Fifth had gone over to have a friendly talk with the New House candidate, and that he had been set on by

Monteith and his friends, and that he had licked four or five of them in a stand-up fight, and then walked out of the house as cool as a cucumber, nobody daring to lay a finger on him.

Needless to say, Catts's popularity in his own House went up with a bound in consequence.

Even Tom Merry & Co. felt some of their opposition to Catts melt away at that thrilling account of how he had stood up for the honour of his House in the lions' den, as it were.

"The beggar is plucky, there's no mistake about that!" Tom Merry observed. "If he wasn't such a rotter, I wouldn't ask for a better captain."

"Fancy looking at a whole gang of them!" chuckled Blake. "Catts knows how to stand up for his own House, at any rate."

"I dare say the yarn's a bit exaggerated."

"Well, I saw Gray of the Sixth, and he's got an eye as black as the nose of a squid," said Monty Leather. "No doubt about his eye."

"And young Jameson says that Baker can't talk, his jaw's so bad," remarked Herries.

"Ah, ha, ha!"

"As for Catts only went over for a friendly talk, when they jumped on him," remarked Manners. "It was a rotten thing to do."

"Well, we haven't heard Monteith's account, you know," Tom Merry remarked cautiously.

"There's no doubt there was trouble," said Blake. "and I suppose Catts couldn't have started it of his own accord, with four or five fellows against him."

"No; that's reasonable."

"Yess, wathah! They're up against the School House candidate, of course," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy remarked.

"I really think I shall give Catts my vote, dear boys, for standing up for the honour of the House in that wiggly way."

"Well, I think I'd rather have Catts than Monteith," confessed Tom Merry. "and certainly rather than Kaec."

"Oh, pass; Knox is out of it, anyway."

"We've got to make our choice among them," remarked Kangaroo, the Cornstalk junior. "We can't get another candidate on this side."

"We don't want any of them!" growled Blake. "But Catts seems the best of the bunch. If we must have one of them, let it be Catts."

The juniors assented, but there was no enthusiasm. They did not want Gerald Catts for captain of St. Jim's.

"It's rather out of old Darrel," said Tom Merry, in an earnest tone. "He's just the man to take Kidnara's place. It's not only that blessed exam, he's working for, but it's his blessed society—he doesn't want to shove himself forward and get into Monteith's way. Of course Monteith isn't a bad sort. But he's New House, and that settles it."

"Yass, wathah!"

"By the way, I've got to go to tea with Darrel," said Tom Merry, looking at his watch. "Blessed if I know what for, but he's asked me to tea."

"Hil Jove! Darnell's asked me, too!"

"And me, too," said Blake.

"And me!" said Kangaroo.

"And me!" said Monty Leather.

"And me!" said Manners.

"And me!" chimed in Herries and Digby and Rolly and Lunder-Lunder.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in astonishment. "What's the matter with old Darrel? He doesn't ever have juniors to tea, and now he seems to have asked half the blessed Lower School!"

"Yass, wathah! It's extraordinary!" said D'Arcy.

"There must be something on."

"Some move in the election, perhaps," said Blake suspiciously. "Darrel is backing up the New House men. Perhaps he wants to talk us over."

"He won't talk me over!" said Tom Merry fairly. "No New House for me!"

"Same here!"

"Yass, wathah!"

"We'll be on our guard!" chuckled Blake. "If he begins to talk elections, we'll change the subject every time."

"Yass; you leave that to me, dear boys! You can rely on me to lead the conversation off any dangerous topic, as a fellow of tact and judgment!"

"Time to see Tom Merry." Mustn't be late when having tea with a prefect."

"But Jove! Wait while I go and change my tie, dear boys!"

"How yer tie!" said Blake. "Come along!"

"Wegally, Blake, it's up to us to be wathah decently dressed on an occasion like this—"

"Come on!"

"Largo my seat, you can! I am going to take off my tie, and—"

"That's all right; I'll take it off!" said Blake, jerking D'Arcy's necktie off. "If that's all you want, it's done. Now come on!"

"You utah aw!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, wringing in the muscular grasp of his chair. "I cannot go to a prefect's study without a tie on!"

"There's no satisfying some people!" said Blake. "Lend me a hand with him, somebody, and we'll show him whether he can go or not!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Hands off, you silly ass! I protest! I shall lose my tempah!"

But the grinning juniors did not heed D'Arcy's alarmed expostulations. They grasped him on all sides, and walked him away, resisting vainly, towards the Sixth Form passage.

"You utah, awful, frightful ass!" gasped Arthur Augustus, as he was manœuvred helplessly along. "You are perfectly aware that I cannot appear in a prefect's study without a necktie! Blake, I shall threaten you—"

"Kin, on!"

"I shall lose my tempah—"

"How he runs on!" said Blake. "Give him another shove!"

"Ow! I shall drop your acquaintance—"

"I shall drop you, and heavy, if you don't stop wriggling!" said Blake. "Here we are! Knock at the door, somebody!"

Tom Merry knocked, and Darrel's cheery voice called out to them to enter. The door was opened, and Arthur Augustus walked in. He could not help walking in, for Blake and Loutcher had held of his arms, and they walked in, and D'Arcy had no choice about accompanying them.

Also, Harries was helping him from behind with his knee. Arthur Augustus looked very flustered and very indignant, but he tried to calm down as the Sixth-Former's amazed glance turned upon him. Arthur Augustus, above all, was always very keen on keeping up appearances.

"How we see, Darrel!" said Tom Merry. "Tee of an!"

"Glad to see you," said Darrel, affably.

"You'll excuse Gussy coming without a necktie," said Blake, while Gussy gave him a withering glare. "It's no good saying anything to Gussy; he will do these things, you know!"

"Oh, don't sneeze!" said Darrel.

"Some kids get into slovenly ways, and there's no curing them," Monty Loutcher remarked. "We've been talking to Gussy, too—"

"Oh, you utah wettah!" breathed Arthur Augustus.

"Sit down, kids!" said Darrel hospitably.

"Thanks awfully!"

"What do?"

"Pony excuse me a few moments while I wan and get a necktie—"

"Sit down!" said Blake, unheeding. "Try to behave yourself in company, Gussy! It doesn't matter what you do in the study, but Darrel's a prefect, you know, and this is where a chap puts on his company manners."

Arthur Augustus turned perfectly purple with indignation. To be told to behave himself in company was the last straw—he, whose manners would have taken the shine out of the most finished polish of Vose de Vere.

"You utah beast!" he exclaimed.

"Don't sag here, Gussy!" warned Loutcher. "Remember, you're in company!"

"You wettah!"

"Allow us to apologise for Gussy, Darrel!" said Monty Loutcher. "These Fourth Form kids, you know what they're like, and—"

"These what?" demanded Blake wrothly. "Why, you—you Shillibah—"

"Ahem!" said Darrel. "Won't you kids sit down to tea?"

Blake plumped Arthur Augustus into a chair. Darrel's table was not for tea, and his bag had certainly exhaled the fumes of the preparation for the feed. The sight of Darrel's table would have delighted Fatty Wynn's heart if he had been there. Good things were simply piled on the table, till a novice would have said that the fatted calf had grazed under the goodly viands. The juniors, who had healthy, youthful appetites, surveyed that festive board with keen appreciation.

Tom to tea was a good number, even for a cozy corner study, but there was room for them. An extra table had been shoved in, and the cloth spread over both; there were seven chairs and a four, and accommodation for everybody with a little squeezing. Why Darrel of the Sixth should crowd his study with a party of juniors to tea was a mystery, unless he had sinister motives. Darrel, certainly, was a very

gentle and good-natured fellow, but his gentleness and good-nature had never taken such a pronounced form before.

Tom Merry & Co., while fully prepared to enjoy the feed, were on the look-out for the junior exploits if they should appear. They weren't going to be led into waiting for Monteth of the New House as the price of a feed—waiting their giddy birthright, as Loutcher expressed it, for a morsel of postage.

They knew Darrel's view—that Monteth was the best candidate going, and that he ought to be elected irrespective of his House. It was really very decent of old Darrel to back up Monteth in this way, because they had never pulled together very well personally. But the juniors felt that Darrel didn't really grasp the seriousness of the situation.

To let in a New House fellow as captain of St. Jim's would be letting the old school go with a headlong rush to the giddy low-voiced—at least, that was how the intensely patriotic School House youngsters looked at it. The Sixth had failed to guard the prestige of the House, and it was up to them—Tom Merry & Co.—to see that the School House wasn't given away in the election.

At the same time, it was rather difficult to refuse Darrel what he might ask, for they all liked and respected Darrel, and he was standing there a handsome feed. The only thing to be done was to be diplomatic, and to turn the conversation whenever it approached the subject of the election.

And, with that plan in mind, the juniors settled down to the feed, doing full justice to it.

CHAPTER 9.

Keep Off the Grass.

DARREL was hospitably met.

"The Sixth-Former" said himself out "to make the juniors feel quite easily and quite at home, and he succeeded. Everybody in the study felt on the best possible terms with himself and everybody else, excepting, perhaps, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was still somewhat worried in his mind by the loss of his tie.

The first keen edge of their appetites worn off, and a terrific trowel having been made upon the provisions, conversation became general and animated.

If Darrel intended to approach the subject of the election, he did so diplomatically. He talked football for a start—and not only football, but junior football—showing a knowledge of the various features and the form of the various junior players that quite warmed the hearts of his guests towards him.

But the eleven hoof appeared at last.

"Talking about football," said Darrel, "it's a great pity Kildaro's gone. He will be missed in the first eleven."

"Yess, wettah!" remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I have been thinkin' about that. I've had an idea for a long time that it would be a good scheme to play some matches in the first eleven. I should be willin' to—"

"Pass the jam!" said Monty Loutcher.

"I should be willin' to—"

"Pass the doughnuts," said Tom Merry.

"I was going to wettah—"

"Do you want all the jam?" asked Loutcher.

"Certainly not, you ass. I was—"

"Then pass it."

"And don't interrupt Darrel," said Blake severely. "I shan't bring you out to tea again if you don't behave, Gussy."

And Arthur Augustus being thus reduced to a state of speechless fury, Darrel had an opportunity of proceeding, which he did.

"We shall have to be careful to get a good football skipper in Kildaro's place, when we hold the election," he remarked.

The juniors exchanged quick glances. There it was at last, but Tom Merry felt that he was equal to the situation.

"Yess—that's why we want you to put up as captain, Darrel," he said. "May we conclude that you have changed your mind, and will stand?"

"Hear, hear!" said all the tea-party.

"Abeas, no!" said Darrel. "I was thinking of Monteth. Now, Monteth—"

"Do you think we are likely to have rain to-day, Darrel?" asked Blake, in a great hurry.

Darrel stared at him. He did not understand what rain this day had to do with the election of a captain for St. Jim's; and he did not know that Blake was carrying out a preconcerted scheme for changing the conversation. Certainly Blake might have managed it a little less abruptly, if he had had time.

"Rain to-day?" repeated Darrel. "I really don't know, Blake. I wasn't thinking about the weather. About Monteth—"

"It will smack up the ground for football if we do," said Blake.

"Lads say it will, but—"

"Bill, it will be good for the farmers," said Blake, with a sudden concern for the agricultural interests of the country. "After all, football isn't everything."

"Quite so," said Manners. "I hear it has been raising in Surrey—"

"It generally does rain when—the weather isn't fine!" was Herries' brilliant contribution to the conversation.

"Tell a funny story, quick," Tom Merry whispered to Lowther. Mopsy Lowther nodded! He was always ready with a funny story.

"Speaking of rain—" he began.

"I was speaking of the election," said Darrel, who was beginning to look a little queer.

"Yes, but rain," said Lowther. "There was a flood once—"

"That was a long time ago, wasn't it?" said Herries.

"I'm not speaking of the flood, am, but of a flood—our old flood," said Lowther. "There were two mistresses—man and wife, you know—were caught in the flood—"

"Were they really?" said Manners, playing up carefully.

"They were!" said Lowther. "They lived in a lovely cottage, you know, and the flood flooded there, you know."

"Did they get wet?" asked Digby solemnly.

"They did!"

"But Jove! I trust their clothes were not washed," said D'Arny.

"They were simply washed out of their cottages," said Lowther. "They would have been drowned, but—what do you think? The men floated out of the window on his violin—"

"Greatest Scott!"

"And his wife accompanied him on the piano!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A man couldn't float on a violin," said Herries, who was never known to see a joke. "It wouldn't bear his weight."

"Yes, walloah!" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

"Prawps it was a 'cello, or a double-bass, walloah!"

