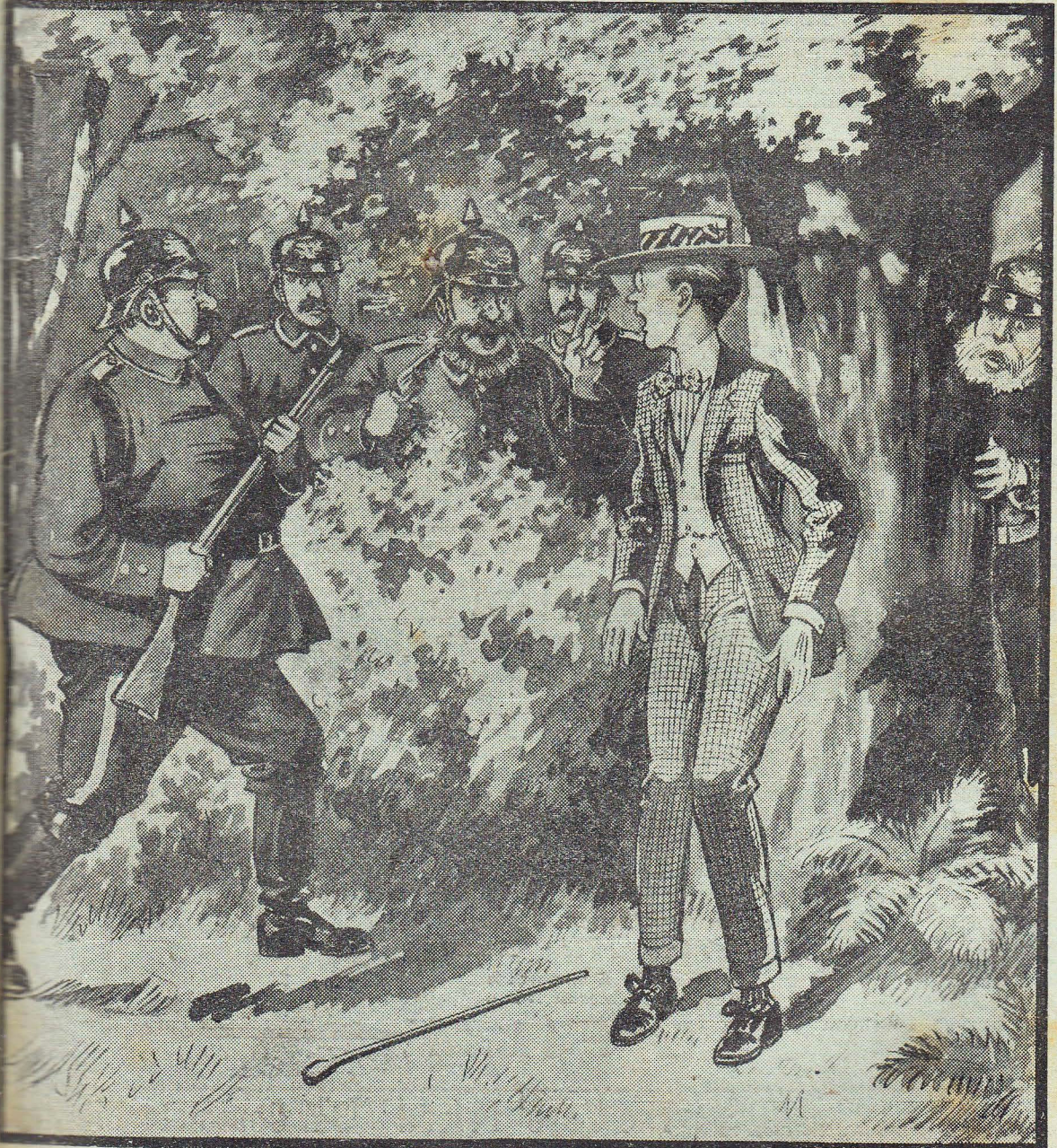
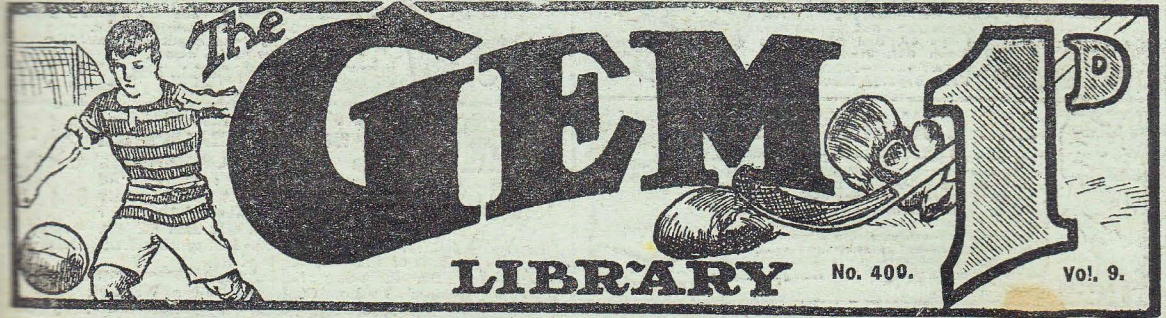


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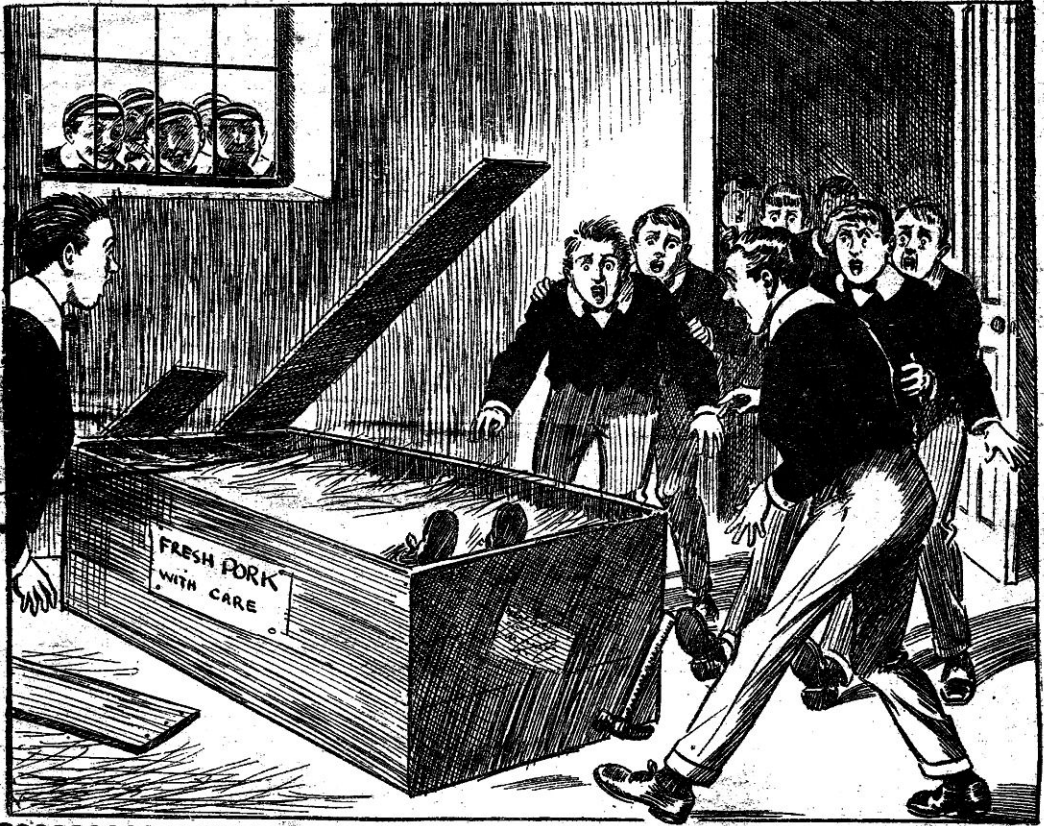


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By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



There was a sudden howl from Lawrence. "Yow! They're moving!" "Great Scott!" The two boots had made a slight, convulsive movement, as if endowed with life! The juniors jumped back from the case. It was quite uncanny. (See Chapter 7.)

CHAPTER 1.

A Surprise for Jack Blake.

JACK BLAKE whistled. Blake of the Fourth was sitting on the table in Study No. 6 with a letter in his hand. D'Arcy and Digby and Herries, his study-mates, were waiting for him.

The chums of the Fourth were wanted in Tom Merry's study, where there was to be a rehearsal of a play shortly to be produced by the Junior Dramatic Society of the School House. That play, entitled "The Hun Invaders," was a real corker, and the juniors were very keen about it. It wasn't every junior dramatic society that could

produce a war play with real German helmets, and that was what Tom Merry & Co. were going to do.

But Blake had declared that he must read his letter before going to the rehearsal. He said it was now or never. The letter had arrived the previous evening, but Blake hadn't time to read it then, as he was engaged in a four-handed mill in Study No. 6, so he had slipped it into his pocket and forgotten it. He had remembered it in the morning, but then he was at lessons, and naturally he couldn't read it in the Form-room, under Mr. Lathom's eyes. He had fully intended to read it immediately after morning lessons, but there had been a rag with the New House fellows, which had filled up the time—indeed,

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"GRUNDY'S GREAT GAME!" AND "UNDER THE DRAGON!"

Blake had been left barely time to bathe his nose before dinner. Perhaps the rag with the New House fellows, and the pain in his nose which resulted, had driven the letter from his mind, but he suddenly thought of it in Study No. 6, just before the quartette started for the rehearsal.

Herries' opinion was that as he had left it so long, he could leave it a little longer. Digby suggested just looking into the envelope to see whether there was a remittance in it. That wouldn't take a minute. Blake declared that he was going to read it; and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy concurred that it was his duty to do so, but advised him to buck up.

So Blake sat on the table and read the letter, while his three chums waited.

Blake had stared at the letter before opening it. It was addressed to him in a very delicate caligraphy, and the envelope had a scent of lavender. Blake did not often receive scented missives, and he did not recognise the delicate handwriting, so he was puzzled. However, he opened the letter, and read it. Then he whistled.

He whistled loud and long. Then he ejaculated:

"My hat!"

"Read it?" asked Herries.

"Yes."

"Then come along."

Blake whistled again.

"They'll be waiting for us," said Digby, "and we've got to try on those blessed Prussian helmets. They'll want padding before we can wear 'em."

"Yaas, wathah! Pway get a move on, Blake, deah boy!"

"Well, this beats it!" said Blake, holding up the letter. "One of you silly asses might have reminded me of this letter. Now it's too late!"

"No bad news, I twust?"

"That depends on how you look at it," said Blake.

"What's the time now, Gussy?"

"Nearly thwee."

"Then it's too late to send a telegram in the morning, isn't it?"

"Yaas, you duffah!"

"Then Gilbert will come!" said Blake.

"Gilbert? Who is Gilbert?" asked Herries.

"Have I ever mentioned my Cousin Gilbert?" asked Blake. "I don't suppose I have, as I haven't seen him for donkeys' years—not since we were two little nippers at the preparatory school together. Or, rather, I was a little nipper and he was a big nipper—he stayed there till he was sixteen. Rather a soft and spoony sort of chap, you know. Lemme see! He'll be twenty now, quite. I remember licking him when I was eleven and he was sixteen."

"A vewy diswepctful proceedin' on your part, Blake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely. "You should respect your eidahs!"

"He was always jading me," explained Blake. "He was rather knutty, and I wasn't. He grouned about my clothes, so I hit him in the eye."

Digby and Herries chuckled, and Arthur Augustus frowned. Arthur Augustus was very particular about his clothes.

"You must have been a wude little beast when you were eleven, Blake," he remarked. "I disappove entially of your proceedin's towards your Cousin Gilbert."

"I haven't seen him since then," went on Blake. "He lives in London, and I wouldn't be found dead in London!"

"I suppose it compares wathah wottenly with your town in Yorkshire," said Arthur Augustus sarcastically.

"You bet it does!" agreed Blake. "But the long and the short of it is, Gilbert's coming here!"

"Well, let him come," said Digby. "I suppose you don't want to punch him in the eye again, after not seeing him for donkeys' years. Let's get to the rehearsal."

"But he's coming to stay!" said Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"You can read the letter," said Blake. "He's got a handwriting like a girl, and he uses scented notepaper."

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I suppose he's grown up into a full-sized knut, like Gilbert the Filbert in the song. Just read it!"

"But the rehearsal——"

"Blow the rehearsal!" roared Blake. "Can't you see I'm in a fix—all through you silly asses letting me forget about this letter!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Dry up, and read the letter," said Blake; "then you can give me some advice. Not that your advice is likely to be much good!" he added disparagingly.

"You may vely upon me to advise you like a fathah, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "Wead the lettah out!"

Blake read the letter out. It ran:

"Dear Jack,—I'm coming down to see you to-morrow. I'm bored to death. I think it may amuse me to see you little boys at school. I'm going to stay for a week. I dare say you can arrange it somehow. If you can't, send me a wire in the morning. Otherwise I shall reach Rylcombe by the train at three. Send something to meet me, walking's such a bore.—Your affectionate cousin,
"GILBERT BLAKE."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You've faibly put your foot in it, Blake. You ought to have wead this lettah yestahday!"

"Whose fault is that?" growled Blake. "What's the good of having three duffers in the study if they can't remind a chap about a letter?"

"You can't send a wiah now," said D'Arcy, "it's too late. And you can't send anythin' to meet the twain, because the thwee twain is already in."

"Catch me sending anything to meet it!" grunted Blake. "If Gilbert can't walk a mile he can stay at the station for the rest of his life. I remember he was always a slacker!"

"Pevwaps you can awwange it with the Housemastah for him to stay," said D'Arcy unheeding. "Mr. Wailton is vevy good-natured."

"I suppose I've got to try," said Blake. "Unless you can lik down to the station quick, and tell Gilbert I'm ill, or dead, or buried, or something."

"Wats!"

"He's coming to see me because he's bored," said Blake. "He's a silly ass, you know; he has more money than is good for him, and never does work of any sort. Too much of a slacker to take anything up. Hangs about, boring himself and everybody else, I've heard say. He's jolly well not going to bore me!"

"You are called upon to treat your cousin with politeness, Blake."

"I suppose I am," grunted Blake. "But I don't like slackers, and I don't like nuts. Blow him!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Look here, I suppose I can slang my own cousin if I like!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated.

"You had better cut the weahsah, and go and meet him on the woad," said Arthur Augustus. "That would be only civil!"