"Oh, pass the jam!" said Lowther.

"To come back to business," said Darrel. "I'm really got something to say to you kids. I think you carry this feeling of House rivalry a bit too far. Now, I don't want you to carry it so far as to elect a captain for the school who won't be worthy of the traditions of St. Jim's—"

"Very old, the traditions of St. Jim's, ain't they?" said Manners thoughtfully. "It's amazing to think what a long time the old school's been here. King John—"

"Never mind King John," said Darrel, rather testily.

"There was a school here, you know, before the dissolution of the monasteries in Henry the Eighth's time—I mean the dissolution of the monasteries," said Lowther. "I once heard it explained that the dissolution of the monasteries took place because Henry the Eighth was a dissolute king."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled all the juniors dutifully.

"You see," said Darrel, apparently impervious to Lowther's funny efforts. "We've got to look at this matter from a broad standpoint—"

"The dissolution of the monasteries, you mean?" asked Lowther innocently.

"No; the electing of a new skipper for the school," said Darrel, quite sharply.

"Oh, that's all right," said Reilly. "You can rely on us to keep the New House man out, Darrel darling."

"I don't want that!"

"Speaking of football—" said Blake.

"New, do stick to business," said Darrel. "I think you kids might be willing to listen to a word of advice from me. Now, Moustiff—"

"We'll be jolly glad to have some advice from you, Darrel," said Blake heartily. "What do you think of our chances in our fixture with the Grammar School?"

"Never mind the Grammar School now—"

"But Gordon Gay's team is in great form," remarked Tom Merry. "They expect to wipe up the ground with us at the next match. I think—"

"To put it plainly—" began Darrel.

"You think the Grammarians will beat us?" said Kangaroo seriously.

"I wasn't thinking about the Grammarians. I think—"

"You think we shall beat them?"

"Look here, you kids—"

"Talking of Grammar School," said Lowther blandly.

"There was once a schoolmaster who—"

But that story was never told. Darrel rose to his feet. Probably he was beginning to understand by that time, and he was fed-up. The juniors rose too, with grave and serious faces. They had succeeded in keeping the prefect of the dangerous topic, though some of their efforts had been,

perhaps, a little obvious. But it had been necessary, as Lowther said, to keep off the grass at any price.

"Thanks for the tea, Darrel," said Tom Merry cordially. "It was really ripping, and we have had a ripping good time."

"Yess, walloah!"

"Many thanks, Darrel, old man."

"And we hope you'll come and have tea in our study some time, Darrel—"

"We shall be glad to have you—"

"And you can depend on us to keep the New House man out of the election—"

"Good-bye, Darrel!"

And Tom Merry & Co. marched out of the study, leaving their host looking after them with a most peculiar expression on his face.

CHAPTER 10.

Fishes Works the Oracle.

TOM MERRY & CO. were in a dilemma, and that day and the next there might have been observed unusual clouds of thoughtfulness upon their youthful brows.

It was a peculiar and really difficult situation. Saturday had been fixed for the election, and on that day a new captain was to be selected for St. Jim's. The juniors had hoped to hear from Kiddars that he was returning. But though news had been received from the old captain of St. Jim's, it was to the effect that his uncle was no better, and that he was going to remain with him—probably for a very considerable time. Kiddars's return, therefore, being out of the question, the election would proceed.

On Saturday a new captain would come into his post, and who was it to be?

On previous similar occasions, Tom Merry & Co. had had a candidate to back up, and they had backed him up right heartily.

But the present situation was out of the common. There were three candidates, of all of whom they disapproved most intensely.

They had the keenest possible interest in the election, and yet they felt that they could not vote for any of the candidates.

To remain away from the election, and not vote at all, was one resource, but that would leave the school on its way to the low-ways. Suppose the New House man got in? It was quite likely, especially with the School House vote split; more than ever likely if a number of School House fellows refrained from voting at all.

And the Co. confessed that, rather than have a New House captain, they'd prefer Gerald Cutts of the Fifth—or even Kinn at a pinch.

Yet it was difficult to make up their minds to vote for Cutts or Kinn. Both the School House candidates were "rotten," there was no denying that. Moustiff had his faults; but he was better than either of them.

Tom Merry's idea of getting another School House candidate to put up, had been an excellent one—it had only one drawback, that it would not work.

The School House voices were satisfied with Moustiff as a candidate; many of them really thinking that it was time the New House had a show; others backing up Moustiff because it was guessed that Kiddars had washed them to do as when he left.

The disastrous result of electing a New House fellow to the captaincy did not seem at all apparent to the seniors, though the juniors never forgot it for a moment.

"We simply must get another candidate to put up!" Tom Merry declared. "If the Sixth won't take it on, we might tackle the Fifth. If Cutts had the cheek to put himself forward, there may be other Fifth-Formers with just as much nerve. Suppose we try old Lefevre—his's not a bad sort."

"Rather on aw," said Mopsy Lowther.

"Well, King Log is better than King Stork," said Tom. "Better have an aw like Lefevre, than a rotter like Cutts."

"Yes, that's true," remarked Manners. "But I hear that Lefevre is backing Cutts up. Nearly all the Fifth are for Cutts. They're as pleased as Punch at the idea of a Fifth-Former getting in as captain of the school."

"It's no go," said Kangaroo. "Lefevre is going round canvassing for votes for Cutts. He was jawing to me today. He can't go back on his own man."

"That settles it, then. Where are we going to dig up a candidate?" demanded Tom Merry, in despair. "Here's the captaincy of a good old school going begging, and nobody will take the trouble to pick it up."

"It's a rotten position," said Blake. "It looks to me as if we shall have to make our choice among the three of them."

"I have already made a suggestion, dash boys!" "Shut up!" roared the jokers all together. They were quite fed-up with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's suggestion of himself as a possible captain.

The study door opened, and George Figgins looked in upon the anxious conclave. Tom Merry & Co. glared at Figgins.

"Well, what do you want, you New House waster!" growled Blake. "Come to tell us your man has withdrawn?"

"No fear!" said Figgins cheerfully. "I've come to talk to you. The election is pretty close now, and it's time you fellows made up your minds."

"We've made 'em up," granted Tom Merry. "We're not going to let in a New House man at any price."

"Figgins nodded. "We're solid for Monteth, over the way," he said, "and nearly all the Sixth-Formers in the School House are for our man, and some of the Fifth. We've got a jolly good chance, so long as your vote is split over here."

"Oh, yes?"

"What I'm afraid of is that Knox and Cutts will come to some arrangement," said Figgins. "They're a pair of rotten!"

"Oh, cheer it! And let our candidates alone!" growled Blake, which rather cool, considering the opinions he had himself expressed of the candidates in question.

"I want you fellows to look at it sensibly," said Figgins solemnly. "This is a matter affecting the whole school. Cutts came over the other day and made a row with our man."

"Licked half a dozen of your fellows off his own bat?" grinned Blake.

"Oh, rot! Do you know what the cause of the row was?"

"No. I suppose they started nagging him."

"They didn't," said Figgins quietly. "The row started because Cutts tried to threaten our man. First he offered to come up with him which should return from the election, and as Monteth refused, he threatened to make up some old stories to discredit him with the Head."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"How do you know?" asked Tom Merry.

"It's got out," said Figgins. "Monteth called in three or four seniors, and told them what Cutts had said in Cutts's presence; then the row started. It's the talk of the house now. Between ourselves, it's pretty well expected that once upon a time Monteth wasn't quite up to the mark. Like he is now. There used to be trouble between him and Kildere about it. But he's straight as a die now. All you fellows will admit that."

"Oh, he's straight enough, I believe!" admitted Tom Merry.

"And Cutts isn't," said Figgins. "What do you think of the kind of a fellow who'd use such a dodge for getting a rival out of the election?"

"Reason?"

"Coddish!"

"Just like Cutts."

"Wack out-dab!"

"And that's the fellow you're going to vote for," said Figgins. "You'll keep out a really decent chap like Monteth, because he belongs to our House, and you'll let in a blackmailing rotter like Cutts!"

Tom Merry shifted uneasily in his seat.

"We're not sure we're going to vote for Cutts," he said.

"Keep, then—is he any better?"

"Oh, we shan't vote for Knox at any price—he's quite outside the limit!"

"Yess, wathah!"

"Then, it's Cutts or no-body," said Figgins. "Now, look here, I've been thinking this over. It's all very well to stand up for one's own House; but I tell you can-

didly, if Cutts were our man, and Monteth your man, I'd vote for your man, and blow his House."

"Honest Julius?" said Blake.

"Honest bright!" said Figgins solemnly. "What's going to become of the school, with a rotten outsider like Cutts for captain?"

"But—but—"

"I think you fellows ought to vote for Monteth, the only decent candidate," said Figgins. "I'd do it in your place—better bright?"

The juniors looked at one another. Figgins's manner was very grave and serious, and they knew that he meant what he said. And they could not help admitting that there was something in his arguments.

"Now, what do you say?" asked Figgins persistently.

"Well, after what you've told us, we won't vote for Cutts," said Tom Merry, looking round. "I think that's agreed."

"Yes, rather."

"And—and perhaps we'll vote for Monteth," said Tom, taking the plunge. "I—I think we can say that unless another School House candidate puts up in time, we'll vote for your man, and chance it."

And the meeting adjourned. Figgins's face brightened up.

"That's the tone!" he exclaimed. "You won't be sorry for it. You'll find that Monteth will give the School House fair play. Darrot's satisfied about that, so I should think you may be. You'll vote for Monteth!"

There was a long pause. Figgins's earnestness had made a deep impression upon the juniors; and he had only voiced, too, thoughts that had been lurking in their own minds. And they felt, too, a sort of glow in making such a generous concession to the rival House.

"Yes," said Tom Merry & Co. at last.

"Good eye!" said Figgins heartily.

"It's understood that if a decent School House candidate puts up, we vote for him," said Tom Merry, "otherwise, we back up your man."

"That's good enough," said Figgins.

And he departed, to carry the good news back to the New House. There is was received with the keenest satisfaction.

There was no doubt now as to Monteth's success. For Tom Merry & Co. would carry the bulk of the School House voters with them, and both juniors and Cutts were certain to be left out in the cold. And the New House rejoiced at the prospect.

When Figgins had gone, the chance of the School House looked at one another rather gloomily.

"I suppose it's the only thing to be done," said Blake.

"There is really an alternative, dash boy."

"Oh, rats!"

"After all, we'll give Monteth a trial," said Tom Merry cheerfully, "and old Figgys is a good sort, too, and he's pleased as Punch about it."

"But a New House chap captain of St. Jim's?" granted Horrie. "I don't like the idea."

"Can't be helped. Better than Knox or Cutts."

And the juniors decided that that was the case. But they did not like it; and they looked forward to the election with feelings of anything but enthusiasm.

CHAPTER 11.

Booges in Council!

LEWISON of the Fourth came into Gerald Cutts's study with a curious expression on his face. Lewison was Cutts's right-hand man in the election, and he kept the Fifth Form candidate informed of the state of feeling among the junior electors. He formed the head of a com-

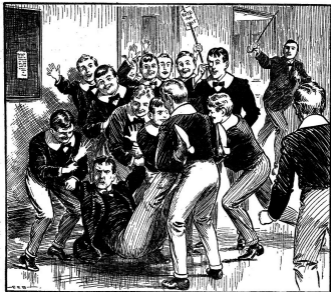
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"If you don't take that notice off the board, I'll lick you!" roared Knox. "Bump him!" yelled Binks, and with one accord the juniors sprang on the proffer, and bumped him—hard. (See Chapter 12.)

trities of canvasses who were seeking votes for Cutts, and he had had a certain amount of success. Cutts was taking the election very seriously, and bending all his energies to the task of getting in as captain of St. Jim's.

Cutts was looking very cheerful just now. He had been comparing notes with Knox, and lists of supporters, and he had overheard the Sixth-Former that he had very little chance of getting in. By standing for election, Knox would only split the House vote and jeopardise Cutts's chances. And Cutts made that clear to him, and he knew that Knox was very likely to withdraw altogether, if it was made worth his while. It was a question of making it worth his while.

"Hallo, what's happened now?" asked Cutts, noticing the expression upon the face of the end of the Fourth at once.

"Trouble," said Levison. "I've just heard that Tom Merry & Co. have gone over to the enemy."

Cutts frowned.

"Which means—"

"They're going to vote for Monteth," said Levison. "Figgins has talked them over somehow. And two-thirds of the juniors of this House will vote the way Tom Merry votes. That's a fact. He has a lot of influence."

"I knew he had, bang him!" said Cutts, gritting his teeth. "I never expected that. What about loyalty to the House?"

Levison grinned.

"They don't want you at any price," he explained. "They'd rather have a New House chap, or any old thing."

"Don't be cheeky, you rat!" growled Cutts. "Well, I shall put a spoke in their wheel, if that's the little game."

If Knox stood out, I should beat Monteth at the polls, and I can arrange it with Knox. But this news changes it all. Monteth will have to stand out now."

Levison whistled.

"But will he?" he asked.

"He will be made to. Then Knox can stay in, to keep up appearances. I don't specially want a walk-over. Monteth will get it in the neck, that's all. I've got the plan cut and dried. I've made ready, you see, in case it was necessary. And it is necessary now, and he will stand out as late before the election that his party won't have much time to replace him with another man. Besides, the School House won't vote for any fellow they put up in Monteth's place. His withdrawal will break their party right up, I think."

"Not much doubt about that," said Levison. "But how on earth are you going to get him to withdraw. I never saw a fellow so dead set on anything as Monteth is on this election. He's much keener than he was when he contested it with Kidder."

"I've got a way, and you are going to help me."

"I'll do anything I can, of course," said Levison. "I'm on your side, Cutts. You know how to make it worth a fellow's while to back you up."

Cutts smiled assentingly for a second.

"Exactly," he said. "Now, you've heard the stories some of the fellows tell about Monteth—it was before your time here, but you must have heard."

"I've heard some things from Mellich," said Levison. "Monteth used to be one of the boys, I understand."

"Just so. He used to go the pace more than I did," said Cutts.

"How he must have gone it hot."
"He did! And he hasn't as much sense in his head as I have in my little finger," said Cutts. "I never put anything on paper; but Monteth used to. He thought nothing of sending a note to Joliffe, the landlord of the Green Man—in his own hand. He would send notes to bookmakers about putting money on horses."

"The silly ass!" said Levinson contemptuously. "I wonder why they didn't blacken him."

"He was blackmailed, and I understand it cost him a pretty penny to get some of his paper back," said Cutts. "Kildare helped him."

"Oh, I see!"
"But very likely some of those bits of paper are still in existence," said Cutts. "Monteth can't know whether they are or not."

"No, but—"
"And if one were sent to the Head—say a note in Monteth's hand, fixing up a meeting at the Green Man—"

"Cutts?"

"Well!" said Cutts sagely, "why not?"
"That would be playing it horribly low down," faltered Levinson. "You were in the same game with Monteth at that time. Now you'd give him away."

"Are you going to start preaching to me, you young rascal?"

"No; but—but— How am I going to help you?" said Levinson suddenly. "I don't like the scheme, and I can't see how I can help."

"You're the only fellow who can help. That note of Monteth's to Joliffe—it happens that I can't lay hands on it. I've asked Joliffe, but he says he never kept any of the papers. I think he doesn't care about betraying Monteth, or he may be speaking the truth, I don't know. But the paper's got to be found."

"Well, I can't find it," said Levinson.

"Yes, you can."
"I don't understand—"

"That paper," said Cutts slowly, "is worth a couple of quid to me. I'd hand over two sovereigns as soon as you bring it to me."

"But—but—"

"Oh, don't pretend to be a fool!" said Cutts irritably. "You make half-crowns by writing out impositions for fellows, because you can imitate handwriting so well it can't be detected. You had your knife into Brooks of the Fourth once, and nearly got him sacked from the school by writing a letter in his hand."

Levinson turned pale.

"You—you don't want me to—to—"
"I want you to bring me that note from Monteth to Joliffe, fixing up a meeting at the Green Man," said Cutts grimly. "I don't care how or where you get it."

"But—but suppose it came out—"
"How could it come out? Monteth couldn't possibly smell a rat. He knows that some of his old notes may still be in existence—in fact, I told him that I could lay hands on one of them. If it's a spoof note, he won't know it. He'll think naturally that it was got from Joliffe."

"I—I suppose he would—"
"I can tell you almost word for word a note that I saw in Joliffe's place once—written to him by Monteth," said Cutts.

Joliffe chuckled it into the fire after reading it, I remember, but Monteth doesn't know that. I can give you the wording. I've got a good memory."

Levinson shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it's all in the game," he said. "I'm hard up, and when a fellow's hard up he can't afford to be too particular. Is the note worth five quid to you, Cutts?"

"No, it isn't," snapped Cutts.

"Then I'm afraid I sha'n't be able to find it," said Levinson coolly.

Gerald Cutts glared at him.

"If you begin baggling with me, you greedy young scoundrel—"

"I'm on the make, same as you are," said Levinson, with another shrug of his thin shoulders. "There's a certain amount of risk, and it's a dirty, scabby thing to do, anyway. I'm not going to do it for nothing. You've done very well out of the race lately. I saw several fivers in your pocket-book yesterday."

"I've a jolly good mind to—" began Cutts, laying his hand on a ruler.

Levinson did not flinch.

"If you touch me with that ruler I'll go straight to Darrel, and tell him what you've said to me," said the junior, between his teeth.

Cutts laid down the ruler. For some moments he stared THE GEN LIBRARIAN—No. 117.

at the end of the Fourth, Levinson meeting his stare with cool indifference.

"Well, it's a go?" said Cutts, at last. He felt that he had met his match in his precious supporter.

"Five quid!" said Levinson.

"Yes," said Cutts obstinately.

"Cash down?" said Levinson.

"Look here—"
"Cash down, or it's a go?"
Cutts set his teeth hard. He opened his pocket-book, took out a crisp five-pound note, and passed it to the Fourth Forman.

CHAPTER 12.

The Shadow of the Past.

D R. HOLMES, the Head of St. Jim's, sat in his study, with a letter in his hand, and a wrinkle of deep and painful thought in his brow. The letter—a half-sheet of impert paper, with a few lines scrawled on it—had evidently just arrived by the post. The doctor had read it several times, and then touched the bell, and sent Toby to call Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House. He was waiting for the arrival of the Housemaster now.

The door opened, and Mr. Railton came in.

"You sent for me, sir?"
The doctor nodded.

"I want to ask your advice about this, Mr. Railton. May I read it?"

The Housemaster, in some surprise, took the letter, and glanced at it. Then he uttered an exclamation.

"You know the writing, Mr. Railton?"
"I think I have seen it before, sir."

"Whose writing do you think it is?"
"Monteth's, sir."

"And it is signed 'J.M.'?" said the Head.

"I am afraid this was written by Monteth of the Sixth, sir. But may I ask how it came into your hands?"

"I have just received it by post," said the Head, indicating an envelope that lay on his desk. "It was sent anonymously. The envelope contained nothing but that note, and by the postmark it was posted in Yorkshire."

"Anonymously!" said Mr. Railton, with a frown.

"Yes. Of an ordinary anonymous letter I should not, of course, take any notice. But this is different. Someone has evidently come into possession of that note, and sent it to me to open my eyes as to Monteth's conduct."

"Perhaps this man Joliffe himself—there may have been some dispute, and he has revenged himself by betraying Monteth to you."

"It is possible."
"Or perhaps it has been done by someone desirous of injuring Monteth's chances in the pending election for captain of the school," said Mr. Railton thoughtfully. "The election takes place to-morrow, and there is a great deal of feeling on the subject."

"In that case, whoever sent it to me may have been actuated by a sense of duty. In the light of that letter, Monteth is certainly not a fit person to become captain of the school."

"Most decidedly not."
"I do not know the writing on the envelope," said the Head. "It appears to me to be a disguised hand. But that is of little moment. It does not matter very much who sent it to me. The question is, what to do in the matter now?"

"Monteth must be allowed to make what explanation he can."
"Undoubtedly, and the sooner the better. Will you send for him, Mr. Railton, or, better still, fetch him here. I wish you to be present."

"Very well, sir."
And Mr. Railton left the study.

Monteth was at practice on the football ground, when Mr. Railton found him. A group of juniors were watching the practice, and Jack Blake was remarking, perhaps a little grudgingly, that Monteth was really in splendid form. So far as the winter game was concerned, there could be no doubt that Monteth would make a worthy successor to Kildare.

"I suppose we shall have to have him!" said Blake, with a sigh. "It will be a come-down for the School House, but there you are!"

"Que faire!" said Digby sagely, in his hot French.

"Oh, keep that for the Fore-room!" said Blake, with a sneer. "It's a rotten position, but I suppose clerking Monteth is the best way out of it."

"Hallo! What does Railton want?" said Tom Merry.

"He's calling Monteth, and looking as grave as a giddy judge."

"Seezerkin's up!" said Archer Augustus.

Monteith had come to the paper as Mr. Railton called to him.

"Are I wanted, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mr. Railton; "the Head wishes to see you, Monteith."

"Anything important, sir?" asked Monteith, surprised by the gravity of the Housemaster's answer.

"Very important, Monteith."

"I'll come at once, sir."

And Monteith threw on an overcoat and snuff-box, and without stopping to change, he followed the Housemaster from the field. The jacks, who had heard the remarks exchanged between the two, regarded one another curiously.

"Looks like trouble for Monteith," Lowther remarked.

"Oh, no!" said Figgles wistfully. "Can't be anything about the election. I know the Head most look on our man as the best man for the job."

But Figgles was feeling uneasy. Until the election was over he could not feel safe about his candidate. Monteith was feeling uneasy, too, he hardly knew why, as he followed the Housemaster to the Head's study. Mr. Railton's gravity had a disquieting effect upon him. He did not ask the Housemaster any questions, however, but accompanied him in silence, and they entered the Head's room.

Dr. Holness's expression increased Monteith's inward alarm. He knew now that something unwelcome had happened as soon as he saw the doctor's face.

"I have sent for you, Monteith, on a most unpleasant matter," began the Head.

"What is wrong, sir?"

"Read that letter!"

Monteith glanced at the letter, and for a moment the room seemed to reel about him. He understood now. For this is what he read in his own hand-writing:

"Dear Jolliffe,—I shall be down at eleven to-night as usual. Get Bunker there if you can. I want to ask him about the chances of Boney Boy for the Leicestershire. —Yours,

"J. M."

Monteith's face went white as a sheet.

He felt the Head's stern, grave glance upon him, and his nerves had knocked him over. He could not see. The sudden blow had knocked him over. He could only clutch the wretched paper, which crumpled in his hand, and stare at the floor.

There was a long silence, and the Head's deep voice broke it at last.

"Well, Monteith?"

The prefect licked his dry lips.

"I am waiting for your explanation, Monteith."

"I—I— Monteith's voice trailed away miserably.

"That letter is in your hand, Monteith."

"Yes, sir," groaned the prefect.

"You admit it?"

"Yes."

"Jolliffe is the name of the landlord of a low public-house in Hylcombe, I believe?"

"Yes."

"You wrote that letter to him?"

"That is all I need to ask," said the Head drily.

"I—I can explain, sir. I—I— This is an old letter, a very old letter," said Monteith. "It was written long ago—long ago!"

"How long ago?"

"I—I don't exactly know. It's not dated, but it—it was at least two years ago, sir," murmured Monteith.

"I—I used to play the giddy on, I admit it. I was a fool. But that was all over long ago. I got myself into trouble, and Kildare helped me out, like the brick he was. I procured him to get clear of that gang, and I kept my word."

"Then Kildare knew?"

"No, no, sir."

"It was his duty as head prefect of the school to acquaint me with your conduct," said the Head sternly.

"He would have told you, sir, only he knew I'd keep my word," said Monteith miserably. "I'd been a fool, but I wouldn't do it. It's been over and past long ago. I've never had anything to do with those rascals since, or my horse."

The Head looked at him very hard.

"I am glad to believe that," he said. "But that does not alter the fact that you, a prefect, acted in the way indicated by that letter. You say it was long ago, and I believe you. You say you have led a straight life since Kildare helped you out of the matter. I believe that, too. I shall not think of punishing you, Monteith, for a wrong done so long ago, and done repeated. But you must see as well as I do that you are not a fit person to become captain of the school."

Monteith bowed his head.

"That punishment, at least, cannot be spared you," said

the Head. "If you are sincerely repentant for having done wrong, you will be willing to face that. You must resign from your candidature."

"Must I, sir?"

"You must!" said the Head sternly.

"Very well, sir."

"Nothing more will be said about the matter, then," said the Head. "I shall not deprive you of your prefectship. I shall not make this public."

"Thank you, sir."

"That is all, Monteith. I shall expect you to make your resignation that into Monteith's eyes."

"And what about Catts, sir?" he enquired.

"Catts?" said the Head, puzzled. "What has Catts to do with this?"