"Rot!" said Blake decidedly. "Of course, I'm going to be hospitable—we're always hospitable in Yorkshire—but I'm not going to cut the rehearsal. I dare say it will be over by the time he crawls into St. Jim's. Come on, and chance it!"

"Weally, Blake, it is up to this studay to observe the wules of civility——"

"Bow-wow!"

"I weapat that it is your dutay to go and meet your cousin on the woad!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Blake, I am surprisid at you!"

"Right-ho! Now let's get to the rehearsal."

"I am shocked!"

"Good! Come on!"

"If you wufuse to go and meet your vishal on the woad, Blake, I shall feel that it is up to me to do so," said Arthur Augustus severely. "Somebody must keep up the studay's reputation for good mannahs."

"Bow-wow-ow-wow!" said Blake.

Blake and Herries and Digby started at last for Tom Merry's study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not follow them. He sniffed.

Then he selected his shiniest topper, and changed his necktie, and took his gold-headed cane, and started out.

Somebody had to keep up the reputation of Study No. 6, and it could not be left in safer hands than those of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 2. The Knut!

"LITTLE boy!" Figgins of the Fourth jumped. Figgins & Co., the heroes of the New House at St. Jim's, were strolling along Rylcombe Lane that pleasant, sunny afternoon. They were chatting cheerily. Figg was talking about the prospects of the football season, so far as St. Jim's juniors were concerned. Fatty Wynn was talking about a certain pie Dame Taggles was preparing at his order—a whacking pie, the mere thought of which made Fatty Wynn's eyes glisten. Kerr was talking about the latest departure of the School House Dramatic Society, and their "dodge" of getting real German helmets for a war-play—a dodge which Kerr admitted was very cute. When that war-play came off there would be a keen interest in seeing the real Prussian helmets, which had been taken by British Tommies from beaten enemies. The interest excited by those trophies would give the bad acting a leg-up, Kerr opined.

As the three chums of the New House were thus discussing three different subjects, they had to do it all at once; but they did not mind. Each was keen on the subject that interested him most.

Then there came an interruption, in the form of a remark addressed to George Figgins:

"Little boy!" Figgins had never dreamed that it was possible that anybody could take him for a little boy. Certainly he had never expected to be addressed as "Little boy." He wasn't a little boy, really; he was rather a big boy. And he was chief of the New House juniors, skipper of the House junior eleven, and a very great person generally. Yet this extraordinary stranger, coming down the lane from Rylcombe, addressed him as "Little boy."

Figgins halted, and fixed his eyes on the stranger. So did Kerr and Wynn. Kerr and Wynn smiled, while Figgins frowned.

The stranger was a young gentleman of about twenty or twenty-one. He was slim, and he was elegant. In comparison with this elegant young gentleman, the elegance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine. The stranger looked, indeed, an exaggerated edition of the swell of St. Jim's.

Figgins & Co. regarded him with deep interest. There were nuts at St. Jim's. But the real, genuine "filbert" was rare. This young gentleman was evidently a Knut with a "K"—a real, indisputable "Colonel of the Knuts."

Such a specimen was seldom or never seen in the quiet country lanes about St. Jim's, or in the village streets. In Bond Street, or Piccadilly, the young gentleman might not have excited remark. But in this quiet region Figgins wondered that he had got out of Rylcombe without all the village boys following him.

And he had addressed Figgins—Figgins of the Fourth—Figgins the footballer—Figgins the Great—as "Little boy."

Figgins looked him over. He took note of his purple tie, which exactly matched in hue his purple socks. His purple socks were easily to be seen, because his trousers were turned up four inches. He noted the elegant shoes with laces about an inch in width—the handkerchief tucked in the sleeve with a fragment of delicate lace showing—the gold watch-bracelet on the wrist—the canary gloves, a size too large, and worn unbuttoned, in the true knutty manner. And the "willow" with a lumpy end, carried with the lump downwards. And Figgins ejaculated:

"My only hat!"

And Kerr ejaculated:

"Great Scott!"

And Fatty Wynn observed:

"Well, this beats it!"

The young man seemed surprised. He fumbled in his waistcoat, produced an eyeglass—a rimless eyeglass—and jammed it into his eye. With that aid to sight, he looked at the three juniors.

"Excuse me, little boy," he remarked. "Can you tell me if this is the right road to St. Jim's?"

Figgins felt inclined to faint. This object was going to St. Jim's!

"Yes," gasped Figgins.

"Thank you, little boy!"

"You—you are going to St. Jim's?" ejaculated Figgins.

"I am trying to get there," said the young man plaintively. "Is it a very long way, little boy?"

"About half a mile from here."

"Good gad!"

The young man seemed almost overcome. Figgins might have said it was forty miles from the effect his words had on the young man.

"We belong to St. Jim's," said Figgins urbanely, closing one eye at his chums. Figgins had resolved to have a little fun with this filbert in return for being called a little boy. "Are you a new boy?"

"Eh?"

Kerr and Wynn grinned. As the stranger was well over twenty, he could hardly have been a new boy for St. Jim's.

"New kid?" asked Figgins.

"Good gad, no! I'm visitin' a young relative at your school, little boy. Perhaps you know Blake—Jack Blake?"

"Blake of the Fourth!" chirruped Figgins, in great delight.

He could imagine Jack Blake's feelings when he saw his visitor.

"Yaas—my cousin little Jacky!"

"You're Blake's cousin?"

"Yaas."

"Oh, good!" said Figgins. "Blake's a great friend of ours—immense!"

"I asked him to send somethin' to meet me," said the young man, in the same plaintive tone. "But there was nothin'—simply nothin'! Not even a cab to be had, good gad! Benighted place. I don't like the country. I told the porter to fetch me a taxi, and he nearly had a fit, good gad! I've had to walk! How am I goin' to walk another half-mile? Good gad!"

"My dear chap, as you're Blake's cousin, we'll see you through," said Figgins. "We know the place, you know. We'll help you."

"Thanks, awfully! If you could tell me where to get some vehicle—anythin' would do."

"Just what I was thinking of," said Figgins. "Suppose you rest on the stile while we fetch the vehicle?"

"What a really rippin' idea!" said the young man, in great relief. "Thank you very much, little boy!"

He sat on the stile, carefully pulling up the knees of his trousers. Figgins & Co., almost suffocating, hurried on down the lane.

"What do you think of him?" gasped Figgins, when they were out of hearing. "Isn't he a knut? Isn't he a bewt? Isn't he a coker?"

"Blake's cousin!" stammered Kerr. "Blake will be overjoyed to see him at St. Jim's—I don't think! He'll be chipped to death about him!"

"Jolly lucky 'tain't a New House chap he's going to visit," said Fatty Wynn. "Look here! We're not going to the school with him, Figg!"

"We are!" said Figgins.

"Bosh! I'm not! I wouldn't be found dead within a hundred miles of the silly idiot!" said Fatty indignantly.

"We're going to get him a vehicle, and take him to St. Jim's," said Figgins coolly. "It's going to be the joke of the term! You cut down into Rylcombe, Kerr, and get a sheet of cardboard at the stationer's—the biggest you can get—and a brush, and some red ink. Don't jaw—just buzz off. I'll go and get the giddy vehicle. Fatty, you keep an eye on the Knut."

"But I say—"

"Don't say anything—just do as I tell you," said Figgins.

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Figgins. "Blake may come to meet his cousin—the jay seemed to expect to be met—but he's not going to get our Knut away. If anybody tries to get that Knut, you're to pitch into him."

"My hat!"

"We're going to take him to St. Jim's in triumph with a big placard announcing what we've found!" grinned Figgins. "It will make the School House boundaries simply squirm."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Co. separated, chucking gleefully. Kerr dashed off to the village, Figgins started for a farmhouse, and Patty Wynn strolled back towards the stile to keep watch over the prize.

The Knut was sitting on the stile, gnawing the end of his stick, and regarding the landscape. He was prepared to sit there till the vehicle came—in view of the utter impossibility of walking half a mile.

Fatty Wynn took up a strategic position between the stile and the school. He was fully prepared to carry out his leader's orders. Any School House fellow who came along with the intention of depriving Figgins & Co. of their prize would have a fight on his hands. And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was coming.

CHAPTER 3. Running For It!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY was walking quite quickly down the lane. As a rule, the Honourable Arthur Augustus favoured an elegant saunter which his chums described as Gussy's Piccadilly crawl. But on the present occasion Gussy was in a hurry. He knew that Gilbert Blake must have arrived at Rylcombe long ago, and must be on his way to St. Jim's. The reputation of Study No. 6 required that courtesy should be shown to the visitor. Arthur Augustus had to make up for the shortcomings of his chums.

He was some distance from the school when it occurred to his noble mind that he did not know Blake's cousin by sight, and would be likely enough to pass him on the road without being aware of his identity. This was rather a knotty problem to think out. Arthur Augustus kept an eagle eye on every passer-by. That was not difficult, for there was little traffic in the quiet country lane. Then he caught sight of Fatty Wynn, seated on a grassy bank by the roadside and sucking toffee.

Fatty Wynn caught sight of him also, and rose to his feet. The Knut was in sight, on the stile a dozen yards away, still sucking his cane. Fatty Wynn forthwith planted himself directly in Gussy's way.

"Wynn, deah boy—"

"Hallo!" said Fatty.

"Have you seen a chap on the woad?"

"Several," said Fatty.

"Any chap that looks like Blake?"

Fatty grinned.

"Not one!" he said. Blake's cousin certainly did not look like Blake.

"I am goin' to meet Blake's cousin, who is expected this aftnoon," explained Arthur Augustus. "I do not know the chap by sight, but he is probably somethin' like Blake."

"Haven't seen anybody with a face like a kite," said Fatty cheerfully.

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Hadn't you better go back?" suggested Fatty. "I hear you've got a rehearsal on this afternoon. You ought to be there, Gussy."

"Yaas, but I am goin' to meet Blake's cousin. Bai Jove! What is that sittin' on the stile?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, that!" said Fatty carelessly. "That's a Knut we've picked up. We've put it on the stile while we're getting a cart to take it to St. Jim's."

Arthur Augustus looked past Fatty at the figure on the stile. Was it possible that that outrageous Knut was Blake's Cousin Gilbert? There was no one else in sight, and certainly Gilbert must be on the road somewhere.

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"Pewwaps that is the chap," said Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove! It will be wathah a surprisew for Blake."

"It will!" agreed Patty Wynn.

"Pway let me pass, Wynn. You are blockin' the way."

"I'm keeping it blocked," explained Fatty. "You had better cut back to that rehearsal. Tom Merry will want you."

"I have no time to bothah about Tom Mewwy just now. Pway let me pass! What are you doin', you ass? Let me pass at once!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Weally, Wynn, I do not desiah any House wags now."

"Then you'd better get back," chuckled Fatty.

"But if you do not let me pass, Wynn, I shall shift you."

"Go ahead!"

"I shall be sowwy to stwike you, Wynn."

"You will!" agreed Fatty.

"For the last time, Wynn!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, his wrath rising. "Will you let me pass, or will you not let me pass, you uttah ass?"

"Not!"

"Then I shall have no wresource but to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Hurrah!"

Arthur Augustus strode on haughtily. He came at once into collision with Fatty Wynn, who threw his arms round him and held him. Arthur Augustus struggled.

"Welease me, you uttah fathead!"

"Are you going back?" demanded Wynn.

"No!" roared Arthur Augustus.

"Then I'm holding on."

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus's blood was up now. He began to struggle furiously. Fatty Wynn roared as he received a drive on his plump nose, but he promptly retaliated with a centre hit on D'Arcy's nose, which elicited a roar from the swell of St. Jim's. Then they lost their footing and rolled in the road, fighting valiantly.

The young gentleman on the stile regarded them through his monocle, and ejaculated:

"Good gad!"

Then he continued to suck his cane and watch the combat.

It was a really terrific combat. The two juniors struggled to their feet, after collecting a considerable quantity of dust. Arthur Augustus's elegant "clobber" was in a parlous state after that roll in the dusty highway. His silk hat had rolled into a ditch, his tie had come out, and his collar was hanging by a single stud.

"You uttah wottah!" he gasped. "Take that!"

"You silly chump!" panted Fatty Wynn. "Take that!"

"Yawooh!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

A drive on the chin sent Fatty Wynn staggering on the edge of the ditch. He lost his footing and plumped in. There was a foot of water in the ditch—and to judge by Fatty's look the next minute there was more than a foot of mud. Arthur Augustus stood panting on the bank, brandishing his fists wildly.

"Come out, you wottah! Come out, you New House wastah!" he roared.

Fatty Wynn gurgled as he scrambled in the mud.

"I'm coming, you School House dummy! Grooogh!"

The fat Fourth-Former scrambled up the bank into the road.

Arthur Augustus started back.

Fatty Wynn was bringing mud with him—thick and slimy mud, with a smell that could have been cut with a knife. That ditch was not often disturbed—and Fatty Wynn had disturbed it at last, and raked up all kinds of weird odours. Arthur Augustus felt quite faint as he approached.