"Didn't Catts give you this letter, sir?" asked Monteith, in astonishment. "I understood—"

"Catts did not give it to me. I have no reason to suppose that he knows anything about the matter. The letter came to me anonymously by post."

"Oh, he's very deep!" said Monteith bitterly. "It was sent to you by Catts, sir."

"Indeed! That would make no difference, however."

"Catts was as true as I was, or worse," the prefect exclaimed. "He is in with me, with Jolliffe and his gang. If I'm not fit to be captain of the school, what about Catts? I gave up that kind of thing. Catts keeps it up?"

"You accuse Catts—"

"Yes, I do."

"Have you any proof to offer of your statements?" asked the Head coldly.

"Proof?" repeated the prefect.

"Yes. You can hardly expect me to take your bare statement against Catts without proof of any kind."

"I—I have a very good proof, of course. I don't suppose Catts ever got anything down in black and white, and if he did I couldn't get it from Jolliffe. He's up against me ever since I refused to have anything more to do with him. Of course, I can't prove it, but it's true!"

"I desire to believe such a thing of Catts, or of anyone else, without the strongest and clearest proof."

"I—I knew this was going to happen. Catts told me the other day that if I stood for the election he would work some trick of this kind."

"Now, I beg to tell you some fellows immediately afterwards, and they—"

"It all runs on your bare word apparently," said the Head drily. "The word of a boy who, as it now appears, has deceived me and abused my confidence. You can scarcely expect me to attach any importance to what you say on this subject, Monteith. You had better say no more. You may go!"

And Monteith went.

The Head sighed, and tossed the letter into the fire. It was consumed in a moment.

"That ends the matter," he said. "You agree with me that I could take no other step. Mr. Railton?"

"Quite so, sir. There was nothing else to be done. In the light of that letter, it would have been impossible to allow Monteith to become captain of the school."

"I am sorry, too, and painfully shocked," said the Head. "I had confidence in Monteith. This is a most unpleasant surprise to me, and I do not think I have been hard upon him. His disappointment in the election will be his punishment, and it is not too heavy a punishment, I think. It is a wretched business altogether. As for his accusation against Catts, it would be wrong to attach the slightest importance to it. I am afraid he spoke out in the bitterness of his disappointment, without stopping to think."

And Mr. Railton nodded. He took the same view. Gerald Catts had played his cards very well indeed.

CHAPTER 15.

Brought to Book.

"HALLO, Monteith! What's the matter?"

Darrel of the Sixth asked the question in alarm, as he met Monteith, after his departure from the Head's study. Monteith's face was white, and his eyes were burning. He was striding on swiftly, and almost ran into Darrel. The senior stopped him with a hand on his shoulder.

"What's happened, old man?"

Monteith stopped, and burst into a bitter laugh. Tom Merry & Co. had just come in from the foreground, and they, too, looked at the New House prefect in surprise. Several other fellows had gathered round. Monteith was the centre of a crowd in a couple of minutes. He did not seem to notice it.

"What's happened?" he repeated. "Nothing. Only I'm

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not standing for the election to-morrow, after all. That's all!"

"Not standing!" exclaimed Darrel, in amazement.

"No."

"Why not?"

"The Head's ordered me to withdraw."

"My hat! Why?"

"Cutts has worked it."

"Cutts?" exclaimed several voices.

"Cutts!" said Darrel. "What rot! How could Cutts possibly make the Head order you to withdraw? You're drawing!"

"He has let the Head know something about me—something that's old and done with, as he knows jolly well," said Moneth. "A rotten old story dead and done with long ago!"

"You mean he has slandered you?"

"Yes."

"But if he's told lies, they can be disproved!"

Moneth laughed bitterly.

"It doesn't happen to be lies; it happens to be the truth," he said.

"Oh!"

"An old yarn about my being raised up in betting, and so forth," said Moneth. "You know about B-Kildare considered you when he helped me out. You know I've been as straight as a die ever since."

"I know," said Darrel.

"But Cutts has slipped out an old letter in my handwriting from some time, and sent it anonymously to the Head," said the New House prefect. "What do you think of that for an election dodge?"

"Rotten!"

"Shame!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yess, wotah! Distinctly childish, I call it!"

Moneth looked round, seeking to notice the janitors for the first time. His face was almost haggard.

"Well, you've got rid of the New House candidate now!" he exclaimed bitterly. "You can have your Cutts for captain now, and I wish you joy of him."

"We don't want Cutts!" exclaimed Tom Merry indignantly. "We had already fixed it up with Figgins to vote for you, Moneth. We'd rather have you than Cutts any day, though you're a New House boaster—I mean, chap."

"Yess, wotah!"

"I'm going to see Cutts now," said Moneth, between his teeth. "He came and made a row in my study the other day. One good tug deserves another."

He strode away in the direction of the Fifth Form passage. Darrel hurried after him.

"Moneth, it's not much good making a row!"

"I'm going to look Cutts. He's not going to get off scot-free after playing me a trick like this."

"Are you sure he—"

"Of course I'm sure! I don't think he'll have the cheek to deny it—even Cutts."

Moneth strode on, and Darrel hesitated. The janitors followed Moneth like an army. Their sympathy was all with him. For once they forgot House rivalry. Cutts had played the game low down, and they would have liked nothing better than to see him licked by the New House prefect.

Moneth reached Cutts's door, and threw it violently open without knocking. Cutts was in his room, with Gilmore of the Fifth, his study-mate. Both of them jumped up as the white and ferocious prefect strode in.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" Cutts exclaimed.

"Beak!"

Moneth's open hand across his face was the reply.

Cutts staggered back, his cheeks going pale, with a red mark across the skin where the New House prefect's hand had fallen.

"Bravo!" chorused Arthur Augustus D'Arny, from the passage. "Go for the wotah!"

"Now, you cad, come on!" said Moneth, heaving off his coat and muffler. "You've swelled me out of the captaincy, and now you're going to pay for it!"

"I'll come on fast enough!" said Cutts, recovering his coolness. "There isn't a fellow in the New House I can't lick. I think I showed you that the other day. But first, I'd like to have some faint idea what the trouble is about."

"You know well enough, you cad!"

Cutts shrugged his shoulders.

"If it's the election—"

"You know it is!"

"So we're to fight because we're rival candidates?" asked Cutts. "Hadin't we better call King in, in that case, and make a three-cornered scrap of it? King is a candidate too, you know."

"No!"

"I don't want to beady words with you," said Moneth, his eyes burning. "I'm here to thrash you within an inch of your life!"

"Oh, good!" said Cutts calmly. "But isn't that rather a positive way of settling an election? What have you got your rag out so suddenly for? Do you know, Darrel?"

"The Head has got hold of some old paper in Moneth's hand," he said. "Moneth thinks you sent it to him."

"Oh, I see! Quite a mistake, of course!"

"You dare do it!"

"I hope no one here suspects me of playing such a dirty trick!" said Cutts, looking round with an expression of virtuous indignation. "If I had, Moneth would be right to be ratty about it. But I haven't."

"Who did, then?" said Moneth.

"How should I know? If it's something you wrote to Jockie or Hank, they may have sent it to the Head. They don't know the way you chaffed them. But if you suspect that it was a rival candidate, why not suspect King as much as me? He knew all about your little games, you know."

"But Jockie! There's something in that!"

Moneth set his lips.

"I know it was you!" he said. "You threatened me with it the other day unless I should withdraw."

Cutts shook his head.

"You misunderstood me," he said. "I solemnly meant to ask you whether you considered yourself a fit person to be captain of the school, considering the kind of fellow you are. I said the Head wouldn't think you a fit person if he knew. Apparently I was quite right, as it turns out. As for threatening you, that's all rot. Such a thought never even crossed my mind. I thought that it is common decency you ought not to want to be captain of St. Jim's. That's all."

"You lie!"

Moneth did not waste further words upon the Fifth-Former. He rushed upon him, hitting out furiously. The other fellows cleared back to give them room. Cutts had barely time to throw off his jacket, when the Sixth-Former was upon him. From all sides fellows came crowding along the passage to see the struggle. A fight between a Fifth-Former and a prefect of the Sixth was naturally very rare, and it caused tremendous excitement. A throng of fellows—seniors and juniors—swarmed themselves into the passage, straggling towards the doorway.

But Tom Merry & Co. held front seats, so to speak. They were wedged in the doorway, and they refused to budge. They had what Lowther described afterwards as a splendid view of the fun.

But it was not fun for the combatants.

Both the seniors were powerful fellows, both good boxers, and both plucky. At any other time Cutts, with his imperturbable coolness, would probably have got the better of the fight. But Moneth was so furious that he did not care for the paralytic drives, and came on without a pause, and all the time his fists were hammering on Cutts.

Darrel walked away. He could not stop the fight, as Moneth was a prefect, but he felt that he ought not to witness it. But nobody else was unwilling to witness it. There was a struggle for places, in fact, while the two seniors were tramping to and fro in the study, harassing one another furiously.

There were no rounds in that fight. The two savagely angry foes fought on to a finish, and it was Cutts who finished last. He was fairly knocked out by the force onslaught of the indignant prefect of the New House.

Crash!

The Fifth-Former went down at last, and lay on the study carpet, gasping. His eyes were half closed, his nose seemed swollen to double its usual size, his mouth was cut and bleeding. He was evidently "done." Gilmore of the Fifth beat over him.

"You can't go on," he muttered.

Cutts shook his head feebly.

Moneth glared down at the Fifth-Former, his anger still unquenched. He was showing severe signs of the condition himself.

"You're done, you cad!"

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Cutts, cool still, in spite of his exhausted state. "You have knocked me out. Tell try me again another time."

"Well, you've had your punishment, and if the fellows are rotten enough to make you captain of St. Jim's, why, they'll deserve to have such a captain as you'll make!" said Moneth bitterly.

And he strode from the study and returned to his own House.

CHAPTER 18.

A Really Stunning Idea.

THERE was a meeting in Tom Merry's study after the vote.

The juniors were in a state of perplexity. The late happening had knocked all their plans to the winds. They had settled on Moseboth as best as their candidate, and that solution of the problem, though far from satisfactory, had at all events settled the question. Now it was all unsettled again. There was a notice on the board in the hall that Moseboth's candidature had been withdrawn.

That finished Moseboth. The contest for the captaincy remained now between Cutts and Knox, unless a fresh candidate should come forward at the eleventh hour.

"And Cutts is quite impossible!" said Tom Merry firmly. "He can drop it till he's black in the face, but we all know that he played that rotten trick on Moseboth."

"Yes, wotnah?"

"After that, we can't stand him," said Blake.

"Impossible!"

"Some other New House chap may take Moseboth's place," said Kasegrove. "We're not bound to vote for him, though. We gave in about Moseboth; but we shan't do the same again for another of them."

"Not much chance of that, either," said Monty Louthen. "The New House are awfully indignant about Moseboth's being ordered to withdraw his name. Nobody else will take his place; they won't hear of it. I heard it from Figgins, Baker and Webb and Gray have all refused to stand, though Moseboth asked them."

"Right enough, too," said Tom Merry. "I dare say most of the New House fellows won't vote at all. And Cutts has a big majority on this side. I reckon he'll get a third more than Knox, at least."

"Then Cutts is going to be captain," said Blake gloomily. "After playing that mean trick. It's rotten!"

"Disgraceful, dear boys. I'm afraid you'll have to come back to my proposition, after all," said D'Arcy, with a wistful shake of the head.

"Falloose!"

"Wotnah?—Blake—"

"Most of the voters will be for Knox, and a crowd of juniors for Cutts," said Tom Merry. "If there were a pin to choose between them, we could turn the scale. But—"

"They're a pair of rotters!" growled Manners.

"Moseboth was the man, after all. But he's out of it now. Hullo, Figgis!" Figgins came into the study, looking very glum.

The School House juniors gave him sympathetic glances. They knew what a blow it was to Figgins, the fact that Moseboth had been "done" out of his chance.

"What are you fellows going to do?" asked Figgins.

"About the election, I mean?"

"Blessed if we know. Your man's out of it."

"He is," said Figgins bitterly, "and that old Cutts has done him out of it. I think you ought to be ashamed of yourselves if you let Cutts become captain of the school, after that."

"What can we do?" said Digby. "We don't want Cutts, but there's only Knox up against him now. And I don't think Knox has an earthly."

"I've got an idea," said Figgins quietly. "I've been talking it over with Kerr and Wyse, and they agree with me."

"Go ahead, Figgis."

"You were going to back our man up, and our good turn deserves another," said Figgins. "We're ready to back up the School House now, as there isn't a New House candidate. Anybody but Cutts."

"But none of the Sixth—"

"How the Sixth?" said Figgins. "I'm fed up with the Sixth."

"But none of the Fifth will stand against Cutts. They're all backing him up to a man," said Louthen.

"How the Fifth?"

"Then what—"

"What price the Shell?" said Figgins.

"What?"

"My hat?"

"If a Fifth-Former can become captain of the school, why not a junior?" said Figgins steadily. "The Shell is only one Fern below the Fifth, anyway. That's my idea. If Tom Merry chooses to put up for captain, I'll answer for all the New House junior votes."

"I!" exclaimed Tom Merry in amazement.

"Yes, you?"

"Great Scott! I—captain of St. Jim's?"

"You'd make a better captain than Cutts, any day."

"Well, that wouldn't be hard," admitted Tom Merry. "I couldn't make a worse one, that's a certainty. But—"

"The Head would never allow it," said Manners.

"He can't interfere. You remember once there was an election, and D'Arcy put up. He was elected all right."

"Yes, wotnah! And I consider—"

"But that was only a lark," said Monty Louthen.

"Yes; but the Head didn't interfere. And he won't interfere this time. You put your name up, Tom Merry, and we'll plump for you. Every chap in the New House will vote for you, if only to get even with Cutts!" said Figgins savagely. "What we want to do is to keep Cutts of the Fifth out."

"I see!" said Tom Merry slowly.

"All your friends will back you up, and most of the juniors will follow suit. They will be awfully taken with the idea of having a junior captain of the school," said Figgins eagerly. "You will simply reap home. I shouldn't wonder if you poll four or five times as many votes as Knox and Cutts put together."

"I consider—"

" Bravo!" exclaimed Blake. "It's the only way, Tommy. Of course the captain ought really to be selected from the Fourth Form—"

"Yes, wotnah; and I consider—"

"And I should make a jolly good captain too," continued Blake. "But I waive my claims. Who says Tom Merry for captain?"

There was a shout from the meeting at once. As soon as they had recovered from their astonishment at Figgins' audacious suggestion they received the idea with enthusiasm. It was the very thing. Cutts would be defeated, and good old Tom Merry would be captain of the school. There wouldn't be a New House captain, and St. Jim's would be saved from all danger of going to the boys' row. There was a ringing cheer that echoed the whole length of the Shell passage.

"Hurrah!"

"Tom Merry captain! Hurrah!"

Tom Merry hesitated. The suggestion had taken him completely by surprise, and he had his doubts. But the idea of being captain of the school even for a time was, naturally, a very attractive one. His eyes began to sparkle.

"Well, if you fellows think so—"

"We do—we do!"

"I consider—"

"Hurrah! Tom Merry captain! Hurrah!"

"Yes," said Arthur Augustus in a burst of generosity. "Yes, and I will back you up, dear boys. I wotnah consider that I have a bettah chance, especially as the captain of the school requires to be a fellow of tact and judgment. But I withdraw my claims, and I will back you up like anything. Hawway!"

"Then we'll put it to the fellows," said Tom Merry.

"Let's get down to the common-room, and we'll see how they take it."

And the meeting adjourned to the common-room.

CHAPTER 19.
The New Candidate!

"GENTLEMEN—"

"File in!"

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry stood on the table in the junior common-room in the School House. The room was crowded with the Shell, the Fourth, and the Third. News of the meeting had gone round, and the fellows had swarmed in to attend it. Figgins & Co. were there, too, with a crowd of New House juniors.

"Gentlemen," resumed Tom Merry. "Moseboth has withdrawn his candidature. We are all sorry to hear it."

"Hear, hear!" from the New House contingent.

"Two candidates are left—Knox and Cutts?"

"Knox is a rotten bally, and we don't want him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Cutts played a dirty trick in giving Moseboth away to the Head, for we all know he did it, whatever he says."

"Gross for Cutts."

"It is necessary, therefore, to put up a new man to save the good old school from going to the dogs!"

"Knox!"

"Figgins of the New House has suggested me."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gentlemen, why shouldn't a junior be captain of St. Jim's?"

"Echo answers why," said Monty Louthen.

"Wotnah, Louthen, echo would answer St. Jim's to that wotnah," said Arthur Augustus. "Echo always answers the last word, you know."

"We've got to show Cotts what we think of his knavish tricks," went on Tom Merry. "And I really think I should make a pretty decent captain for the school."

"Blessed is he that showeth his own trespass!" grinned Carr.

"Order!"

"Under my rule," said Tom Merry, growing enthusiastic. "St. Jim's will flourish like the bay-tree beside running waters. There will be liberty, equality, and fraternity—freedom for all, combined with respect to authority—every chap will do just as he likes, and discipline will be freely enforced."

"Hear, hear!"

"It will be my aim to carry on the good work commenced by the late lamented Kiddare."

"Good old Kiddare!"

"I shall do my best to keep up the football and cricket traditions of the old school—more especially by a judicious mixture of jassies among seniors in the First Eleven—"

Francie cheering.

"I shall too my influence with the Head to get a certain number of jassies made into prefects, to keep the Sixth in order—"

Wild applause.

"In a word, everything will go rippingly, if you decide to elect me captain of St. Jim's. I promise to stand up for the rights of the juniors."

"Hurrah!"

"If the Sixth cut up nasty, they'll get it in the neck."

"Down with the Sixth!"

"Fagging will be abolished—"

"Bravo!"

"Bullying will be put down with a firm hand—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And—and all will be calm and bright," said Tom Merry, to confusion. "Gentlemen, hands up for myself as captain of St. Jim's."

A forest of hands went up.

There was no doubt that the candidature of Tom Merry of the Sixth was popular in the extreme—at least, with the Lower School.

Tom Merry glanced with a sparkling eye over the crowded and enthusiastic meeting. There were enough fellows present to elect him, if it came to that.

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"Gentlemen, I thank you—"

"Hear, hear!"

"I will now proceed to put a notice on the board announcing my candidature. All of you can come with me."

"What—?"

And Tom Merry jumped down off the table, and led his excited and enthusiastic adherents to the notice-board in the hall. Mostly Lewther found a pencil, and Mazzera a sheet of paper torn from a pocket-book, and Tom Merry wrote out the notice and pinned it on the board. It ran:

"Thomas Merry, of the Sixth Form, has the honour of announcing himself as a candidate for the captaincy of St. Jim's, now vacant. He appeals for the suffrages of all St. Jim's fellows, School House and New House alike. Roll up!"

"Hurrah!" roared the crowd.

"What's all that dashed noise about!" exclaimed Knox of the Sixth, pushing his way angrily through the crowd.

"What rot are you putting on the board, Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry looked defiantly at the bully of the Sixth.

"I'm putting up my election notice," he said calmly.

"Your what?" ejaculated Knox, staggered.

"My election notice."

"What do you mean, you young idiot?" said the senior harshly.

"I'm standing for captain of St. Jim's."

"You?"

"Yes—I mean I," said Tom Merry coolly. "and I fancy I'm going to pull it off, Knox. I'm backed up by both Houses."

"You silly young ass!" exclaimed Knox furiously. "Take that electric paper off the board at once. Do you hear?"

"I hear," said Tom, with a nod.

"Take it down!"

"Rats!"

"What?" yelled Knox.

"Getting dead!" said Tom Merry pleasantly. "I shall tell R.A.T.S.—as! However, I'll say it again if you don't quite catch it. Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, wathah! Wath. Koozer, dear boy! You wan off.

You're no wright to interfere with the free and independent elections of St. Jim's."

"If you don't take that paper down, I'll take it down, and lick you," sneered Knox.

"You're no right to touch it, and you won't be allowed to."

The senior gave a snort of fury, and made a grasp at the paper on the board. But the juniors were ready for him.

They were afraid of Knox. Hatch grasped the unpopular bully of the Sixth on all sides, and he was whirled away from the notice-board before he knew what was happening.

"Bump him!" yelled Blake.

"Hurrah! Bump him!"

"Let me go!" shrieked Knox, hitting out wildly.

"You—ow! My nose—ow—"

"Great Scott! My eye—"

Bump! bump! bump!

Knox roared as he was bumped on the floor—hard. Darrel came out of his study with a cuss in his hand.

"It's all right, Darrel," said Tom Merry reassuringly.

"We're only bumping Knox. He wanted to take down the election notice of a rival candidate. That's not allowed."

"Certainly not," said Darrel.

Knox tore himself free, looking very dishevelled. His collar was torn out, and his jacket split at the back.

"That young heave Merry is setting up as a candidate!" he howled. "Are we going to have the election turned into a silly joke?"

Darrel started.

"Merry! You're not such an ass—"

"I'm standing for captain?" said Tom Merry sturdily. "A respectable and influential party of electors have done me the honour to select me as their candidate—"

"Tom Merry, captain! Hurrah!"

"You young duffers!" said Darrel, and he went back to his study laughing. Knox tramped off, gritting his teeth. He made no further attempt to remove the notice from the board. The electors were evidently not to be trifled with.

"Darrel seems to take it as a joke," said Tom Merry a little uncomfortably. "I don't see anything to laugh at myself."

"He laughs best who laughs last," said Blake sagely.

"The Sixth won't laugh when you tramp home at the election as captain of St. Jim's."

"Wathah not!"

"I wonder how the Head will take it!" murmured Mazzera.



Blindell leaped desperately from the saddle of his motor-cycle, and clutched at the runaway horse's reins, caring nothing what happened to his much-prized machine. (For this exciting incident, see the grand long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled: "Blindell's Prize," in this week's issue of "THE MAGNET" Library. Now on sale. Price One Penny.)

Most of the fellows were wondering, too, how the Head would take it. But the general opinion was that he couldn't interfere. From time immemorial the St. Jim's fellows had possessed the right of electing their own captain without interference. It was a custom, vital, for the captain of the school to be in the Sixth, and to be a prefect. But it was not a rule.

Besides, there had been no interference with the candidature of Knox and Catts—and Knox wasn't a prefect, and Catts wasn't in the Sixth. Without gross inconsistency, the Head couldn't interfere with Tom Merry on those grounds. He mightn't like it, Tom admitted; but then, by acting as a really capable and first-class captain, he would soon convince the Head that it was all right. That was the way Tom Merry looked at it.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Bailton imparted the news to the Head soon after the notice was put on the board. The Housemaster was half smiling as he reported it.

Dr. Holmes could not help smiling too.

"Blow my soul!" he said. "The boy cannot be in error."

"I fear that he is very much in earnest, sir."

"But the school—they will not be so foolish as to elect a justice captain of the school, I am sure."

"I trust not, but—"

"I do not see how I can interfere," said the Head thoughtfully. "I do not want to give the juniors the impression that they are treated with injustice. I think I shall leave it to the good sense of the boys."

Which he did!

Only the boys did not have exactly the same idea of "good sense" as the Head had, and so they were loudly and enthusiastically determined to bring their candidate in—and their candidate was Tom Merry!

CHAPTER 16. Foiled at the Finish.

ELECTION day!

There was almost breathless excitement in the old school.

Had the contest remained among Catts, Knox, and Montack, the excitement would have been nothing like it. But a

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junior was standing for the captaincy—and that made all the difference.

Of four candidates, one—Monteth—had withdrawn, and the other three were going in the poll—at all events, it was supposed so. But Knox and Cutts had had a talk together, and doubtless the Fifth-Former had made it worth Knox's while to give him a free run, for on Saturday afternoon it was known that the Sixth Form candidate had followed Monteth's example, and withdrawn.

Knox had realised, undoubtedly, that he had no chance. Cutts's followers far outnumbered his, to say nothing of the crowd that supported Tom Merry. If both the armies had stood, both would have been hopelessly beaten, but with one withdrawn, the other still had a chance.

Knox and his friends were supporting Cutts now; and Gerald Cutts hoped to pull it off. The juniors were determined that he shouldn't. Carousing had been going on broadly on both sides.

In the New House, Figgins & Co. were indefatigable in Tom Merry's cause. Tom's generous backing of Monteth had touched their hearts; and, besides that, they were eager to get even with Cutts. Not a fellow in the New House would dream of voting for Cutts. Even some of the anxious intended to vote for Tom Merry, to mark their displeasure at the exclusion of their own candidate.

Some of these, indeed, were of the opinion that, if a junior were elected to the captaincy, the Head would rescind his order, and allow Monteth to take the post after all. For a junior captain was really unthinkable, as a permanent—to senior mind, at least. The juniors saw nothing unthinkable about it.

The contest raged now between Tom Merry and Cutts, and though the Fifth Formers still had hopes, Tom Merry had ample confidence.