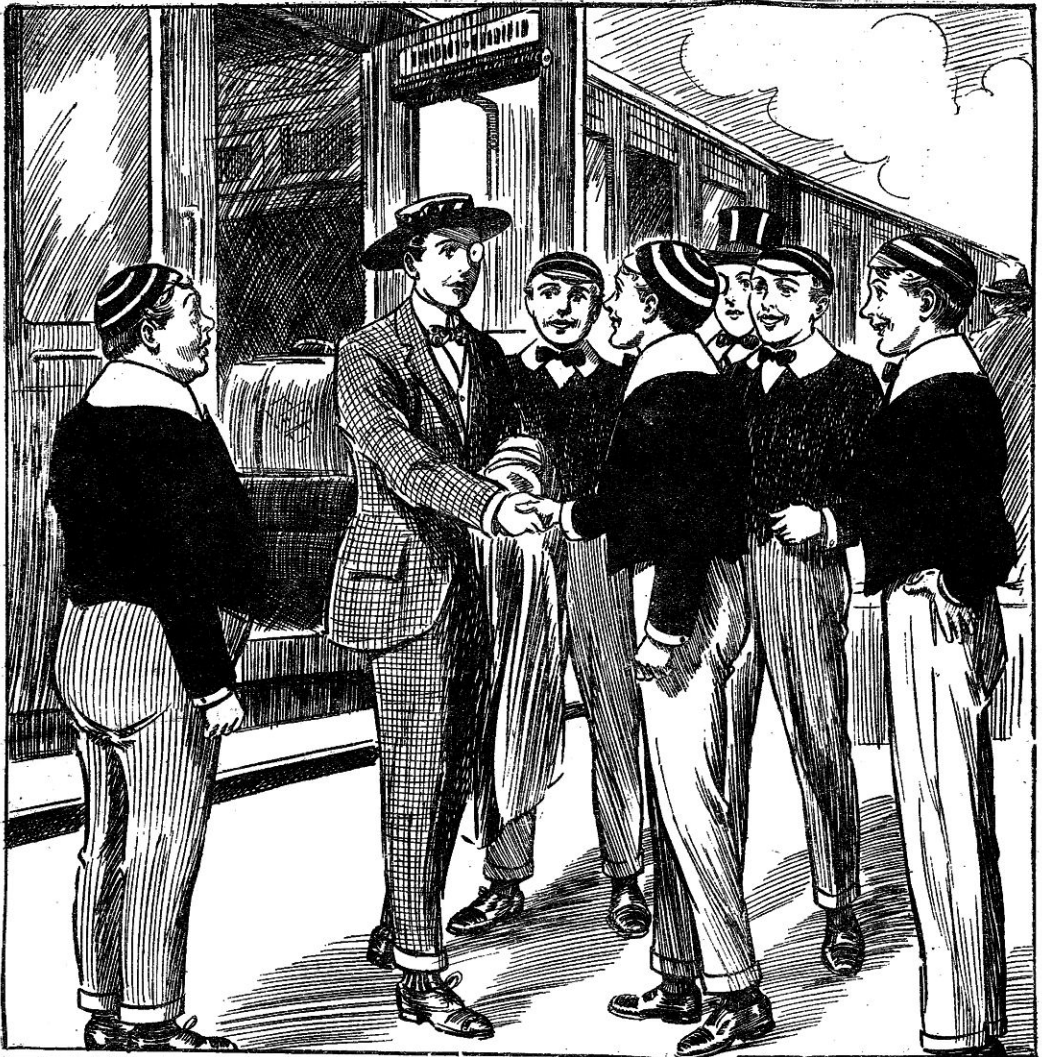
He backed away rapidly.

"Keep off!" he gasped. "Wynn, you howwah, don't come neah me! Goodness gwacious! Keep away!"

"Lemme gerrat you!" gasped Fatty.

"Gweat Scott!"

Arthur Augustus fairly ran. Arthur Augustus feared no foe; but he could not stand the scent of that mud at close quarters. He was dusty enough already, and a



"I suppose you won't want to cut me, Jackie, if you meet me as a private—!" "Cut you, old chap?" said Jack, squeezing his hand. "I'll be jolly proud of you, and so will all of us. Good old Hilbert." (See Chapter 14.)

coating of the mud that Fatty Wynn had dug up would have been the last straw. He fled.

"Come back, you funk!" roared Fatty Wynn. But Arthur Augustus didn't come back. He streaked for the school as if he were on the cinder-path.

Fatty Wynn shook himself like a Newfoundland dog, scattering mud and water in all directions. Then he started after Arthur Augustus. He was coated and soaked with smelly mud, and he had forgotten all about Figgins and the Knut. He was only thinking of bestowing some of his smelly mud upon the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus looked back, to see a fat and muddy figure thundering on his trail.

"Gweat Scott!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. He put on speed.

Fatty Wynn put on speed also. Arthur Augustus had a start, which was well for him, for Fatty, in spite of his weight, was a good runner. He began to gain a

little, and Arthur Augustus caught a whiff of the mud from behind. It spurred him on to renewed efforts.

"Stop, you rotter! Stop, you funk!" yelled Fatty Wynn.

"Gwooh! Keep away, you howwah!"

The school gates were in sight at last. Arthur Augustus rushed in desperately, and sprinted across the quad, quite oblivious of the fact that he had lost his hat and his necktie, and looked a most remarkable object. Fatty Wynn charged in at the gates after him. Arthur Augustus headed for the School House.

"What on earth's the matter?" asked Grundy of the Shell, meeting Arthur Augustus as he panted up the steps. "You silly fag, what are you—"

"Gewwout of the way! Stop him!"

Arthur Augustus dodged Grundy, giving him a shove that sent him staggering. Grundy of the Shell gave a

smort of wrath. He did not like being shoved by Fourth-Form fags.

"Why, you cheeky young rotter!" he began.

Arthur Augustus was gone. He was straining up the stairs, heading for Study No. 6. Grundy looked round to see what D'Arcy was running from. He soon discovered. There was a crash in the doorway as Fatty Wynn bolted in, and met Grundy in full career.

"Oh! Oh! Ah!"

"Yoooop!"

Fatty Wynn threw his arms round Grundy to save himself. They waltzed together for a moment, and spun over. Fatty jumped up and headed for the stairs, leaving Grundy on the floor gasping. He had left Grundy a good deal of his mud, and the scent that clung to George Alfred Grundy was terrible. Fatty Wynn streaked up the stairs.

Arthur Augustus had reached Study No. 6, and there he looked back, spent and breathless. A muddy figure was thudding after him, close behind. Fatty had put on a spurt, and he was almost within reach.

Arthur Augustus had had an idea of looking himself in the study. But there was no time for that. He rushed on down the Shell passage.

"Bai Jove! Oh, deah! You howwid wottah, keep off!"

With a final effort Arthur Augustus reached Tom Merry's study, a foot ahead of the raging Fatty. He hurled the door open and rushed in.

"Wescue, deah boys! Stop him! Yawwooh!"

"Great pip!"

"What the thunder—"

"Stop him! Wescue!"

CHAPTER 4.

An Arrival in State.

TOM MERRY & Co. were in the study.

They were busy with the rehearsal of the "Beasts of Berlin," and they were going strong.

The real Prussian helmets were very much in evidence. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell wore the helmets, and they were dressed in a more or less lifelike imitation of Prussian Guards.

Tom Merry, as Captain Korfdrop in the play, was delivering a ferocious speech, sentencing Blake of the Fourth to be instantly shot. But the ferocious speech was suddenly interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus, quite out of breath, sank into the armchair, panting.

"Keep him off!"

"Gussy," roared Blake, "where's your hat?"

"Oh, cwumbs!"

"Where's your necktie?" yelled Digby.

"Gwooooh!"

"What's the matter?" howled Tom Merry.

"Yoooop!"

"What the merry dickens—"

"Hallo, what's this?" shouted Monty Lowther.

"This" was Fatty Wynn.

He charged into the study, reeking with mud and bristling with wrath. He was barely recognisable; in fact, but for his circumference, the juniors would not have known him. But there was only one fellow at St. Jim's with a circumference like Fatty Wynn's.

"Lemme gerrat him!" panted Fatty.

Arthur Augustus leaped out of the armchair as if the seat had become suddenly red-hot. He dodged wildly round the table.

"Keep off! Wescue!"

"Hold on!"

"My hat! That whiff—"

"Grooooh!"

"Chuck him out!"

There were yells of wrath from the rehearsers as Fatty Wynn bumped into them in his frantic pursuit of Arthur Augustus. Smelly mud was freely distributed to all the juniors in the study. They tried to dodge, but

there was not much room for dodging in the crowded room.

"Collah him!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, dodging behind Blake. "Keep him off!"

"I'm not going to touch him!" gasped Blake. "He's a bit too nifty for me. Keep off, you smelly beast!"

Arthur Augustus caught Blake by the shoulders, striving to keep him between Fatty Wynn and his own elegant person. But Fatty Wynn grabbed Blake and dragged him aside, with a loud and indignant yell from Blake. Then he seized on the swell of the School House.

"Gwoogh! Wescue!"

"Collar the potty idiot!" shouted Manners.

"Pile on the fathead!"

"Squash him!"

The juniors were pretty muddy already, and their wrath was great. So they piled on Fatty Wynn. Fatty was dragged off his victim, and bumped down on the floor.

"Hold him!" yelled Tom Merry.

Half a dozen pairs of hands grasped Fatty and held him down. Arthur Augustus regarded his clothes, and almost wept.

"Bai Jove, look at me! Oh, deah!"

"Pin that fat idiot down!" said Tom Merry. "We'll scrag him for this. Look at the state we're in! Keep still, you New House hoologan!"

"Lemme gerrat him!" roared Fatty.

"Here, take a turn of this cord round him," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The muddy juniors did not stand on ceremony with Fatty. They looped the cord round his fat wrists and ankles, and drew it tight. Then Fatty Wynn lay and gasped on the carpet.

"Now, what's it all about?" demanded Blake. "We'll make an example of that New House bouncer for coming into a respectable House in that state. Open the window, for goodness' sake; it's whiffy!"

Tom Merry flung the window wide open, and the juniors fanned themselves. The "whiff" was clearing off a little, but it was still terrible.

"Oh, deah!" groaned Arthur Augustus. "Look at my clobber!"

"Blow your clobber!" growled Tom Merry. "What do you mean by interrupting the rehearsal?"

"It is all Blake's fault, deah boy!"

"My fault!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! If you had sent a twap to meet your cousin it would have been all wight."

"What on earth's my cousin got to do with it?" demanded Blake, in astonishment.

"Gwooooh!"

"You don't mean to say that those New House bouncers have had the nerve to play any tricks on my Cousin Gilbert?" shouted Blake.

"Ow! Yaas, wathah! The sillay ass was sittin' on the stile—"

"Eh? What silly ass?"

"Your cousin, deah boy. I am suah it was your cousin, because he looked a silly idiot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you frabjous ass—" began Blake wrathfully. "Lemme loose, you blithering idiots!" came in sulphurous tones from Fatty Wynn.

"Stick something into his mouth," said Blake. "An inkpot will do. Now, what's that about my cousin, Gussy, you ass?"

"I was goin' to meet him, to keep up the reputation of the studay, and as Fatty Wynn wouldn't let me get neah that chap on the stile—I am suah he was your cousin, and those boundahs are japin' him—I gave Wynn a fearful thwashin'—"

"You didn't!" howled Fatty. "I gave you one."

"I pitched him into the ditch—"

"I fell in."

"And then the howwid wottah came for me, all weekin' with mud, so I had to wun like anythin'!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"And what's become of my Cousin Gilbert?" demanded Blake.

"I forgot all about him, deah boy. I had to get away from that smelly beast. I suppose he is still sittin' on the stile. He looked sillay idiot enough to go on sittin' there for evah and evah."

"You'll see him soon!" howled Fatty Wynn. "Lemme loose, you silly asses!"

"So you're japing my Cousin Gilbert, are you?" said Blake. "Figgins and Kerr, I suppose. You cheeky New House waster—"

"Oh, deah, look at my clothes! I weally think I had bettah go and have a bath. And I wish you to undahstand, Blake, that I uttahly wufese to go and meet your cousin again undah any cires whatevah."

Arthur Augustus limped breathlessly out of the study. He certainly needed a wash and a change.

"What about the rehearsals?" hinted Manners.

"Blow the rehearsals!" said Blake. "If those cheeky New House bounders are japing my visitor, we're going to chip in—at least, I am. What are they doing with him, Fatty Wynn, you smelly porpoise?"

"Groch! Find out!" gasped Fatty.

There was a sudden roar from the quadrangle. It was a roar of surprise and merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"What is it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn chuckled.

"Your cousin's come, Blake, I fancy."

Blake, in consternation, rushed to the window. Tom Merry & Co. rushed after him. They stared out into the quadrangle. Fatty yelled.

"Lemme loose! Lemme loose, you rotters! I want to see the silly ass, too!" yelled Fatty, wriggling in his bonds.

But he was not heeded.

The School House fellows were staring at the extraordinary scene in the quadrangle.

A trap had driven in at the gates. Figgins was driving it. Beside him sat a young man, whose amazingly nutty appearance would have attracted glances anywhere. If that young man had walked in at the gates, certainly a good many glances would have been turned on him, and there would have been many smiles.

But the manner of his arrival caused a sensation. Kerr was behind him in the trap. As the young man had his back to Kerr, naturally he could not see what Kerr was doing.

But everybody else could see.

Kerr was holding up a large placard just behind the young man's head—a huge sheet of cardboard, upon which was daubed, in large letters and red ink:

"JUST CAUGHT WILD!

GENUINE KNUT!

LAST APPEARANCE IN PUBLIC BEFORE BEING SENT TO HOME FOR IDIOTS!"

Jack Blake gasped.

"My cousin! My hat! My only Aunt Maria!"

CHAPTER 5.

School House Against New House!

TOM MERRY & CO. stared.

They gasped.

"Your cousin!" yelled Tom.

"Your c-c-cousin!" stuttered Herries.

"That!" ejaculated Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha! Blake's cousin!" chirruped Fatty Wynn. "New House chaps don't have cousins like that! Lemme loose, you fatheads! I want to see him."

Blake gazed from the window, almost transfixed. It was years since he had seen his Cousin Gilbert, but he remembered him at sixteen as decidedly "nutty." Evidently he had developed into a filbert of the filberts.

If he had been a common or garden nut it would not have been so bad. But he was an exaggerated specimen of a nut—he was a nut of the nuttiest variety. Even that would not have been so bad, but for the fact that he had fallen into the hands of Figgins & Co. The New House schemers had made the most of him. It was easy

to understand now why Fatty Wynn had been on guard, and why Gussy had not been allowed to approach the Knut.

The fellows in the quadrangle were yelling. They would have smiled, anyway, at the sight of the Knut, but his utter unconsciousness of the fact that Kerr was holding that placard over his head behind made them shriek. Gilbert's face expressed some slight and languid surprise, but he hadn't the faintest idea what had caused the merriment that had suddenly seized upon everybody in the old quadrangle.

The trap came slowly up the drive. Figgins was in no hurry. He wanted to give everybody a chance to see what he had caught wild.

He wanted, above all, to give Study No. 6 a chance of spotting Gilbert. He wanted Jack Blake to have that innocent pleasure.

"Your cousin!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Go and slaughter him and bury him—quick!"

"My Cousin Gilbert," moaned Blake, "and—and he's coming to stay a week!"

"Oh, scissors!"

"There's something in the name," remarked Monty Lowther blandly. "I've heard of another Gilbert who was a nut—"

"A Knut with a K!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm Gilbert, the Filbert, the Knut with a K!" sang Manners softly.

Blake snorted.

"Oh, don't be funny! Come and help me mop up those New House bounders! The whole school will be shrieking over this!"

"They're shrieking already!" chuckled Lowther.

"Come on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "If he's Blake's cousin, it's up to the School House to rescue him."

There was a rush from the study. The Terrible Three stayed only to yank off their stage "clobber," and then they rushed after Blake and Herries and Dig. Fatty Wynn roared to them as they went, but they did not heed. The fat Fourth-Former was left wriggling on the floor, a helpless prisoner. The School House juniors had no time to bother with Fatty.

"Buck up, School House!" shouted Tom Merry, as he ran down the passage.

At that rallying cry, fellows who were in their studies came bolting out. Most of them had been at their windows, grinning. Talbot and Kangaroo of the Shell joined Tom Merry at once, and Gore and Danc and Glyn, and Reilly and Julian of the Fourth. They did not ask questions; they were quite ready for a House rag. They rushed down the stairs in a crowd.

There was already a crowd round the trap as it came through the drive, and it was proceeding at a walk. Gilbert was still unconscious of the cause of the sensation. He had glanced round once, and Kerr had promptly slipped the placard behind him, and looked unconscious. Gilbert surveyed the howling crowd in great surprise, and Kerr elevated the placard over his head again. The shrieks of merriment redoubled.

"Rescue!" shouted Blake, as he led the rush from the School House.

"Back up, New House!" shouted Figgins. "This is our Knut! Back up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good gad!" said Gilbert. "What's the doocid row? What's the dashed excitement about, dear boys—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Caught wild!" gasped Redfern of the New House. "Where did you catch it, Figgys? Whom does it belong to?"

"It belongs to Blake!" said Figgins. "It's a School House specimen. It addresses a chap as 'Little boy,' and says 'Good gad!' just as if it were human."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good gad!" ejaculated Gilbert, thus bearing out Figgins's statement, amid shouts of laughter. "Are you referrin' to me, little boy?"

Blake & Co. made a rush. The trap would have been taken by assault, but just then Kildare of the Sixth strode upon the scene. The captain of St. Jim's was laughing. He could not help it.

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"GRUNDY'S GREAT GAME!"

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Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Hold on!" he called out. "Keep back, Blake! Stop this! No ragging!"

"That's my cousin they've got there!" bawled Blake.

"We caught it wild," said Figgins.

"Good gad!" said Gilbert.

"Figgins," said Kildare, as severely as he could, "what do you mean by treating a visitor to St. Jim's in this manner?"

"Me!" ejaculated Figgins. "Why, I've brought it here. We picked it up in the lane, and it couldn't walk."

"What!"

"It nearly fainted when I told it that it was half a mile to St. Jim's. So we got a trap for it," explained Figgins.

"I'm doing this to oblige Blake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll oblige you!" roared Blake. "I'll—I'll——"

"Rush them!" yelled Digby.

"Hold on!" shouted Kildare. "Order! Do you hear?" Like the celebrated Dying Gladiator, they heard it, but they heeded not. For once the captain of St. Jim's was not listened to. The School House party made a rush, and swarmed over the trap.

Naturally, a New House crowd made a rush, too, to stop them, and there was a wild scuffle round the trap.

The horse began to plunge, and Kildare caught its head quickly and held it, or some damage might have been done. The prefect, being thus occupied, could not interfere, and the juniors went ahead. Tom Merry and Blake were in the trap, and they had hold of Figgins. Figgins descended from the trap in a heap, and then they grasped Kerr. Redfern and Owen and Lawrence were clambering to the rescue, and the vehicle was crowded with struggling juniors.

Gilbert the Knut sat in the midst of it in a dazed condition.

Kerr's placard went flying through the air, and it was caught by Jameson of the Third, a New House fag, and he proceeded to flaunt it through the quad like a banner. Struggling juniors bumped to and fro in the trap. In their excitement they quite forgot that the scene was being enacted under the windows of the School House. They remembered it when Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, came striding out.

"Boys!" thundered Mr. Railton.

"Cave!" gasped Tom Merry.

The struggle in the trap suddenly ceased. The combatants jumped out and ran. The scuffling juniors melted away. In a flash, as it seemed, the trap stood deserted on the drive, with Kildare holding the horse's head, and Gilbert the Filbert sitting alone, dazed and overcome.

Mr. Railton compressed his lips to keep back a laugh. The sudden vanishing of the excited mob was comic. He strode towards the trap.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed.

"I think it's a House rag, sir," said Kildare, trying not to laugh. "Some relation of Blake's, and the New House kids have been having a joke with him."

"Such jokes must not take place in the quadrangle," said Mr. Railton.

"Good gad!" stuttered Gilbert.

"Who are you, sir?" exclaimed the Housemaster, with a far from approving look at the dazed Knut.

"Good gad! I'm Blake's cousin! I've come to see my cousin!" gasped Gilbert. "A little boy found this trap for me. What's the doocid excitement about?"

"Pray come into the House!" said Mr. Railton.

"Yaas, certainly!"

Gilbert descended from the trap, and came up the steps of the School House. He paused there, took a small silken fan out of his pocket, and fanned himself. Mr. Railton observed that proceeding in the greatest astonishment. He had never seen a young man who carried a fan before.

"If you are Blake's cousin—where is Blake?"

"Here, sir!" said Blake's voice meekly.

"You had better look after your cousin, Blake."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton retired to his study, after another look at Gilbert—a look that might have penetrated Gilbert, if he had not been so completely satisfied with himself. But Gilbert represented perfection in his own eyes, and he did not even observe the Housemaster's expression.

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"So you're little Jackie?" said Gilbert, affixing his monocle and regarding the Fourth-Former.

"I'm your Cousin Jack!" said Blake rather gruffly. He was anxious to get Gilbert out of sight. "Come up to the study."

"Yaas!"

Blake piloted his cousin into the School House. Figgins came back to take the trap away, looking rather dubiously at Kildare. But the captain of St. Jim's only shook a finger at him; and Figgins drove the trap away, grinning. Gilbert's arrival in state had been a score over the School House, and Figgins was satisfied. He wondered whether the ineffable Gilbert was going to stay. In that case, it was quite certain that the New House Co. had not done with the Knut. Figgins looked forward cheerfully to making the existence of Study No. 6 a burden to them, so long as they had the Filbert on their hands.

CHAPTER 6.

This Side Up, With Care!

"GROOH! You silly chumps! Lemme loose, will you?"

That sulphurous voice surprised the Terrible. Three as they came back into the study. They had forgotten all about Fatty Wynn.

In the excitement of the scuffle with the New House juniors, the prisoner in the study had completely passed from their minds. The fat Fourth-Former was still on the carpet.

"Lemme loose! D'y'e hear? You thumping idiots! You frabjous chumps! You blithering cuckoos!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

The Terrible Three chuckled.

"Blessed if I hadn't forgotten you, Fatty," grinned Tom Merry. "Take it quietly; you're a prisoner of war, you know. Hallo! How did you get that ink on your chivvy?"

"Grooh! I called out when I heard somebody pass!" gasped Fatty. "That young beast D'Arcy minor came in, and instead of letting me loose, he poured the ink over my chivvy. Groooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose you didn't call out any more?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"No, I didn't! I waited for you silly idiots to come back. Now lemme loose, and I'll wipe up the study with all three of you!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"Not good enough," said Tom Merry. "What do you mean by capturing a prize idiot belonging to Study No. 6, and making an exhibition of him? It's up against the School House. You've got to die the death!"

"You silly ass——"

"We'll let one leg loose, and you can hop home," said Tom Merry, with a chuckle. "We'll bring our peashooters and see you off."

"Why, you rotter——"

"Hold on!" said Monty Lowther, raising his hand. "Fatty isn't going yet. I've got a wheeze!"

"Pile in, O King!"

"Fatty came in here like a Hun invader, and we've made him a prisoner. His pals don't know he's here. They'll be getting anxious about him. You see, it's past tea-time, and they know that only a serious accident could make Fatty miss tea. I think we ought to send him back to them—this side up, with care!"

"What are you driving at?"

"There's an old packing-case in the box-room—several, in fact," said Lowther. "We can get it here easily enough, and take it out by the back way. I'm thinking of sending Figgins a present."

"A present!" ejaculated Tom.

"Yes. In these hard times a present of food is most acceptable, and we're going to send Figgins a consignment of pork."

"Pork!" yelled Manners and Tom Merry.

Monty Lowther nodded.

"Exactly!"

"Are you off your rocker?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Where are you going to get the pork? And what are

you going to send it to Figgins for—and what's the little game?"

Monty Lowther jerked his thumb towards Fatty Wynn. Then his chums understood, and they roared. Fatty Wynn understood, too, and he bellowed.

"Why, you silly rotter——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll yell——"

"No, you won't!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully, jerking Fatty's somewhat muddy handkerchief out of his pocket. "You're a prisoner of war, and you're going to be gagged. Open your mouth!"

"I won't—— Goooooh!"

Fatty Wynn had to open his mouth to say he wouldn't, and Monty Lowther seized the favourable moment for jamming the handkerchief into it. Fatty's eyes rolled wildly, and he gurgled, and he guggled. But Lowther drove the handkerchief right in, and then proceeded to secure it with a length of twine, which he wound round and round the New House junior's head.

Tom Merry and Manners looked on, chuckling. Fatty Wynn was soon reduced to silence. His looks spoke volumes, but not audibly.

"There," said Lowther, rising, "I think that's workmanlike. Do you feel comfy, Fatty?"

Fatty only glared. He could do nothing else.

"Silence gives consent," remarked Lowther. "Now for the packing-case. Keep an eye on the passage, Tommy, while we get him to the box-room."

"Good egg!"

Tom Merry whipped into the passage, to keep watch. Manners and Lowther lifted the captured enemy and bore him out of the study. Several juniors were in sight, and there were inquiries as to the "little game," and Monty Lowther's explanation was received with many chuckles. Tom was keeping watch at the head of the stairs in case a prefect should "happen" along. Kildare or Darrel or Langton would certainly not have allowed that little joke to be carried out.

In a few minutes Fatty was safe in the box-room, however, and Tom Merry joined his chums there, with three or four other juniors, all eager to lend a hand.

Fatty Wynn was deposited on the floor, while Lowther prepared the packing-case. The lid was removed, and old straw and packing-shavings put in, and then the fat Fourth-Former was lifted in. Fatty Wynn wriggled spasmodically as he sunk into the packing. But he could not resist, and he could not speak.

The juniors proceeded to pack the straw and shavings round him, and over him, till he was covered up with the exception of a round face red with wrath.

"Comfy?" asked Lowther.

Glare!

"He seems all right," said Lowther. "Now put the lid on. We shall have to nail it on. Mind you don't drive the nails into Fatty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better leave a hole or two for him to breathe," said Kangaroo. "If Figgins wants dead pork, he can do his own slaughtering."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The boards were placed over the packing-case, and there was an active hammering. The juniors considerably bored several holes in the board over Fatty's face, so that he could breathe freely.

Fatty Wynn was quite unable to give expression to his feelings. They were deep, but not too deep for words—if he could have uttered any words.

The lid having been nailed securely on, Monty Lowther proceeded to daub on the boards:

"THIS SIDE UP!
WITH CARE!"

Then the packing-case was carefully corded up, and a label attached.

"Now we've got to get it out," said Clifton Dane. "We shall want a steam-derrick, I guess."

"All together!" said Lowther.

"And don't drop it on the stairs!" chuckled Tom Merry.

The half-dozen juniors seized the packing-case, and

raised it from the floor. Fatty Wynn was not a light weight. But they were sturdy fellows. The case was raised, and carried out of the box-room. The narrow stairs were a little difficult to negotiate, but the case was got successfully down to the landing.

"Back stairs," remarked Lowther.

From the landing, they proceeded to the back stairs; and on the lower landing they were met by Mrs. Mimms, the House-dame. The good lady looked at the big packing-case in astonishment.

"What ever have you got there?" she exclaimed.

"Some stuff for Figgins," explained Lowther. "Old rubbish really, but Figgins wants it, so we're going to give it to him. It's of no value, but we're taking the trouble just to please Figgins."

"That's very kind of you, Master Lowther."

"Madam," said Lowther seriously, "it is our aim to be good, kind boys, and to please our dear schoolfellows."

And the juniors bore the packing-case onwards, and it was brought out by the back of the house. There they set it down to rest.

Monty Lowther took his brush and ink, and daubed a further inscription on the lid of the case.

"FRESH PORK!"

"Figgins is bound to be pleased when he gets that," he remarked. "Tain't everybody who gets a packing-case of fresh pork for a present. Now get it to Taggles's lodge, and we'll get Taggy to take it to the New House."

The juniors lifted the packing-case again and carried it round the quadrangle, keeping at a safe distance from the house. They had satisfied Mrs. Mimms, but they did not want a master or a prefect to ask any questions about the case. It was landed at Taggles's lodge, near the gates, at last, and Monty Lowther knocked at the lodge door.

Taggles opened it.

"Good evening, Taggles, old chap," said Lowther affectionately.

"Huh!" grunted Taggles. "Whatter you want, Master Lowther? None of your tricks!"

"Tricks?" said Lowther, in a pained voice. "Oh, Taggles!"

"Huh!"

"We've got a present here for Figgins, of the New House," said Lowther. "We want you to take it to him, Taggy."

Taggles looked at the packing-case in surprise.

"The carrier didn't bring that 'ere," he said.

"Quite so. We carried it."

"My heye!" said Taggles.

"We want you to deliver it," said Lowther. "It's a present for Figgins—a little surprise. We don't want our names mentioned."

"Ho!" said Taggles suspiciously.

"You see, Figgins's name is on the label," said Lowther. "You've only got to deliver it to the New House for Figgins. Don't mention us. By the way, would you do me the honour to accept this two-bob bit, Taggy?"

Taggles's face cleared, and he did Lowther that honour.

"I'll get the gardener to 'elp me carry it," he said. "Rely on me, young gentlemen."

"You'll be careful with it, Taggles! There are breakables inside it, and if the contents should be broken it would cause lots of trouble."

"I'll be careful, Master Lowther."

"This side up, with care, you know, and don't bump it!"

"Werry good!"

"Thank you, Taggles."

Tom Merry & Co. retired—but only a short distance. They waited to see the goods delivered. Five minutes later Taggles had called in his friend, the gardener, and between them they bore the packing-case to the New House.

"Oh my hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry, as the packing-case disappeared into the New House, "what a giddy surprise for Figgins!"

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NEXT
WEDNESDAY: "GRUNDY'S GREAT GAME!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "If we could only see his face when he opens it!"
 chuckled Manners.

"He's pretty sure to open it in the common-room,"
 said Lowther. "It's too big to go up to the study, and
 he can't block up the passage with it. This way!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The juniors ran quickly round the New House to the
 window of the junior common-room. The window was
 open, and they had a full view of the interior.

"Now for the merry entertainment!" murmured
 Lowther. "This will be as good as Figgy's Knut caught
 wild—what?"

"What-ho!"
 And the School House juniors suppressed their
 chuckles and watched.

CHAPTER 7. Finding the Body.

"MASTER FIGGINS!"

"Hallo!" said Figgins.
 "Packing-case for you, sir."
 "My hat!" said Figgins.