A large number of the seniors did not mean to vote at all, but the juniors intended to roll up in great force for their man. And almost all the jaspers of both Houses were for Tom Merry.

The election was fixed for four o'clock in the afternoon, in the big hall of the School House.

Long before four o'clock the hall was crowded.

Tom Merry's backers whipped in the voters from all quarters from the gym and the footer ground and the river and the stables. Not a fellow who possessed a vote was allowed to be anywhere but in Big Hall.

Mr. Railton and Mr. Latham were talking on the important occasion, and a little before four o'clock they came in.

Both of them were looking very grave. They did not like Cutts or his candidates, but they hoped sincerely that he would be elected. A junior as captain of the school was a new departure, of which the masters were not likely to approve.

Chosen greeted the appearance of the two masters. "Now we sha'n't be long, dear boys," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bai Jove, we'll have a celebration when we've elected Tom Merry captain. I still consider that I should really make a bettish captain, you know, but I'm bakin' up old Tommy."

"It will be a jolly walk-over!" chuckled Monty Leather. "Look at Cutts! He doesn't look very jolly, does he?"

"Watch out!"

"He knows he's going to get it in the neck," said Tom Merry. "Now, who's going to propose me?"

"Bemah leave that to me, dear boy. I will put it very nicely."

"Right-ho! File in!"

Four o'clock struck. Mr. Railton raised his hand for silence, and the buzz of voices died away in the crowded hall.

"My boys," said the house-master, in his deep voice, "you are met to elect a new captain for the school, in the place of Kildare, whose departure we all regret."

Mr. Railton was interrupted by cheers for Kildare. Then he resumed:

"I understand that there are two candidates. I trust that the boys of St. Jim's will make a wise selection, and not cast up against me a reckless innovation."

"Oh, that's against you, Tom Merry," whispered Levison. "Oh, yes!" said Blake. "Railton speaks that we're to vote for the right candidate, and the right candidate is Tom Merry."

"Yess, wathin'?"

"Knox is up!" cried Karpago. "Go it, Knox." Knox rose to propose his friend, Gerald Cutts, of the Fifth Form, as captain of St. Jim's. There were cheers from a section of the assembly.

Tom Merry & Co. looked round them, and they were satisfied that not more than a third of the fellows present were cheering for Cutts. Quite a hundred fellows were absent from the Hall, fellows who would not vote for a junior, and who did not choose to vote for Cutts.

"Now, Guay?" said Blake.

Arthur Augustus came gracefully forward.

"Gentlemen of St. Jim's—"

"Hurrah!" came a roar, which completely put in the shade the late cheering for Cutts. "Go it, Guay!"

"Gentlemen, I have the honour to propose my esteemed friend, Tom Merry for the post of captain of St. Jim's!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I need not dilate upon the excellent qualities of my friend, Tom Merry. You all know him."

Chorus.

"You know him for a good man and true—kindest fellow and noblest foe—a chap who's as straight as a die, and always plays the game."

"Hurrah!"

"Mr. Railton, the majority of votes being evidently in favour of my friend Tom Merry, I claim to have my friend Tom Merry declared captain of St. Jim's."

"I demand a show of hands," said Cutts, between his teeth. Cutts was pale with rage; he had little hope left now.

He had raised his arms well, too well, perhaps. Clinging as he had been, his scheme had ended *awry*, at last, like a beam of wax; he was felled at the finish. The unexpected had happened, for the candidature of a junior was certainly one of the most unexpected things that could have been thought of. And Cutts of the Fifth saw his castle in the air falling away.

"Hands up for Cutts of the Fifth!" said Mr. Railton.

Hands went up on all sides, and they were carefully counted, and then Mr. Railton and the Fourth Form master compared notes as to the total. A note was made of the number, and then a show of hands for Tom Merry was called for.

To the most casual glance it was evident that the number was far greater.

But the counting was gone through carefully.

Then there was a hush of silence, as Mr. Railton stood up to make the announcement of the result. The excitement was breathless.

"Votes for Cutts of the Fifth—eighty-five."

"Oh!"

"Votes for Tom Merry of the Shell—two hundred and thirty."

"Hurrah!"

"Tom Merry of the Shell is declared to be duly elected captain of the school!" said Mr. Railton, with quite a queer expression upon his face.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Cutts of the Fifth drove his hands deep into his pockets, and strode from the hall, his face white with rage. But few regarded Cutts of the Fifth. A wildly excited and enthusiastic crowd surrounded Tom Merry, and raised him shoulder-high, and bore him round Big Hall in triumph, and the old ratters rang with cheers for Tom Merry, Captain of St. Jim's.

THE END.

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THE EDITOR.

THE FIRST INSTALMENTS.

Jerry Osborne, a young Britisher who is employed as a clerk in London by a German named Muller, goes to Berlin on a holiday, and there meets with an adventure which alters the course of his whole life. Chance throws him into the company of Max Elton, a famous British aviator and inventor, who has established himself on the German coast in order to keep an eye on the secret preparations for war with Britain which Germany is carrying on on a large scale. Osborne joins Elton in his work, and learns that the aviator is in danger of his life from German Secret Service agents, of whom Jerry's own employer, Muller, is the chief.

The two become fast friends, and go through many adventures together, finally coming back to England, where Elton becomes one of the advisors of the Cabinet. Various disasters happen to English animals and dockyards, but still no suspicion is breathed against Germany.

One night a German aeroplane lands on a lonely part of the coast, piloted by Muller. The German ambassador is there to meet him, with an important document in a secret cipher. By a trick, Elton captures the document, decipheres it, and sends a translation of it to the Foreign Secretary by the hand of Jerry. Elton himself is captured by the Germans, and is being conveyed to Germany by aeroplane, when Jerry, on Elton's famous "plane, the Waterfly, suddenly puts in an appearance.

Jerry's machine carries a gun, but the Germans refuse to pull up at his command.

"Use the gun!" yells Elton. "Never mind me!" Jerry hurries, and then makes up his mind to fire!

(Now go on with the story.)

A Narrow Escape!

Loading the gun with a solid shot, Jerry aimed the Waterfly at a tangent, and, with a movement of the lever, reducing speed, he once more reared towards the other plane so as to meet it in a line. When within a bare twenty yards, he righted, and pulled the firing-string, and the steel ball sped direct towards the man beside Elton: then, to avoid collision, Jerry reversed aude and glided downwards, leaving over to see the effect of his shot.

It had been true enough. Taking Kurt full in the body, it had fairly lifted him from his seat, to drop like a stone into the sea. But it was a dead body that fell.

"Muller next, and then to disable the engine," Jerry told himself. "The gyroscopes will keep the plane upright, and she'll float long enough for me to plane down and pick Max up."

But when he looked around, Muller's plane had vanished. Astonished, Jerry looked out, to see her plunging down swiftly towards the sea. And the reason for the act became apparent. The dual in the air had absorbed all Jerry's attention, and what was passing on the sea beneath had been unnoticed. Now he saw a large steamer, and she appeared to be Muller's objective.

"Firing the German flag!" shouted Jerry, flinging aside the telescope he had snatched up, and he set the engine working in earnest.

The steamer was a big German liner out of Hamburg, and Muller, catching sight of her, had at once seen the means of escape from his enemy. Once on her deck he would be safe—his prisoner also. So close was she, and so low down had Muller been forced, that a single glide brought him to her, Osborne came tearing up in pursuit, but he had been hindered by the necessity of turning; and the other plane, safely landing by means of the gyroscopes, was already at rest on the forward deck when the Englishman was still fifty yards away. Only just in time did Jerry reverse so as to avoid crashing into one of the stowery masts.

Fate Decides Against Jerry.

It was a piece of rank bad luck, and Jerry Osborne had good reason to feel angry. The game had been in his hands, and now this confounded German steamer had blundered into his fine scheme and turned success into failure!

In a towering rage he checked the Waterfly, turned her about, and glided towards the steamer. He was in that mood when men do not stop to count consequences. In a few seconds he was flying level with the liner's bridge, on which he could see Muller in eager conversation with the

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 315.

Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of the Unusual of St. John's. Order Early.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"CAPTAIN TOM MERRY!"

Another Splendid Long, Complete School Tale of the Unusual of St. John's. Order Early.

captain and a couple of officers. To the deck rails had crowded a swarm of sailors and passengers, staring blankly at the Watterly and her consort.

"The man you has just come aboard you from the aeroplane," cried Jerry, "he is a criminal! You are to give him up immediately!"

"Und who are you, sir, who thus gives orders to me?" shouted back the captain of the liner, a tall, burly man of middle age, coming to the edge of the bridge.

"Never mind who I am, You will do as you are told, or take the consequences, and they will not be pleasant. The English police have warrants against him—for murder among other things. You keep him at your peril. As for the man who was with him, fastened—"

"You are a fool, or a child," interrupted the German angrily, "to speak to me so! The Herr is a German subject, and you no right had to do him harm! Yes, sir, will go away, or—"

"I don't go until you had over that vessel on the bridge with you! He's a spy, a murderer, an assassin! He has escaped from England!"

"Und to England he will not go back again. You was a child to think you frighten me!"

"And you're a child, in spite of your age, if you think I have nothing to back up my demands!" Jerry retorted. "Do you give the man up?"

"I do not. He is a special courier from England for der Ambassador of Germany, and it was your—your unverschämte—their—your bluff—to think I give him to your hands. As for der other man, I do not understand. Der was no one come aboard mit der Herr!"

While he was speaking, Muller came to him and whispered. He was going to speak further, when Jerry's indignant voice cut him short.

"That is a lie!" he shouted, though he was wondering what had become of Elton, of whom he could see nothing. "An Englishman was with him, when this vessel had treacherously made prisoner. I give you three minutes for my friend to be released, and that unless you do it he will be executed. If you do not choose—"

"Ach, und what you do, jungling!" said the captain, grinning.

"You will see."

"Ach, you are Elton all your gentleman; you talk too much and you do too little. You think to frighten me by your big words, but I tell you it is a mistake you are making. The captain of a German ship does not get up an honest German subject at the bidding of any Englisher, much less a one single boy Englisher. You, led us see what you do." And the big German, a devilish smile upon his tanned face, leaned away from the rail to give an order to one of his subordinates.

The next instant, as though by magic, among the persons hanging upon the steerage's lower rail, appeared between twenty and thirty sailors armed with magazine-rifles. Jerry found himself covered, and, with barely thirty feet separating him from the muskets, it was hardly possible for the most indifferent marksman to miss.

"We wait to see what you do, jungling." When you begin you find we quite ready for you are," shouted the captain. "A German does know how mit pirates to deal, even when he is an Englisher pirate."

Jerry Osborne smiled back.

"Bah, elton!" he cried derisively. "And of what use do you think they will be against what I am going to do?"

In his anger at the German's contemptuous reference to Englishmen, nothing would have pleased him better than to have trained his gun on the liner. He had all the will and plenty of ammunition. But the sight of the leveled rifles, the recognition of the uselessness of the act prevented him. What if he did fire a few shots and kill some of the officers or crew? Alas! he could not hope to overcome the whole of the liner's crew and passengers. And his gun was unable to disable the great craft. Had he any shells among his ammunition something of the kind might have been done. Max Elton was not to be rescued that way.

"We wait for you to begin, jungling." And the captain bowed ironically.

"Thank you! I am just going to begin," replied Jerry; and, with a touch upon a lever and the turn of a wheel, he sent the Watterly cascading in a rising curve upwards.

Jerry had not been bluffing. Towards the northern horizon he had caught a glimpse of a dark line with four tiny knobs rising from it and a greyish base above. If he were not mistaken, this line meant one of the half-dozen latest built torpedo-boat destroyers which, as a result of Elton's revelations concerning the Zeydel Zoo, had been doing patrol work in the North Sea. If the threat of her heavy calibre

guns and torpedo-tubes did not bring the skipper of the Vaterland to his senses it would be a wonder.

His mission deflected to bring the Watterly near enough for Jerry to discover that she was the Waap, and her commander was a man not easily deterred.

"You ask me to surrender and bring to that German liner heading for the Elbe—oh! I'll shout back to Jerry. "A good request, sir. And who, sir, may you be?"

"Osborne's my name."

"Indeed! And please tell me why, Mr. Osborne, you invite me to do this?"

"Two men on board who should not be there. One is Max Elton—"

"Max Elton! Holy Christopher! And what is he doing there?" and the officer's hand, pointing eyes began to show excitement.

"He's there because he can't help it. He was kidnapped and taken out of England last night by the second man—a German—Mr. Muller. I have been chasing them this hour and a half."

"You have? Are you, sir, the Jerry Osborne who's Elton's assistant?"

"That's so."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Osborne. My name's John Carlton. Elton begged! Christopher, that can't be allowed! Well, sir, maybe my orders don't go so far as the stopping of German liners, but Elton isn't going to see the inside of any German prison while I'm at hand. Will you come aboard, Mr. Osborne?"

"No, thank you!"

A crisp order was shouted down the speaking-tube to the engine-rooms, and within five minutes the snake was peering back, black, and oily from the four square funnels as the Waap worked up to her forty-knot speed limit. From the Watterly, travelling slowly to windward, Jerry kept up a jerky and incomplete conversation with Lieutenant Carlton. Jerry could not express a chuckle as he thought of the feelings of the German skipper as he beheld the destroyer steaming in a line that would bring her across the vessel's course.

"Tell her to heave to, and stand by," ordered Carlton, and a little string of flags appeared on the Waap's stern mast.

The signal was seen and obeyed, the skipper's contempt for Englishmen not extending to the armaments of the vesselless-looking little black craft coming through the water at the speed of an express train. But all his bluster had not departed from him when Carlton stepped on board.

"You're Englisher!" he growled in his hoarse, glaring at Jerry, and loud enough to be heard by the latter, who had accompanied Carlton, leaving the Watterly floating at the end of a rope attached to the Waap.

"Certainly," Jerry answered cheerfully. "I told you I was coming back."

"Und now, captain Englisher, what you mean by stopping me and my ship upon the high seas?" demanded the German, swinging about. "I had no right to stop at all."

"Shows you're a sensible man that you did, sir," replied the destroyer commander politely. "Saved me a little trouble."

"It is an outrage. When der German Government knowed it, then will come compensation to pay by your country," blustered the skipper.

"We won't worry about that until it happens," Carlton said coolly. "Best get one thing at a time settled. What about the two passengers you have on board who ought not to be here?"

"I had no one on der schip who here ought not to be," answered the German, his English getting worse as he grew more excited.

"Is that so? You will let me see your passenger list."

"I will not. You had no right to those to see."

"You are mistaken, sir. I have the right. I have been appointed to by a British subject concerning another British subject whom you are detaining by force."

"[And if I will him not give up?]" the German asked truculently.

Lieutenant Carlton looked at him seriously, smiled, and took him gently by the arm, leading him to the bridge rail.

"Permit me to draw your attention, Herr captain," he said, and extended a gloved hand towards the Waap.

"Ja, wohl," said the skipper, very red in the face.

"You see the guns, captain? Very well."

"Bad this is a German schip?"

"I believe it is. If it were his German Majesty's royal yacht, it would make no difference. Herr captain, you are wasting your time, and mine. Where are the two men who, as this gentleman tells me, came aboard you from an aeroplane?"

There was a dangerous gleam in Carlton's eyes, a crisp

ness in his tone, in spite of his politeness, and the German noticed it. But he was a stubborn fellow.

"This mages dreadful out mein country!" he cried. "Ued your country will and be captured to mages trouble with mein. I can assure you, Herr captain, that you will make very considerably trouble for yourself, if you do not produce the two men I speak of. One is an Englishman, conveyed here by force; the other is a criminal against whom the police have many warrants, and whom it is my duty to arrest."

"Der schain has led to you!" the skipper cried furiously, pointing at Jerry.

"If the case be not as I put it, produce the men, and grove by what they say that I am incorrect," suggested Carlton.

And then the sound of a scuffle close at hand attracted the attention of both men, and they turned about sharply to see a short, thick-set man struggling in Jerry Osborne's grip.

"Bunker!" roared the German. He shouted an order. "Lieutenant," cried Jerry, who had spotted a jettison hook on his opponent, "I caught this man sending off a wireless message, so doods for assistance."

The situation was threatening, for half a dozen sailors, led by an officer and armed with rifles, had made a rush on the bridge ladder. But Lieutenant Carlton was equal to it.

"Tell your men to stop this nonsense!" he cried sharply. "Who, you fool, your ship and everything in her could be blown into eternity at one word of mine. See! these bullets are, and listen to reason. Mr. Osborne, you did quite right, Captain, let us have no more of these stupid tricks. And now, go as I have told you, and send for the two men."

There was no help for it. The German realized that the officer would be as good as his word, and he submitted. Down the ladder tumbled the armed sailors, and a minute later Max Elton came upon the bridge, cool and self-possessed as ever. He stared slightly as he caught sight of the naval uniform, and nodded and smiled at Jerry.

"Hallo, Jerry, and what prank have you been getting up to now?" he cried cheerily. "Delighted, sir, to see you. And as bawled to Carlton. But what does it mean?"

"That as I couldn't persuade the ship's captain into releasing you, Lieutenant Carlton has given me his assistance," Jerry replied.

"And the poor captain resents the interference!"

"He does, but I think the gentleman understands it would be more prudent not to resist it," Carlton observed grimly.

"And now, Mr. Osborne, what about the German fellow of whom you speak?"

"Important, to avoid exploding with rage the skipper turned away and glared seaward. About the decks seamen and passengers stood in knots, whispering, open-eyed."

"Yes," Jerry said quickly. "We'll take thatascal Muller back along with us. We've waited long enough to get our hands on him, and now—"

"Jerry, one moment," said Elton, came forward and spoke in a lower tone. "Old man, we'll let Muller stay here."

"Let him stay!"

"Yes. The despatch—you haven't forgotten it? He is to deliver it," Elton said earnestly. "Let him. It will be one—to England's—advantage. They do not know its contents are known. Let the Germans believe them still a secret. Believe so, Jerry, it will be a better service to our country to allow theascal to go free than to carry him a prisoner to England. You follow me?"

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return is doubtful," went on Elton. "One would think a message—"

And at that Jerry shouted loudly. "That infernal wireless operator?" he cried.

"Lieutenant," remarked Elton five minutes later, "they are warplanes, carrying bombs to a certainty. In ten seconds they could send the Wasp to brass, and you could do nothing—"

"Too late—I was too late!" groaned Jerry. Lieutenant John Carlton expressed himself naval fashion. "Except give us up," added Elton.

Points for Germany.

"Mr. Elton, you make me feel ashamed of myself—that I am the most contemptible coward on earth. I'll never be able to hold up my head again!" And with this bitter speech John Carlton turned away and began pacing to and fro.

Jerry Osborne, arms folded across his chest, was sunk in dejection. He had failed; and failure had come in the very hour of triumph. One hundred feet overhead hovered the two great German warplanes that the message from the German liner's wireless operator had brought in a hurry from the depot established on Uth Island. From one of the black painted masts a telephone wire had been dropped upon the Wasp, and the demands of her commander transmitted to Lieutenant Carlton.

Herron Max Elton and Jerry Osborne had been surprised. As an alternative—well, the German officer had politely explained that things would be very unpleasant for the Wasp.

And, bitterest stroke of all, Max Elton had declared the demand must be complied with.

"I won't do it!" Carlton pulled up short, stamped to Elton, and shot out the words sanagefy. "I'll see myself—"

"Blown to bits. Which means the loss to our country of four-score brave men and a useful vessel," interrupted Elton.

"It would be robbing our country."

"Better that than to shoot the news to the world that Englishmen are all sea cowards."

Carlton, sometimes what looks like cowardice is really the truest heroism. Real courage is required to do that which is the most disagreeable.

"Is give you up without lifting a finger?" muttered the naval officer. "To express the German, since that Englishman are afraid to die. Let them annihilate us. England hasn't sunk so low yet that the world's respect that. If I mean war. Well, war it'll have to be some day. As well now as then. Why shouldn't we have the honor of striking first blow?"

"Little honor; and the blow would be absolutely futile. In England yet ready to fight! Not on fair terms. And Germany has been prepared for years—ready at any moment," replied Elton. "Man, don't you suppose I know how hard this is for you? But what happens if you don't do as you are bidden? You are wiped out—your ship—your men. And so what happens? Your being killed wouldn't give us life and safety. No, my friend, I'm right, and you know it, hard as admitting it is."

Then he picked up the end of the dangling telephone-wire and jilted the microphone to his lips.

"Your terms accepted," he said in a steady voice. "Arrange how we are to join you."

Carlton, his hard eyes staring seaward, but seeing nothing, heard plainly, and the knacker's shrewd pointed under his gloves, so fiercely did he grip at the brass rail. Jerry, suddenly raising himself, went quickly across to Elton.

"Old man, there's nothing else to do. Can't sacrifice a good vessel and the lives of our crewmen for nothing."

"But we can do something. Wouldn't take ten seconds to get into the Waterway; and once in here we can laugh at these German hounds."

"Wouldn't get a chance of laughing, Jerry," Max said sadly. "Look at her. And he looked up to the huge glass floating with gentle movement overhead. "One of the latest patterns of war planes; carries machine-guns and well as bomb-shooting apparatus. They'd have us before we'd get into our coats. No, it's no use. But I'm sorry for you, old chap. You should have left me as my fate. But it was plucky of you to end. My fault, all the same."

"It isn't!" Jerry cried severely. "But I'm—"

"All right, Jerry. Keep your pecker up. We're not dead yet. Why, this may be a stroke of good—"

And there he was obliged to break off, for someone was speaking at the other end of the wire.

"Lieutenant Carlton," he said, dropping the wire. "She's coming down lower, and means dropping a rope-ladder for Jerry and me to climb to her. We'll say so-long."

"With us Heaven'll find a gas I could train on her!" muttered Carlton, with something in his throat.

THE GREAT LIEUTENANT.—No. III.
Another Splendid Long Complete School Tale of the Officers of St. John's, Order Barb.

"Get that one of those fine days. Don't despair," returned Elton, seeing his unwilling hand. "Every warship will carry plane-ascending guns, I'm hoping—if such things as warships remain. There's one favour I'll ask you to do for me."

"What is it?"

"Check a box of dynamite or something into the Waterloo as soon as you safely can. I'd rather the Germans didn't destroy her."

And then he nodded cheerily to the junior officers, and climbed the ladder let down. Jerry followed, after a hand-shake with Carlson. He felt trembling over with rage.

"Wilkommen, Herr Elton!" greeted the brittle-moustached, smiling officer of the warplane, as Elton stepped on board. "I am proud and glad to receive you. And you, Herr Osborne!"

Jerry would cheerfully have taken him by the throat, but as he might not do that he said nothing. Elton did reply:

"I anticipate, sir, that you will have some trouble later in justifying this unwarrantable action of yours," he said. "There is no war between your country and mine, and the forcible capture of two Englishmen will take some explaining. We are not trespassers in your country, remember."

"I will take the risk, Herr Elton," was the cheerful answer. "A German officer does not fear to assume responsibility. You say I am not justified. We differ."

And Elton turned away to find a seat near to Jerry, who was looking about him with a great deal of curiosity, noting the great size and immense strength of the warplane, her large crew, and the number of guns, each protected by a large, turtle-back shield of steel. A most formidable fighting machine she looked, and Jerry whispered as much to his friend.

"She is," Elton admitted. "Von Fresener's latest, and he has good reason to be proud of her. Neither France nor Austria nor Italy has anything to compare with her."

"And England—what has she to put up against her?" cried Jerry eagerly.

"They're not war friends don't know—and won't know," replied Elton, dropping his voice to a whisper. "Not until 'The Day' comes. Then it may happen they'll get something of a surprise."

"But our tip-top planes—" began Jerry.

"Those that are let out for public, including German, inspection, aren't very great," admitted Elton. "But this is a secret, old man. We haven't put all our best goods in the shop window. You surely don't think I was content to stop short with the Waterloo?"

"And you've invented something that'll lick this?" cried Jerry in wonder.

"Well, that seems to be seen. My own opinion is yes. There are a few finished specimens tucked away somewhere, and more building. Even our sharp-eyed friend Miller hasn't seen them."

"Ah!" Jerry drew a deep breath. "Makes one feel better. You've backed me up as an ad."

"That's right. No use being in the dumps." And Elton laughed. "I wonder if they're going to take us to Uruk or somewhere these boats?"

But it soon became evident there was no such intention. Across the Zeppelin Zoo went the warplane, sixty miles an hour in spite of her enormous weight, dropping her concert as they were well over the straggly-looking water. But the commander was careful not to fly above the vast crowds of spectators and magazines created under the show of draining operations. Elton and Osborne were prisoners, but he was a German, and meant ransoming to risk of their seeing anything important. The warplane struck off in a south-easterly direction, and soon was travelling across a fat, bare, and unpopulated plain, through which ran the River Rhine.