Figgins and Kerr were in their study when the New
 House page came up with that interesting information.
 The chums of the New House had been discussing the
 unexplained absence of Fatty Wynn. After taking the
 trap back to its owner, Figgins had returned to St. Jim's,
 expecting to find Fatty there. But the Falstaff of the
 New House had vanished. Nobody had seen Fatty—not
 since he went out with Figgy and Kerr that afternoon.
 Figgins and Kerr were wondering what on earth had
 become of him when their wonderings were thus inter-
 rupted.

"Packing-case for you, Figgy," said Kerr. "Must
 be from home. Let's hope there's tuck in it; funds are
 short!"

"I should think tuck would come in a hamper," said
 Figgins. "Blessed if I know what they could have sent
 in a packing-case. Let 'em bring it up here, kid!"
 "It wouldn't come into this 'ere room, Master
 Figgins."

"My hat! It must be a whacker! We'll come
 down."

Figgins and Kerr, greatly interested, hurried out of
 the study. A good many of the Fourth joined them in
 the passage below. Taggles and the gardener were rest-
 ing there with the big packing-case. The juniors were
 interested. If some generous relation had sent Figgins
 a case packed with tuck all the juniors in the New House
 were ready and willing to help dispose of it.

"Ere you are, Master Figgins!" said Taggles. "This
 'ere is for you, sir."

"By Jove! It's a whacker!" said Figgins. "Sure
 it's for me? I've not been expecting anything of the
 sort."

"Ere's your name on the label, sir."

Figgins looked at the label. It bore the inscription:
 "Master G. Figgins, New House, St. James's School,
 near Rylcombe, Sussex." There was evidently no
 mistake about it.

"Must be tuck, I should think!" said Kerr.

"Great Scott!" said Redfern. "If there's tuck in
 that, there's enough to provision the New House for a
 sieg."

"Won't Fatty be pleased!" grinned Lawrence.

"Even Fatty would have to leave some of it, if it's
 tuck!" said Owen, and there was a laugh.

"Bring it into the common-room, Taggles, will you?
 It can't go up into the study," said Figgins, greatly
 excited.

"Yessir!"

Taggles and the gardener lifted the packing-case
 again, and it was carried on into the junior common-
 room. There it was set down. The juniors surrounded
 it in an eager crowd.

"Eavy, that is, sir," said Taggles.

Figgins felt in his pocket for a couple of sixpences,
 and Taggles and the gardener departed satisfied.

"Get a chisel, somebody!" said Figgins. "You've

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got one in your tool-box, Reddy. If this is tuck, we'll
 stand a feed to the whole House."

"Hear, hear!"

"Pork!" said Owen, reading the inscription on the
 lid. "Fresh pork! It can't be all pork, Figgy!"

"Hardly!" said Figgins. "That must be an old
 label—it's an old packing-case, I suppose. They
 wouldn't send me a couple of hundredweight of pork,
 I should think!"

"Ha, ha! Not likely!"

"Buck up, Reddy!"

Redfern of the Fourth came back with a chisel and a
 hammer. Figgins started operations on the packing-
 case at once, eagerly watched by the juniors.

He was also eagerly watched by half-a-dozen fellows
 outside the window of the common-room; but the New
 House fellows did not observe them. All eyes in the
 room were on Figgins and the packing-case.

There was a creak as one of the boards was wrenched
 off the top of the packing-case. Straw stuffing was
 revealed.

Another board came off, and another. Then Kerr
 plunged his hand into the packing, to discover what it
 contained.

He gave a jump.

"My only hat!"

"What is it?" exclaimed Figgins.

"A—a—a boot!" ejaculated Kerr.

"A boot?" howled Figgins.

"Yes—look!"

Kerr dragged the packing-straw aside, and revealed
 a boot—and then another! The New House juniors
 gazed at them almost in stupefaction.

The boots rested, seemingly, in their heels, with the
 toes pointed upward—quite a remarkable position for
 them to be in.

There was a sudden howl from Lawrence.

"Yow! They're moving!"

"Great Scott!"

The two boots had made a slight, convulsive move-
 ment, as if endowed with life.

The juniors jumped back from the case. It was quite
 uncanny.

"What the merry deuce——" gasped Figgins.

Kerr advanced to the case again, and with a steady
 hand dragged away some more straw from around the
 boots. A pair of fat ankles in socks were disclosed, tied
 together with a whipcord.

The amazement of the New House juniors was un-
 bounded now. They stared at those fat ankles as if
 they were mesmerised.

"It—it—it's somebody inside the case!" stuttered
 Figgins.

"A dead body!" shrieked Clampe of the Shell.

"Help!"

"Oh, crumbs! There's been a murder, and they've
 sent the body here!" howled Diggs.

Figgins grew quite pale as he stared at the boots and
 the ankles. A body was evidently reposing in the
 packing-straw. Visions of what he had read of
 mysterious murders and bodies fastened up in packing-
 cases floated before Figgy's horrified mind. He felt
 quite faint.

The boots moved again slightly, and Kerr yelled:

"It's alive!"

"Alive? Oh, dear!"

"The murderer didn't quite finish him!" gasped
 Clampe. "Help! Help!"

Monteith of the Sixth looked in at the doorway.

"What's the row here?" he demanded.

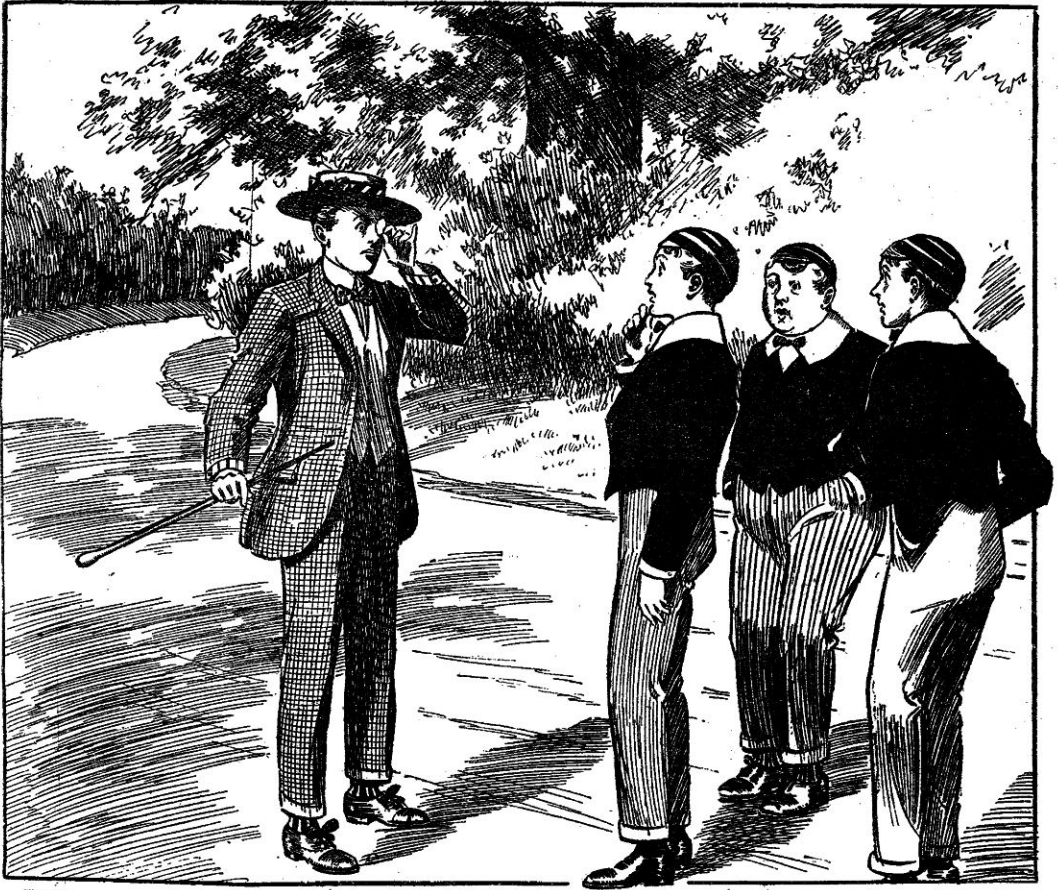
"It's a murder!" shrieked Clampe.

"A dead body in a packing-case, and it's alive!"
 howled Diggs, rather illogically.

"What?" exclaimed the prefect.

"It—it's a body!" gasped Figgins. "Look, Monteith!"

ANSWERS



"Excuse me, little boy," remarked the stranger. "Can you tell me if this is the right road to St. Jim's?" Figgins felt inclined to faint. Was this object going to St. Jim's! (See Chapter 2.)

S-s-somebody's sent me this packing-case, with a body in it!"

"Great Scott!"

Monteith strode into the room. He looked down into the half-uncovered packing-case, and started. The two boots were agitated slightly, as if their owner were trying to move and found it difficult.

"You see the ankles are tied together," said Lawrence, in a hushed voice. "Look at 'em, Monteith!"

Monteith looked astounded.

"He can't be dead, he's moving!" he said. "Unpack the case—quick! He's alive, anyway! Get that lid off!"

"M-m-mind the blood!" stuttered Clampe.

"There isn't any blood, you ass!" said Kerr.

"There m-m-must be, if he's been murdered!"

Willing hands were wrenching off the remainder of the lid. At the same time the packing-straw and the shavings were dragged out, littering the floor round the box. A pair of legs were revealed, also, tied round the knees. Evidently the murderers had made sure of their victim. Then a very ample waist came into view, with a cord round it, fastening the hands down to the sides. Then a plump chest; and, as the last board was torn off, a round, red, furious face.

Then there was a roar.

"Fatty Wynn!"

"Wynn!" exclaimed Monteith, staggering. "Wynn

of the Fourth! W-w-what are you doing in that box, Wynn, you young villain?"

Fatty Wynn did not reply. He couldn't. Figgins yanked at the gag in his mouth; he jerked away the twine, and then the handkerchief. Fatty Wynn's eyes were rolling. Where his face was not muddy and inky, it was crimson with fury. He found his voice at last.

"You silly idiots!"

"What?"

"You frabjous duffers!"

"Fatty!"

"You howling jabberwocks!" yelled Fatty. "Why didn't you let me out before? Why couldn't you let a chap out of a dashed packing-case, instead of jabbering and babbling like a lot of old hens—what?"

"How did you get there?" shrieked Figgins.

"Ain't you murdered?" gasped Diggs.

"I didn't get here!" roared Fatty. "I was shoved here! Didn't you know it was a School House jape, you howling idiots? Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monteith.

The prefect beat a retreat, laughing heartily. Fatty Wynn sat up in the straw. Figgins mechanically untied his hands.

"You silly idiots!" went on Fatty. "You've been about an hour jawing and babbling over me, and me waiting all the time to be let out. You silly chumps!"

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NEXT WEDNESDAY: "GRUNDY'S GREAT GAME!"

Why didn't you open the box at once? Oh, you babbling gorillas."

"B-b-but how——"

"But who——"

"Great Scott——"

"You—you fat idiot——"

"Who did it?" shrieked Figgins.

There was a roar of laughter from the open window. The School House juniors could contain their feelings no longer.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. spun round towards the window. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, Kangaroo and Dane and Glyn were there in a grinning row.

"You—you—you——" stammered Figgins.

"Fresh pork for Figgins!" roared Manners. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"This side up, with care! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Collar 'em!" yelled Figgins.

The New House crowd made a wild rush to the window. The School House juniors promptly fled, still yelling with laughter. Fatty Wynn was crawling out of the packing-case. He was still expressing his opinion of his chums, and his opinion seemed to be that they were howling idiots, crass blockheads, babbling chumps, and burbling jabberwocks, and several other things. Figgins shook his fist from the window after the vanishing japers of the School House.

"The—the potters!" gasped Figgins. "It's—it's a rotten jape! I say, Fatty, old man——"

"Oh, you chump!"

"Fatty——"

"You jabjabs fathead!"

"Fresh pork for Figgins!" giggled Clampe. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Redfern. "You're done in the eye this time, Figgy. You can take your pork away!"

"A feed for the whole House—what?" chuckled Lawrence. "We're not going to eat that pork, Figgy. Take it away and bury it!"

Fatty Wynn shook his fat fist at the grinning juniors and stamped away. Figgins and Kerr stared at the packing-case. They did not grin, but everybody else in the common room was howling with laughter. It was a long time before Figgins & Co. were allowed to forget the arrival of that packing-case of fresh pork.

CHAPTER 8.

Tea in Study No. 6.

STUDY No. 6 was at tea when the Terrible Three looked in, smiling.

Blake and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy were entertaining their visitor.

Gilbert the Knut was being entertained.

The chums of No. 6 did not look particularly happy. Mr. Railton had given his consent for Blake's cousin to stay a few days at the school. It is barely possible that Blake, hospitable as he was, would have been equally pleased if Mr. Railton had not been so kind.

The prospect of having his Cousin Gilbert on his hands for several days was dismaying.

He looked relieved when Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther came in. He felt that they would help him to bear Gilbert.

"Trot in!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Come in, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "You are in time for tea."

"You know my cousin, I think?" said Blake. "My Cousin Gilbert. He—he's staying a few days at the school."

"It's a pleasure and an honour to meet Cousin Gilbert," said Monty Lowther gravely.

"Delighted, dear boy," said Cousin Gilbert.

"Merry, Manners, Lowther," said Blake, presenting them. "Squat down, you fellows, and have your tea. You'll be delighted to know Gilbert. Such an entertaining chap."

"My little Cousin Jackie is so flatterin'," said Gilbert.

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Blake cast a deadly glare into his teacup. Gilbert persisted in regarding him as his little Cousin Jackie.

"Awfully good of you to give St. Jim's a look-in," said Manners affably. "We'll try to entertain you while you're here. Play footer?"

"Footer?" said Gilbert.

"We'll put you in a game," said Tom Merry. "The regular matches haven't started yet, but we're keen on footer practice now. I suppose you're a tremendous player?"

"Good gad!"

"No? What's your favourite game, then?" asked Tom Merry.

"Marbles?" asked Lowther.

"No, I don't play marbles," said Gilbert unsuspectingly. "I play bridge, you know. I'm not a good playah. Too much like work."

"In training, perhaps?" suggested Herries.

Gilbert stared.

"Trainin'?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"I don't go in for sports," said Gilbert. "I look on that as rot. I'm not likely to go into trainin'. Good gad!"

Herries grunted. He had not been thinking of sports. Spooney and lackadaisical as Gilbert was, he was more than old enough to be in the Army, or, at least, in training. But for the fact that he was Blake's cousin, and a guest in the study, Herries would have asked him bluntly what he was doing out of khaki.

Such an idea did not seem to have crossed Cousin Gilbert's vapid mind. It had crossed Blake's, however, and he was feeling uncomfortable. For a rich and prosperous young man to be hauging idly about town in war-time was a reflection on all his family, and Blake felt it keenly. Gilbert had not even the excuse of a profession he had studied for, or of a "job" that he would be doubtful of getting back after the war. He was rich and free to do as he liked, and when so many hundreds of thousands of poor men had rushed to the Colours it was, as Blake felt, simply sickening to see a rich fellow sticking out. But courtesy forbade any mention of the subject to Gilbert. It was a free country, and if he chose to be a slacker it was his own business.

Gilbert was suppressing his yawns. He had told Blake in his letter that he was coming to see him because he was bored to death in town. It looked as if he would be bored to death at St. Jim's, too. Perhaps it was his own company that bored him. Certainly it was calculated to bore anybody.

"Is there a music-hall near here?" Gilbert asked suddenly.

"There's one at Wayland, about three miles," said Blake, with a grin.

"Oh, gad!"

"You'd have to walk both ways!"

"Good gad!"

"In fact, you'll be rather bored here, I'm afraid," said Blake. "We've got plenty of footer——"

"Oh, don't!"

"And long country walks——"

"Oh!"

"And ripping scenery——"

"I don't care much for scenery," yawned Gilbert. "Scenery's a bore, like everythin' else. Life's a bore. You get to the end of everythin', you know. You kids haven't found it out yet. Wait till you're my age!" He yawned again. "You get to the end of everythin'. Everything's a frightful bore!"

"What a happy view of life!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Gilbert must be very stimulating to his friends."

"Shush!" murmured Tom Merry.

"Fact is," said Gilbert, polishing his eyeglass, "I've been thinkin'——"

"You have?" exclaimed Lowther, in surprise.

"Yaas. I've been thinkin'," said Gilbert—"thinkin' of goin' into the dashed Army, you know, by gad."

Blake brightened up a little.

"That's a jolly good idea, Gilbert, old chap!" he said

heartily. "You're the right sort, after all. I—I mean you're the right sort. When are you joining?"

"Oh, I'm not joinin'," said Gilbert calmly.

"Oh! Not?"

"No. Too much fog!"

"Oh!" said Blake.

"I was goin' to join the O.T.C.," said Gilbert. "But promotion's too slow for me. And you have to study a lot of things. Now, I never could stand study. Study is a fearful bore."

"But—"

"Still, I turned it over in my mind," said Gilbert. "But it was impossible. There was an objection I didn't think of at first—but it settled it."

"Physically unfit?" asked Herries a little sympathetically. "That's hard lines."

"Oh, no! I'm fit enough—fit as a fiddle!" said Gilbert.

"It's the clothes."

"The—the clothes."

"Yaas—the colour of them, you know. It doesn't suit my complexion."

"Wh-a-at!"

"Khaki's a horrid colour for me," said Gilbert seriously.

"I simply can't wear anythin' greenish or yellowish. It suits some fellows—and those fellows can go into Kitchener's Army, and I wish 'em luck. But a fellow must think of the harmony of colour, you know. Life wouldn't be worth livin' without taste. Hardly worth livin' as it is; by gad!"

"My hat!"

"Gal," went on Gilbert reminiscently—"gal gave me a white feather the other day."

"Oh! What did you do?" asked Tom Merry, with interest.

"Looked at her," said Gilbert calmly. "I simply said to her, 'How do you think I should look in khaki, with my complexion?' Floored her, by gad!" Gilbert chuckled. "Hadn't a word to say."

"Oh!"

The School House juniors felt that they hadn't a word to say, either. They could only stare at Gilbert. Herries found his voice, however.

"Ain't you afraid of being taken for a funk?" he asked.

Gilbert shook his head.

"Ain't afraid of anythin'," he replied. "Brave as a lion—I shouldn't wonder. Do you mind if I smoke a cigarette here?"

"Oh, go ahead!" said Blake resignedly.

The Terrible Three left Study No. 6 after tea. They smiled as they went to their own quarters.

"What on earth will Blake do with that howling slacker?" said Manners. "If he stays here, half the fellows will be chipping him for being such a fatheaded Knut, and the other half for being a funk. If his people knew what was good for him, they'd bump him into khaki, whether he liked it or not."

"Poor old Blake!" said Tom Merry. "What a relation to have sprung on you! But Gilbert may get fed up, and go. He looks bored already."

After their preparation was done that evening, the Terrible Three looked for Blake, curious to know how he had got on with his cousin. They found Jack Blake looking tired.

"Where's Gilbert?" asked Tom Merry.

"Gone to his room," said Blake. "Thank goodness for that. He's been yawning his head off. So have we."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy entertained him a bit, talking about clothes," said Blake. "Gussy's strong on that subject, you know, and Gilbert was interested for about ten minutes. Then his mind wandered. His poor little brain can't keep on any one subject for long—even clothes. I don't want to be inhospitable, but—" Blake groaned. "I shall be chipped to death about him. Isn't he an exhibition?"

"Well, a little bit," agreed Tom, laughing.

"And then, there's the fact that he's not a soldier," said Blake. "Gilbert isn't a funk—none of the Blakes are funks, they couldn't be. We don't grow funks in Yorkshire, you know. But the fellows will want to know why he isn't in the Army, you know. 'Tain't even as if he was at the university; he's left—I believe he got sent

down. Not that being there would be any excuse. He ought to be in khaki."

"Can't you tell him so, as his affectionate cousin?" asked Manners.

"It wouldn't do any good," groaned Blake. "You heard what he said—khaki doesn't suit his complexion, and they don't wear copying-ink ties in the Army, either."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Tain't a laughing matter," grunted Blake. "It's up to me to be civil to a guest, ain't it? Gussy says he's afraid my good manners won't hold out. And to be quite truthful, I'm rather afraid so, too."

The Terrible Three grinned as they went to their dormitory. They were interested to see how long Blake's good manners would hold out under the infliction of the Knut.

CHAPTER 9.

A Hot Chase.

JACK BLAKE stood it manfully for two or three days. His study-mates backed him up with equal manfulness.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy said that it was up to them, and they agreed that it was.

Gilbert had a room in the School House, and he boarded with the School House fellows, and he seemed quite comfortable there.

He rose very late in the mornings, so Blake never saw him before morning lessons; for which relief he was very thankful.

But he saw plenty of him at other times; too much, in fact. Gilbert declared that the country air was doing him good; and though he admitted that he was bored, he showed no sign of intending to depart.

According to Blake, who hailed from Yorkshire, Yorkshire hospitality was unbounded, and was bound to be unbounded, and it was therefore impossible for Jack to show how his guest made him writhe. He had to make Gilbert welcome, and make the best of him.

The Terrible Three, to their credit be it said, backed him up almost as heartily as Digby and D'Arcy and Herries; and forbore from chipping him on the subject of his filbertian cousin.

But the rest of the School House took Gilbert as a standing joke.

His shoes, his broad laces tied in big bows, his creased trousers, his watch bracelet, his lace handkerchief, his purple tie, his purple socks, and everything that was his, in fact, became the theme of jokes far and wide.

Whether Gilbert was quite unconscious of it, the juniors could not make up their minds. Certainly he seemed quite satisfied with himself and things generally. Some of the fellows had thought of "japing" him. But Study No. 6 let it become known that any bounder who japed their guest would have a severe fight upon his hands immediately afterwards; and at the same time they appealed to their friends to back them up in that emergency.

The School House fellows did, so far as letting Gilbert alone was concerned. Kerruish refrained from his little scheme of dropping tar on Gilbert's topper, Reilly did not use his catapult as he had intended, Lumley-Lumley did not inform him that his King and country needed him. Kangaroo forbore to present him with a white feather; in fact, the fellows contented themselves with grinning over him and chucking over him, and let it go no further.

But in the New House it was different.

Figgins & Co. regarded the Knut as fair game. And they were sore from their late experience. To have their own chum, Fatty Wynn, delivered to them in a packing-case, marked "Fresh Pork" was naturally irritating. Figgins & Co. felt that they had to avenge that insult.

So they planned little jokes on Gilbert, and during a couple of days there were more fistical encounters between School House and New House than there had been in the previous couple of weeks. Whenever the fellows were out of the Form-rooms, Study No. 6 kept guard over the Filbert, to keep him from harm—hence the "scraps" that came about.

While the fellows were at lessons Gilbert would snut

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himself in the quadrangle, or lounge about the library, or chat with the porter, apparently contentedly.

Blake thought he must find it a little dull; but when he said so Gilbert explained that he was bored everywhere, and that it was no worse to be bored at St. Jim's than to be bored anywhere else. The young man seemed to have an infinite capacity for being bored.

And certainly he began to look better for his stay, for he did not get any late nights at St. Jim's, and he was unable to lounge about his favourite resorts—music-halls, and theatres, and bars—while he was at the old school.

It was in vain that the School House chums strove to get him interested in football. Gilbert came down to the field once to watch them practice, but he sauntered away after ten minutes. He explained afterwards that it made him tired to watch them. As for playing himself—good gad!

On the third day of his stay, the chums of Study No. 6 found him yawning his head off when they came out from lessons.

"Bored, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus sympathetically.

"Yaas," said Gilbert.

"Wathah dull for you—what?"

"Aw'ly."

"Anythin' we can do?"

"Nothin'."

"Come and see my bulldog," said Herries.

"Yaas; you haven't seen the pets, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "I'll show you my white wabbits."

Gilbert yawned and nodded. The juniors walked him off round the School House to the building where the pets were kept. Herries proudly unfasted his bulldog, the celebrated Towser. Herries felt that if Gilbert wasn't interested in dogs he was a hopeless case, and might as well be given up at once.

Gilbert looked at Towser in some alarm, and did not seem pleased when Herries took him off the chain.

"He's all right," said Herries reassuringly.

"He has no respect for a fellah's trousers!" said Arthur Augustus. "But he does not bite."

"I don't like the look in his eye," said Gilbert. "What's he snuffin' round me for, good gad?"

Towser certainly was snuffing at Gilbert. Blake thought that Perhaps Towser had never seen a Knut at close quarters before, and was curious about him. Perhaps it was the cut of Gilbert's trousers that interested him, or it might have been the purple socks.

Whatever Towser's reason, he did snuff round Gilbert, and suddenly he made a snap.

He had only snapped at the trousers, but he might have taken a whole bit out of Gilbert, to judge by the fearful yell the filbert uttered.

"Yaroo! Help!"

"He's all right!" shouted Herries.

"Don't run, or he'll run after you! He always does. He's only torn your trousers."

"Only!" murmured Blake.

Gilbert seemed to lose his presence of mind, or perhaps the tear in his trousers seemed more serious to him than it did to Herries. He gave Towser a swipe with his willow.

"G-r-r!" came from Towser; and he made a jump at the Knut.

Gilbert fled.

"Stop, you ass!" yelled Herries. "Don't I keep on telling you he's all right."

"G-r-r-r!" growled Towser. It did not really sound "all right"—at least, to Gilbert's startled ears.

He ran for his life. Naturally, Towser, seeing him running, ran after him; his instincts of chase were aroused.

Gilbert glanced back over his

shoulder, and his eyes almost started from his head at the sight of the bulldog tearing on his track.

"Good gad!" he gasped. "Help!"

He tore on madly.

"Towser will bite him now," grunted Herries. "He gets excited when he chases anything. Better cut after him."

Study No. 6 rushed in pursuit of Towser. Towser was growling just behind Gilbert, who was exerting himself as he had seldom or never exerted himself before. His eyeglass streamed at the end of its ribbon; his necktie came loose and floated in the wind; his coat-tails streamed behind him as he ran for his life.

"Call the bwute off, Hewwies!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"That's all right. Towser always obeys me!" panted Herries, as they came sweeping round the School House. "Towser! Towser! Towser! Towser!"

Towser did not heed. He had a deadly eye fastened on the fleeing Gilbert, and he meant business.

"Towser! Towser, old chap! Towser! Towser!"

Towsy turned a deaf ear.

"The wotten bwute won't come!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "You ought to teach that beastly bulldog to obey, Hewwies!"

Herries snorted.

"Towser isn't a silly lap-dog to come whenever he's called!" he snapped, rather unreasonably. "Towser's got a will of his own, old Towser has!"

"Call him off!" shrieked Gilbert, as Towser made a snap and just missed him. "Help! Oh, good gad! Callinoff!"

He was streaking across the quadrangle now, with Towser in hot pursuit. There was a yell from the fellows in the quad—shouts of encouragement, and yells of laughter.

"Go it, Gilbert!"

"After him, Towser!"

"Put it on, Filbert!"

"Sample his bags, Towser! Sample his socks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"G-r-r-r-r!" Towser made another snap, and Gilbert bounded on out of reach once more. He dodged round Taggles's lodge, and sprinted off for the School House. Yells of laughter followed him—so did Towser—so did Study No. 6, panting and breathless. They had never guessed that Gilbert was such a sprinter.

The Terrible Three were on the steps of the School House as Gilbert came tearing up.

"Stop him!" panted Gilbert.

He rushed wildly into the house. Towser came whisking up the steps, and Tom Merry caught him. Herries rushed up and recaptured his bulldog. Towser resisted. He wanted to get on with the business in hand, but the united efforts of Study No. 6 dragged him away.

"My hat!" gasped Blake, when Towser was safe on the chain again.

"We shall find Gilbert dead after that run!"

"He's all in a sweat," said Herries anxiously.

"Who—Gilbert?"

"Eh? Blow Gilbert!" said Herries crossly. "Towser, of course. This hasn't done Towser any good."

"It may have done Gilbert good!" grinned Digby.

"Hang Gilbert!" roared Herries.

"What did he want to bolt like that for? Towser only wanted to play with him. Look how he's panting, poor old chap! He was only going to tear his trousers. I don't suppose for one moment that he would have bitten the silly idiot—not very deep, anyway. Poor old Towsy!" And Herries, in a state of great indignation, caressed his bulldog consolingly.

Blake and Digby and D'Arcy hurried away to the School House to see Gilbert. They expected to find him

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Kerr was holding up a large placard, just behind the young man's head—a huge sheet of cardboard, upon which was daubed, in large letters and red ink: "JUST CAUGHT WILD! GENUINE KNUIT! LAST APPEARING IN PUBLIC BEFORE BEING SENT TO A HOME FOR IDIOTS!" (See Chapter 4.)

fainting. The Terrible Three were in Study No. 6, looking after Gilbert. The Knut, had fled into the study and sunk down in the armchair, looking quite exhausted. The chums of the Shell followed him in, and Gilbert gave a feeble gasp.