"I regret I cannot accompany you to Berlin, gentlemen," said the commander, coming towards them. "We part company at Wesel, where we shall land within half an hour."

"And how shall we be taken to Berlin?" asked Jerry.

"I cannot say. But you will learn at Wesel."

"And what do you call us, then?" demanded Jerry. "We are not ordinary prisoners—breakers of the law, and prisoners of war we cannot be, for there is no war."

The officer smiled.

"That, too, dear, is no business of mine." It was then half an hour the warplane was dropping gently so as to alight within an enclosure that reminded Jerry of the flying ground at Hendon, only that it was ten times as large. Knots of uniformed men stood about, watching the gradations of many varieties of aircraft. The opening of the great warplane bred instant excitement.

(This exciting serial will be concluded next week, when our grand new serial "Playing the Game," by Arthur S. Henshaw, will commence. Order next Wednesday's "Boys' Library" in advance. Id. as usual.)

"THE GEM" LIBRARY FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE.

The only names and addresses which can be printed in this column are those of 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 advertiser 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, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4."

Douglas Langley, care of Telegraph Office, Tarnish Station, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England or Scotland, age 16.

Van Heerde, care of Van Heerde, Mollsee, Cape Province, South Africa, wishes to correspond with Scottish girl, age 22.

David Hughes, care of A. G. Kopp, watchmaker and jeweller, High Street, Fremantle, W.A., wishes to correspond with a girl reader, age 17-18.

Cherwyn Spang, 6, Chateau Road, Richmond, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with any boy or girl interested in stamps.

Leo H. Apperley, "Bronga," Collingwood Street, Manly, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with girl reader (preferably prehistorical student), from all parts, age 15-21.

H. Hoodmaker, English Church Mission School, Lyndoch, Durban, Natal, Cape Colony, wishes to correspond with young English lady readers interested in education or mission work, age 20-24.

George B. Wallace, 84, Church Street, Kingston, Jamaica, British West Indies, wishes to correspond with girl reader, age 16-20.

Harold Ellis, night orderly, Winnipeg General Hospital, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in Canada, Australia, or British Isles, age 20-21.

G. B. Dunn, Trafalgar Street, Gore, Southland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with girl readers in England, age 17-18.

E. J. Van der Walt, 26, St. John Street, Blaauwfontein, Tzaneen, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader in Great Britain, age 17-18.

Bertram Haley, 20, Jackson Street, Northcote, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl in England interested in shorthand, age 20.

E. Philpot, Lakemere P.O., Barrage, B.C., Canada, wishes to correspond with readers in the British Isles, age 18-22.

W. Friedman, 54, Chateaubain Avenue, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps or postcards.

H. M. Alford, care of R.A. Bank, Shanghai, China, would like to correspond with readers in North and South America, age 17-19.

F. K. Scott, "Newry," 14, Milton Street, St. Kilda, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy readers in England, age 18-14.

L. A. Wilson, 22, Church Street, Kingston, Jamaica, wishes to correspond with girl readers in Ireland, France, Spain, Australia, and New Zealand.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



WHAT HE WANTED.

Quite an interested crowd had gathered round the unfortunate victim of an accident as he struggled to release himself from the remains of a battered silk hat and a silver-mounted umbrella.

"Where am I?" he feebly muttered, as though all the wind had been knocked out of him.

"Ere you are, sir!" said an enterprising youth, holding out a nap. "Guaranteed to show every street in London. One penny only!"—Sent in by C. Nail, Liverpool.

JUST LIKE MOTHER.

The boys of the village, having formed a football team, were at a loss for a football, and were discussing a means of obtaining one.

"It's like this," the captain explained. "It seems we must all subscribe, and then 'as can afford must must give the most."

These being no signs of dissent, the captain proceeded: "Now, there's Jimmy Simpkins. Every time he takes 'is cool-liver oil 'is mother puts a penny in 'is money-box. 'E's getting rich."

"Ah?" interrupted Jimmy. "But when it gets to 'arf-a-crown swaver takes it out and buys another bottle!"—Sent in by E. W. Brown, Leamington Spa.

THE REAL ARTICLE.

It happened that a strong March wind was blowing, when cries of despair could be heard in the distance of an old farmer whose wig had become a victim of the wind.

A lad near by, seeing the sad plight of the poor old man, gave chase, picked up the wig, and handed it to its owner.

"Many thanks!" said the farmer, who, not being too old to have a joke, said: "You are the first genuine hair-restorer I have ever seen!"—Sent in by Ernest Beave, Bristol.

HEARD IN COURT.

At last the Suffragettes were in power, consequently there were lady lawyers, lady magistrates, lady police, etc.

Naturally, the mere man laughed heartily over one of the first cases tried by a lady judge.

The lady lawyer had again asked for a postponement of her client's case.

"I'm getting tired of these requests for postponements," said the lady judge.

"Why, your Honour, we only ask for another week!" answered the lady lawyer. "The fact is, my client's dress-maker is ill, and can't get her going-to-court gown finished until that date."

The lady judge was sympathetic, and granted the postponement.—Sent in by L. Newman, Clapham, S.W.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Surprises or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the sender will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into until regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in separate lines or postcards, will be disregarded.

THE LOST PRESENT.

Maid (to postman delivering long-delayed parcel): "What is it?"

Postman: "Label says, 'Wild ducks'; but they're more like 'rambling-birds' now!"—Sent in by Miss Jessie Tennent, Usherbro.

NOT A PRIZEWINNER.

The local teacher had offered in the schoolroom a prize of threepence for the best poem on the subject of his message. On reading them that night he came upon the attempt of the youngest boy in the class, which read thus:

"Your messages are fat as,

I don't know what the snakes are;

But we've lost our dog called Jim."

Needless to say this effort did not get the prize.—Sent in by G. Bevan, Westminster, S.W.

IT'S ONLY NATURAL.

As a penny savings bank for children, run in connection with a Sunday-school, a little boy one Saturday spoiled up with an important air and drew one penny from his account.

On the Monday morning following he returned the penny to his account, to the amazement of the commissionaire in charge.

"So you didn't spend your money!" he said.
"Oh, no!" the lad replied. "But a fellow like to have a little oop in hand over Sunday!"—Sent in by Miss Winnie Moseley, Nottingham.

ARTFUL BOY.

Jack: "I'm in a difficulty."

Jim: "What's the difficulty?"

Jack: "Well, I am at a loss whether to marry the girl I love or a rich widow."

Jim: "Take my advice, and marry the girl you love."

Jack: "Right, old chap; I will!"

Jim: "I say, old man, what's the widow's address!"—Sent in by Fred. Fisher, Bournemouth.

THE ONLY WAY.

An old gentleman seated by the window in a country restaurant shook his fist fiercely at the waiter.

"Take this egg away!" he roared.

"Yes, sir," answered the waiter. "And what would you like me to do with it?"

"Do with it!" roared the customer, in a voice like thunder. "Why, wing its neck!"—Sent in by H. Wilkinson, York.

TRY THESE.

Question: Which are the most contented birds?

Answer: Crows. Because they never complain without cause (crowd).

Question: What is the difference between a speckle and a pillow?

Answer: One is hard up and the other soft down.

Question: When has a man four hands?

Answer: When he doubts his fate.

Question: Why is a wig like a lie?

Answer: Because it is a "falsehood."

Question: Why did odderberry wine?

Answer: Because he could not get lemon-aid.

Question: When is a candle in a passion?

Answer: When it burns up.—Sent in by Simon Sockal, Limorick.

NEXT WEDNESDAY: **"CAPTAIN TOM MERRY!"**

Another Special Long, Complete Success Talk of the Church of St. John's. Order Early.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 117.

Another Special Long, Complete Success Talk of the Church of St. John's. Order Early.

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



WHOM TO WRITE TO :

EDITOR,
"THE GEM" LIBRARY,
THE FLEETWAY HOUSE,
FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

OUR TWO COMPANION PAPERS,
"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
EVERY MONDAY
AND "THE PENNY POPULAR"
EVERY FRIDAY.

For Next Wednesday.

"CAPTAIN TOM MERRY!"
By Martin Clifford.

In this, our next splendid long, complete tale of the famous class of St. Jim's, Tom Merry of the Third finds that he has a very hard row to hoe indeed in his new capacity as captain of the school, but he sticks to his headless task manfully. As he says himself, he intends to keep order at St. Jim's, if he has to hang a row every five minutes to do it! Knox, the bully, Catty, the black sheep, and even Darral of the Sixth, in turn feel the weight of the captain's authority. But when the terrible disturbances in the school attract the attention of the Head himself, promises are brought to bear upon Tom, and the authority of head boy of St. Jim's passes again, by his own choice, from

"CAPTAIN TOM MERRY!"

TWO GREAT SERIAL STORIES.

In next Wednesday's issue of "The Gem" Library I have a rare treat for my class, for in that number will commence a **MAGNIFICENT SERIAL STORY OF SCHOOL ADVENTURE**

entitled

"PLAYING THE GAME!"

By Arthur S. Hardy.

Mr. A. S. Hardy is one of the most popular writers of the day, and in our grand new serial we have him at his best. This is enough to show you that there is something extra good about this story. Please don't forget to spread the news round among all your friends. And don't forget the title:

"PLAYING THE GAME!"

I also want to call all my readers' attention very specially this week to the amazing new story which starts in the current issue of our original companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. The title of this wonderful yarn is

"THE BLUE ORCHID,"

By Sidney Drew.

and it deals, further, with the stupendous achievements and marvellous adventures of that amazing man Ferrers Lord, the multi-millionaire. Of course, Ching Lang, the Chinese prince, and the whole company of favourite characters, who are the millionaire's faithful followers, also play a big part in this great story. All my "Gem" readers will be well advised to obtain a copy of this week's "Magnet" Library—which, of course, is now on sale everywhere—and start reading for themselves this powerful adventure serial, the finest work ever written by the famous author, Sidney Drew—namely,

"THE BLUE ORCHID."

HOW TO TRAIN DOGS TO DO TRICKS.—No. 2.
How to Start.

The first thing to do with your dog is to make a comparison of him. Feed him yourself—a light breakfast, and

a good meal in the evening. Have a name for him, and have one kind of whistle, and use none other. Do not let anyone (people the dog) do not overdo your own kind attentions to him. In short, don't spoil him.

When the dog knows you well enough to follow you without much trouble begin to teach him, and from that time onwards his lessons should come before his meals, so that he learns to regard his food as his reward for work done.

Probably the first thing you will want to teach your dog is to come when he is called. A dog that has not learnt that simple lesson will be a nuisance, but many a dog never learns well because he is badly taught. The amateur trainer forgets that the dog is not a human being, and does not understand our language, and that what the dog really learns is to associate certain actions with certain sounds. Therefore, when teaching the dog, keep to one word or set of words, for each thing you want him to do.

To teach the dog to come to you when he is called take him out for a walk on a long lead and say "Here," or "Come," for "Here" is more easily learnt. The dog will usually take the notice of the word "Come" first, and will usually take the lead, and repeat the word "Here." When he is near you, give him a little piece of meat. Then let him go away from you, and in two minutes time repeat the lesson. Repeat the process for about twenty minutes. If possible give him two or three lessons in the middle of the day, and another full lesson of twenty minutes in the evening. He will soon learn to associate the word "here" with coming towards you.

Bidding and Retrieving.

To teach the dog to beg—the simplest plan is to take him into the corner of the room, and put him in the right position there. The corner of the room will support his back. Hold him in that position, and say "Beg." Keep him sitting up for a few moments, and then give him a mouthful. Then try him away from the corner of the room. If the dog has some little thing given to him every time he "sits up" he will soon learn that lesson.

It is an easy matter to get a young dog to run after a stick or ball, but it is quite another matter to induce the dog to retrieve the article—that is, to bring it to you. The simplest plan in the long run is to use a long piece of string. When the dog has run after the article he is to retrieve, and has picked it up, call him, and gently pull on the string attached to his collar. If he drops the article, put it back in his mouth, and when he reaches you put it, reward him.

To teach the dog to jump is an easy matter. Hold a stick close to the ground. Put the dog on one side, and hold a piece of meat on the other. Hold the stick low down so that the dog cannot get under it, and say "Over." He will soon learn how to get at the meat. If he blunders at the stick, trying to push it away, put him back in his original position, and start again. When he has learned that lesson you can raise the stick a few inches at a time, until you get a respectable "jump," but be careful not to overdo the lesson, for continual jumping is very tiring.

(Next week another special article on "How To Train Dogs To Do Tricks.")

The Editor