"Keep him off, good gad!"

"He's gone!" said Tom Merry.

"Oh! By gad, I'm done in!" gasped Gilbert. "Fan me, will you?"

"Eh?"

"Fan me, dear boy!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"There's a fan in my breast-pocket inside," said Gilbert faintly. "Get it out—I'm too fagged!"

Tom Merry stood rooted to the floor for a moment. Then, without a word, he extracted the silk-and-ivory fan from Gilbert's pocket, and fanned him. He did it mechanically; he felt quite overcome.

"Got any smelling-salts?" said Gilbert faintly.

"Sm-sm-smelling-salts!" gasped Tom.

"Yaas."

"We don't carry 'em," said Monty Lowther blandly. "But the smell of burnt feathers is good for fainting people. Rely on us, old chap. We'll revive you."

There was an old shuttlecock on the mantelpiece. Lowther tore out the feathers, stooped over the fire. A smell of burning feathers pervaded the study horribly. Then Lowther approached the exhausted Gilbert.

"Here you are, old son!"

"Grooh!"

"Don't mind the smell—it will buck you up no end."

"Yow!"

"Leave it to me, old chap."

Gilbert mumbled faintly. Monty Lowther was rubbing the burnt feathers on his face, and Gilbert, unsuspectingly, was assuming the complexion of a Christy Minstrel. Tom Merry and Manners barely restrained their chuckles.

"Draw it mild, Monty, old man!" gasped Tom.

"I must help the sufferer, Tommy," said Lowther. "As Blake's friends, we're bound to look after his cousin. Feel better now, old scout?"

"Grooooh!"

There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Blake and Digby and D'Arcy arrived. They stared blankly at the black-faced object in the armchair.

"What the thunder—" ejaculated Blake.

"Bai Jove!"

"Gilbert's fainting," explained Monty Lowther. "I'm reviving him with burnt feathers. It's a remedy, you know."

"You—you funny villain!"

"Nothing funny in reviving a fellow in a fainting fit, is there?" said Lowther. "I'm doing this for your sake, Blake, as a friend."

"Then I'll do something for your sake!" roared Blake. And he rushed at Monty Lowther.

"Here, hold on! Yaroooh!"

"Good gad!" gasped Gilbert, as Blake and Lowther rolled on him, locked in one another's arms.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"G'wreat Scott! Weally, you wottahs—"

Monty Lowther tore himself away, and jumped up. The Terrible Three dodged out of the study, roaring with laughter. Gilbert sat and blinked at the three Fourth-Formers in great astonishment. Blake sat up on the floor, and blinked back at him. He was exasperated with the humorous Lowther, but the sight of Gilbert's black face was too much for him, and he burst into a yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the joke?" gasped Gilbert.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cwumbs! Ha, ha, ha! Excuse me, deah boy! Ha, ha, ha! Look at your chivvay in the glass!" shrieked Arthur Augustus.

Gilbert rose, and looked in the glass, and then he nearly fainted in earnest.

"G-g-g-good gad! Is—is that my face?" he said faintly. "Good gad! W-a-a-what's the matter with my face? Oh, dear!"

Blake, nearly suffocating, led him away to a bathroom, and left him there. Then he limped back to Study No. 6, where D'Arcy and Digby were almost in hysterics. And for a long time there was no sound but that of hysterical merriment in Study No. 6.

CHAPTER 10.

The Wheeze of the Season.

"I 'VE got it!" said Kerr.

It was Wednesday afternoon, and Figgins & Co. were consulting in their study in the New House.

Figgins had declared that they ought to make hay while the sun shone. He was alluding to the presence of Gilbert the Filbert in the School House. Fatty Wynn was quite of his opinion. Fatty had not quite got over his experience in the packing-case. Fellows were continually asking Fatty Wynn the price of fresh pork, and whether he could let them have some pork chops, and so forth, and Fatty was quite fed up with the subject. It was up to Figgins's study to score over their old rivals, for the sake of their prestige.

The Knut seemed to offer them opportunities, but hitherto they had not been able to take advantage of these opportunities. And Figgins said that it was a lot of good opportunities going to waste. He called upon Kerr to think of a wheeze; it was generally admitted that the Scottish junior had most of the brains of the study.

Now Kerr announced that he had "got it." And the chuckle with which he accompanied the remark seemed to hint that "it" was humorous.

"Go ahead!" said Figgins encouragingly. "We've got to wipe out that jape; the fellows will leave off talking to Fatty about pork when we give 'em something else to cackle over. That Knut was born to have his leg pulled, and we haven't pulled it yet."

"Yes, pile in!" said Fatty Wynn. "Anything up against the School House, and I'm your man. And the Knut is their weak spot."

"Their giddy heel of Achilles, by Jove!" grinned Figgins. "He's such a born idiot that we ought to be able to guy him no end."

Kerr nodded.

"They're footballing this afternoon over the way," he remarked.

"So are we," said Figgins. "We've got to stick to practice if we're going to lick the School House this season, and, of course, we are."

"We can cut it this afternoon," said Kerr. "They're playing, and when they're busy the Knut goes off on his own. I've noticed that he takes little walks in the wood. Nasty rude boys chip him when he goes into the village; they seemed to be dazzled by his socks."

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"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lots of the fellows have been saying that he ought to be in khaki," went on Kerr. "Clampe was talking about giving him a white feather. In fact, he was going to, but Blake spotted him, and rubbed his nose in the quad."

Figgins frowned a little.

"I don't like that, Kerr," he said. "It's caddish to give any chap a white feather. The only fellows who have a right to hand out white feathers are the fellows who are in khaki themselves. If a fellow's too young to go, or too old to go, or can't go because he's a woman—I mean because she's a woman—it's his place to shut up. He can't prove that he would go if he could. You generally notice that it's men over military age who talk loudest about conscription. Some of them would look pretty yellow if conscription came in, and then the age limit was raised to fifty."

"Oh, ring off, old chap!" said Kerr. "I'm not thinking of handing out any white feathers. I know it's caddish, and it's only done by people who're quite safe from having to go themselves. But if it could be brought delicately to Mister Gilbert's attention that he ought to go, that's a horse of another colour."

"I know there's no excuse for him," said Figgins. "Tain't as if he was poor, and doubtful about his prospects after the war. There isn't any possible excuse for a rich man who doesn't go."

"Pr'aps he knows he's a funk," said Fatty Wynn. "If a fellow knows he's a funk he knows he wouldn't be much good."

Figgins snorted.

"If he's a funk, why don't he go into a quiet corner and drown himself?" he said. "I think he's more a fool than a funk. Dash it all, it's pretty hard to believe that there's anybody in England who's afraid of the Huns!"

"We're going to give him a chance of showing whether he's a funk or not," grinned Kerr. "That's the little scheme. Gilbert will be taking his little walk in the wood this afternoon."

"Well?" said Figgins.

"You know those duflers over the way are getting up a war play—"

"What the deuce—"

"They've got half a dozen real German helmets that they bought up cheap from a second-hand dealer, who got them from some Tommies who came home," said Kerr, "and they've made up half a dozen uniforms to match."

"I know they have," said Figgins. "But their play's all rot, of course. Nothing like what we do on this side."

"While they're at footer this afternoon it would be jolly easy for a chap to nip into the School House, and borrow their stage props."

"What on earth for?"

"To take 'em out into the wood, along with my make-up box," said Kerr. "Then we, and Reddy and Owen and Lawrence—"

Figgins stared at his chum.

"We could do it easily enough," he said. "But what in thunder are we, and Reddy and Owen and Lawrence going to do in the wood with six German helmets and six Hun uniforms?"

"Put 'em on!"

"Put 'em on!" ejaculated Fatty Wynn.

"Yes."

"What for?" roared Figgins.

"For Gilbert's benefit. We can make up our faces with boozey complexions like Germans, and whiskers and things. We drop on Gilbert in the wood—"

"Great Scott!"

"And take him prisoner in German—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The blessed funk will think the Huns have landed at last. We're near the coast here, you know, and we'll come on him as German scouts."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And if he isn't in a blue funk—" said Kerr, grinning.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins and Fatty Wynn.

"We'll make him beg for mercy on his knees——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then we'll make him sign a petition for mercy, to be sent to General Snortz, our commander——"

"Oh, scissors!"

"And we'll bring it home with us, and show it to the School House bouncers!" chuckled Kerr. "We'll have it framed and hang it up in the study. And if that don't make Study No. 6 tired of life you can use my head for a footer!"

Figgins roared and Fatty Wynn yelled. They could imagine the feelings of Jack Blake when he discovered that such a document was in the hands of the old rivals of Study No. 6.

"And we'll make him change clothes with one of us, and send him home dressed as a German," said Kerr, chuckling. "We'll send his clothes back to Jack Blake by carrier, with a note, and our kind regards."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The roars of merriment from Figgins's study were loud and long. The door opened, and Redfern of the Fourth looked in, with Lawrence and Owen. The trio were going down to the footer.

"What's the merry joke?" asked Redfern. "Let a chap into it. Something about fresh pork?"

"You silly ass——" began Fatty Wynn wrathfully.

"The joke of the season," grinned Figgins, "and we want your help. We're going to make the School House bouncers simply squirm!"

"We're on!" said Redfern at once. "The footer can wait. Explain, O King!"

Figgins explained, and Redfern & Co. roared, too.

Half an hour later, while Tom Merry & Co. were busy with footer practice on Little Side, Kerr slipped quietly into the School House, and his comrades strolled round to the back of the building. A large bundle was lowered from a back window on the end of a cord, and it was followed by another and another.

Figgins & Co. walked off with the bundles. Kerr sauntered out of the School House with empty hands, and any fellows who observed him leave did not guess for a moment that he had been raiding Tom Merry's study.

The Scottish junior rejoined his chums at the bike-stand. The six juniors wheeled out their bikes, with bundles attached to the handle-bars.

On Little Side, the School House footer practice was going strong, and Gilbert had sauntered down to watch it for a few minutes. Figgins and his comrades wheeled their bikes out into the road. Figgins called to Jameson of the Third, and whispered to him mysteriously; and then the cyclists rode away, leaving the New House fag chuckling, on the watch in the road.

Gilbert the Filbert watched the footer and yawned, little dreaming of the trouble the chums of the New House were taking for his especial benefit.

CHAPTER 11.

Captured by Huns.

"PILE in, Gilbert!" said Jack Blake.

Gilbert looked round, in a puzzled way.

"In where?" he asked.

"Here!"

"In what?"

"Footer!" roared Blake.

"Good gad!" said Gilbert.

"Yaas, wiah in, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We can easily lend you some things, you know; we could bowwow them of one of the seniahs."

"It will buck you up no end," said Tom Merry.

Gilbert yawned.

"Thanks! I'll take a stroll," he remarked. "I've just had my paper come down, and I'm goin' to read it."

"War news?" asked Talbot of the Shell.

"Oh, no! The 'Tailor and Cutter,'" said Gilbert innocently. "It's my favourite paper. Awf'ly interestin' article in this numbah about trousers."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bai Jove! I'd like to have a look at that," said Arthur Augustus, with interest.

"You jolly well won't!" growled Blake. "Get on with the footer."

"Weally, Blake——"

Jack Blake seized his chum by the shoulder, and rushed him back into the field. The Filbert sauntered away, with his paper under his arm. The shouts of the cheery juniors on the football ground had a jarring effect upon Gilbert; they told of so much energy that they made him feel tired.

He strolled out of the school gates, and down the shady lane. A rude village boy spotted him in the lane, and stopped to stare, and then rudely asked Gilbert where he was going in those trousers. Gilbert did not deign to give him any information; he walked on and turned into the wood.

It was a pleasant autumn afternoon, and very quiet and shady in the wood. Gilbert walked, or, rather, crawled, at a snail's pace, along the pleasant footpaths, with a feeling of contented laziness. He had not observed that Jameson of the Third had followed him from the gates of the school; and though he heard a shrill whistle from the lane, he did not connect it with Jameson or with himself. There was certainly no thought of danger in Gilbert's mind.

He selected a quiet spot at last, where an opening in the trees gave him a view of Wayland Moor, thick with gorse and shimmering in the sun. He sat on a fallen trunk, leaned back against a tree, and opened his tailor magazine.

He was very soon deep in the article on trousers; a very interesting subject to Gilbert. There was only one matter more important than trousers to Gilbert's mind. It was not the war. It was neckties.

Deeply immersed in that entrancing article, Gilbert did not hear a rustling in the wood, or observe a swaying in the underbush. But a low, muttering voice from quite close at hand broke upon his ears suddenly, and he started. It was a voice that muttered in German:

"Wer da?"

Gilbert started. Who on earth was saying, "Who is there?" in German, in a quiet wood on an English countryside? Another voice, deep and husky and guttural, replied:

"Bin ich, mein leutenant."

Gilbert jumped. The reply, "It is I, my Lieutenant," evidently hinted at the presence of soldiers. Soldiers—German soldiers! Gilbert sat transfixed. How on earth had German soldiers got there?

Some rascals who had escaped from a concentration camp, perhaps. Or—— Gilbert shivered a little, and listened with all his ears. Another voice chimed in. The Huns were separated from Gilbert only by a screen of thicket. He heard them quite distinctly.

"Hast du den Engländer gesehn?"

Gilbert wished, sincerely, that he had taken a little more trouble with his German at school, and that he had taken a little trouble to remember what he had learned. Even so simple a sentence presented difficulties to him. But he thought it out, and he realised that it meant, "Have you seen the Englishman?"—or literally, in the German idiom, "Hast thou the Englishman seen?"

Then the Germans in the wood were looking for an Englishman! They could not be escaped prisoners from a concentration camp, evidently. In that case, they would have been looked for by Englishmen, themselves, and would not be looking for an Englander. What could it mean? The "Tailor and Cutter" slipped from Gilbert's hand into the grass. He strained his ears to listen. The voices were mumbling in low tones. He distinguished a few German words that he understood, such as "krieg," and "blut," and "schwert," and "sterben"; which he knew meant "war," and "blood," and "sword," and "to die." They were dreadful words for the unfortunate Knut to hear, all alone as he was, at least two miles from a human habitation, in the depths of the wood. If the Germans had known that he was within hearing, and had been seeking deliberately to unnerve him, they could not have calculated better.

"Wo ist der junger Engländer gegangen?" went on the guttural voice. "Ich habe nicht ihn gesehn."

If Gilbert's German had been a little better, he might

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have known that this German was not quite the German that was spoken in Germany. It was a German that savoured of a junior Form at school. But Gilbert could barely make out the meaning of the words, and he could judge no further.

"Er muss sterben!" said another voice.

Gilbert shuddered. "He must die!" Was it possible that the ferocious Huns were alluding to himself?

Gilbert sat still, with his heart thumping wildly. There was only one thing that this could possibly mean—the Huns had come at last. The long-threatened invasion was an accomplished fact.

St. Jim's was not many miles from the coast of Sussex. If the Huns came by way of the Channel, they were likely enough to land in Sussex. Then their scouts would be pushed forward along the countryside, perhaps; in fact, undoubtedly.

The Germans had come, and their scouts were in the wood, within six feet of Gilbert the Filbert.

Gilbert, of course, had heard of the threatened invasion. He knew, as everybody knows, that the Germans simply yearned to get into England, to burn and plunder and waste and massacre as they had done in Belgium. But he knew, too, that the British Fleet was mistress of the seas, and that the German Fleet preferred to skulk in canals. Murderous raids in Zeppelins were more in the German line than open sea-fights. Gilbert had a profound faith in the Fleet; so profound, that he was willing to leave the business of guarding England entirely to them, while his own time and attention were bestowed upon the important subjects of neckties and trousers. Besides, there were three million men in khaki, and if the Huns landed, by some chance, they would be extremely sorry they had done so, shortly afterwards. Gilbert felt that the defence of the country was in good hands, and that he was quite at liberty to devote his attention wholly to neckties.

And here were the beasts—within two yards of him! And he was equipped in purple necktie and purple socks; a very poor defence against a Hunnish invader, however delightful they might be to a knuttie-eye.

The bushes rustled. Gilbert had a wild idea of jumping up and bolting. But there was another rustle, and another. Gilbert sat frozen as the sunlight, glimmering through the branches overhead, glimmered upon a German spiked helmet. It glimmered upon another and another.

"Ach!"

"Mein Gott!"

"Der Engländer!"

With those exclamations, the Huns closed round Gilbert. The Knut stared at them like a fellow mesmerised. There were half a dozen of them in all, and they were all round him. Short, thick-set fellows, in a foreign uniform, with spiked helmets, spiked moustaches, brick-red faces and beetling brows.

"Ach! Sprachen sie Deutch?" exclaimed the leader, a Hun who was taller than the others and somewhat slimmer.

"No!" gasped Gilbert. "I—I—"

"It is that I shall speak English," said the Hun. "I speaks to you in him. You keeps silence on your life."

"I—I am a non-combatant," stammered Gilbert helplessly. "You—you—you can see that I am not a soldier."

The Hun shook his head. The other Huns shook their heads too. They did not seem to believe Gilbert's statement. The leader drew something from his pocket. Gilbert felt a cold shiver as he caught a gleam of metal.

"Sie sind ein spy!"

"Nothin' of the sort!" gasped Gilbert.

"Den vat in dem clothes are you doing?"

"They—they are my clothes," stammered Gilbert.

"You are not in der uniform, so you are ein spy."

"But I am not a soldier!" gasped Gilbert. "I assure you. Good gad—"

The Hun shook his head again.

"I not believes you," he said. "How olt are you?"

"Nearly twenty-one!" stammered Gilbert.

"You are not sick and ill?"

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"Nunno."

"Den you muss a soldier be," said the Hun. "So you are ein spy in civilian clothes. You muss sterben."

"Oh, dear! Good gad!" gasped Gilbert.

He cast a wild glance round him. The circle of spiked helmets shut him in; there was no escape. The brick-red, moustached faces looked ferocious and un pitying.

"I—I assure you—" groaned Gilbert.

The Hun leader raised his hand.

"Listen! You see tat ve have landed. Ve are scouts. Der army is—is behind. Ve march on Abbotsford, and ve take der camp by surprise. Before dese sleepy Englanders know tat te Chermans have come, ve are upon zem! Ve keel, and burn, and slay! Ha!"

"Oh, you awful rotter!" gasped Gilbert.

"Ve will not let you live to give varning tat ve come. You muss die viz yourself. Down on your kneezen!"

"Down on your kneezen, Engländer pig-dog!" said another of the Huns fiercely.

Gilbert staggered back against the tree.

"T-t-turn that thing another way!" he gasped.

"Listen to me," said the Hun leader. "Perhaps I spare your life. You shall write a petition to mine captain; you shall explain tat you are not a soldier—tat you are vat you English call shirker, and you peg for your life. Den I spare you, and you remain brisoner while ve attack der camp at Abbotsford. Hein?"

Gilbert did not reply. But as he leaned against the tree a desperate light was gleaming in his eyes.

CHAPTER 12.

Not According to Programme.

THE Hun waited for Gilbert's reply. But Gilbert did not speak; he was trying to pull himself together.

As in a vision, he saw what the Hun's words meant—a sudden attack upon the khaki camp at Abbotsford; the soldiers taken by surprise; the old country town given up to flames and massacre; murder and incendiarism spread through the countryside. Gilbert was a knut, and he seldom thought about anything more serious than the cut of his trousers and the colour of his socks.

But deep down somewhere inside Gilbert, behind the well-fitting waistcoat and the purple tie, there was a British heart. He had never been conscious of it before; it seemed to wake up suddenly in the presence of the invaders of his native land. To his own surprise, he was not feeling afraid any longer. Instead of fear within him, there was anger and growing determination. The Huns should not surprise the men in khaki if he could help it. They had offered to spare his life if he begged for mercy. But begging for mercy was not in the Knut's thoughts at that moment. He was collecting himself for a desperate effort.

"Vell, vat you say, hein?" demanded the Hun leader.

Gilbert did not speak—he acted. His action surprised the Huns, and surprised himself, when he thought of it afterwards. He acted upon instinct, without stopping to think. There was only one idea in his mind—to give warning of the Hun landing, to spread the alarm far and wide. And he forgot himself and his danger.

He made a sudden spring forward, and came at the long-legged Hun like a stone from a catapult.

His fist, clenched hard, was planted full on the spiked moustache, and the Hun, taken utterly by surprise, staggered back and fell full length in the grass.

"Grooogh!" gasped the astounded Hun.

Gilbert made a desperate rush to escape.

The Huns, surprised as they were, clutched at him; but Gilbert was another and entirely new Gilbert at this moment. He hit out furiously, and a Hun rolled at his feet, and another reeled against a tree. Then Gilbert was running—running for his life, and for the lives of others—as he believed, at least.

Like a deer he dashed away through the trees and gained the moor, and dashed in the direction of the distant town of Wayland.

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Oh, thunder!"
"Yow! My nose!"

Gilbert did not hear those exclamations, which were certainly very odd from the lips of savage Huns.

"Yow-ow-ow!" groaned the Hun leader, sitting up in the grass. "Who'd have thought it? The silly ass has nearly broken my jaw! Wow-wow!"

It was the voice of Figgins that proceeded from under the spiked moustache.

"Wow-wow!" said Redfern's voice from another Hun. "Look at my eye!"

"Oh, dear! Look at my nose!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "He's off!" gasped Kerr, staring blankly after Gilbert, who was fleeing like a roebuck across the moor. "After him, for goodness' sake! He'll rouse the whole neighbourhood. The blithering idiot thinks we're Germans!"

"Ow! Yow! I believe he's loosened my teeth! Wow-wow!"

"After him!" shouted Kerr.

"Oh, let him rip!" mumbled Fatty Wynn. "Look at my nose! Yooop!"

"What a rotten sell!" groaned Redfern. "You silly ass, Figgins! You said he was a funk. Funks don't tackle six Huns at a time. Wow!"

"Who'd have thought it?" gasped Figgins.

"Let him go," chuckled Owen. "He deserves to escape after that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"After him, I tell you!" raved Kerr. "He'll alarm the whole country. We shall have the police and the soldiers out. It's against the law to give an alarm of a German landing if it isn't true—and we've done it."

"My hat! You precious ass!"

"There'll be a fearful row if he gets away!" shrieked Kerr. "Come on! We can easily run down that slacker."

"Oh, crumbs! And this is what you silly asses call a jape!" howled Lawrence.

"Don't jaw—after him! Get out the bikes and run him down!"

Kerr's advice was evidently good. The disappointed and furious Huns rushed for their bicycles, which were hidden in the thickets near at hand. The thought of Gilbert getting to Wayland with the news that the Germans had landed made them turn quite cold. There would certainly be a row, and if it came to the Head's ears, those unhappy japers would have to pay very dearly for their jape. They had not expected for a single moment that Gilbert would get away from them. They had supposed that he would be overcome by terror. Gilbert's manly resolve to do his duty for his country at all risks astounded them, and knocked their scheme into a cocked hat.

They rushed the bicycles out, and rushed them out of the wood upon the moor. Gilbert was running hard. They had never dreamed that such a slacker could run like that. As a matter of fact, the Knut was expecting pistol-shots to ring out behind him every moment. He did not know that what he had taken for a revolver in Figgins's hand was nothing more dangerous than a fragment of an old bicycle pump.

"Put your beef into it!" exclaimed Kerr, as they got clear of the trees, and mounted their machines on the open moor. "We'll soon have him."

They dashed away, pedalling hard.

But the ground was decidedly bumpy for cycling, and the grass was obstructive, and their uniforms impeded them. They were not in trim for a race; and Gilbert had a good start.

Still, they gained. Gilbert had covered half a mile when he looked back from a rising knoll and saw the six cyclists on his track.

"Good gad!" gasped the Knut.

He had not known that the Huns were cyclist scouts—but evidently they were. They were shouting to him, but in the distance he could not hear. But he could see that they were gaining on him, and that on foot he would never beat the mounted Huns in a straight run to the town. He cast a desperate glance round him, and started off again in a new direction almost at right-angles with his previous course.

"We've got him now!" panted Figgins. "Cut across!"

"What-oh!"

The cyclists swerved from the line they had been following to cut across diagonally and save ground. They drew rapidly nearer to Gilbert now. Again he changed his direction, and followed the former course towards Wayland.

"Hold on!" yelled Figgins suddenly.

He jammed on his brakes.

"Stop!" shrieked Kerr.

"Oh, my hat!"

Ahead of the cyclists stretched a deep split in the moor—a gulf that was at least six yards wide and fifty or sixty deep. The cyclists looked quite pale as they dragged their machines to a stop and jumped down.

"The cunning beast!" snorted Redfern.

They understood now why Gilbert had changed his direction. He had run along the further side of the chasm. By cutting across the cyclists had arrived on the near side, but they could not get across the split. They had to go round. Gilbert had fooled them—Gilbert the fibber, Gilbert the slacker and duffer, had had so much presence of mind! It amazed them. Was this Gilbert of the purple socks, Gilbert of the lace handkerchief, Gilbert of the monocle—this ready-witted fellow who had grappled with six Huns—as he supposed—and had tricked them into losing ground in the pursuit by a cunning device? Evidently there was more in Gilbert the Fibber than met the eye.

"He'll get away now, safe as houses," gasped Owen.

"Buck up!" snorted Figgins.

They remounted and rode along the rift, to the end near the knoll, where they were able to take up the chase again. But Gilbert had been running hard all the time, and he was only a speck on the moor in the distance now. With mighty efforts, the cyclists pedalled on his track. They came on to a footpath, which made the going much easier. Strung out in line, they pedalled as if on the cycle-track at St. Jim's and riding for a prize.

Every moment they expected to see Gilbert collapse under his efforts. But he kept on. Where was he getting the energy from? Wherever he was getting it from, he showed no sign of failing. Without a halt, without a pause, he ran on and on for Wayland—to carry the alarming news that the Germans had landed! The New House juniors gained on him, but they did not gain fast.

Luckily for them, the moor was a solitary place—certainly there would have been a furore if six Huns in spiked helmets had been sighted. Figgins & Co. were desperately anxious to get hold of Gilbert, and explain to him before he got near the town. Harder and harder they rode, and Gilbert, looking back, saw them drawing nearer and nearer. It was a matter of only a few minutes now!

CHAPTER 13.

Only a False Alarm.

"HALLO, Gilbert!"

"My hat!"

"G'weat Scott! I certainly nevah supposed that Gilbert could wun like that! But what is he doin' it for?"

Those amazed exclamations came from a party of cyclists on the road over the moor. Tom Merry & Co. were on a spin. There were eight juniors in the party—the Terrible Three and Talbot of the Shell, and the chums of Study No. 6. Footer practice being over, the juniors had taken advantage of the fine weather to go for a spin across the moor, and they were pedalling along the road when they caught sight of Gilbert.

Gilbert was coming down a slope from the moor to the road. The eight cyclists halted as they spotted him. They were simply astounded.

Gilbert had lounged out that afternoon with the "Tailor and Cutter" under his arm. It had been most probable that he would come home in a cab—exertion at walking not being in his line. And here he was, running as if for a wager—panting, gasping, streaming with perspiration, his hat gone, his necktie flying loose, covered with dust from head to foot, but apparently simply bursting with energy.

The rising ground behind Gilbert hid the pursuers

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from the sight of the juniors in the road. They could not see that Gilbert was being chased.

"What is he doing it for?" ejaculated Blake. "Hi, hi, Gilbert!"

Gilbert sighted them, and came panting down into the road. He grasped Blake's bicycle.

"Give this to me—"

"Eh! What for?"

"I've got to get to Wayland," panted Gilbert. "It's miles yet, I believe. You kids cut off—sharp!"

"But what—" yelled Tom Merry.

"The Germans!"

"The which?" howled Monty Lowther.

"Germans!" gasped Gilbert. "They're after me. The rest are behind—somewhere; they're going to take Abbotsford Camp by surprise. I've got to give warning. Gimme that bike, you duffer."

But Jack Blake held on to his bike. He required a little more information before he allowed Gilbert to go into Wayland with the news that the Germans had landed.

"Hold on!" he said. "Where are the giddy Huns?"

Gilbert waved his hand back towards the moor.

"After me!" he gasped. "You'll see them in a minute—they're coming over the rise. Give me that bike, I tell you—there's not an instant to lose. Good gad knows how I got away alive!"

The juniors regarded Gilbert in utter astonishment. That the Germans had landed they did not believe for a moment; if it had happened, it would certainly not have been left to Gilbert to give the alarm.

"I suppose you haven't been drinking too much ginger-beer?" asked Monty Lowther.

"They're coming!" roared Gilbert.

"Let 'em all come," said Tom Merry; "we'll undertake to eat all the Germans that have landed."

"Yaas, wathak!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"You can leave them to us, deah boy."

"You young idiots!" shouted Gilbert. "Every second's precious. Give me that bike, Jack."

"Rats! Hallo, wharrer you at?" yelled Blake.

Gilbert clutched the bike away, hurling Blake aside. Blake was so much astonished that he staggered and fell. He never looked for so much energy from the Knut.

"M-m-m-y hat!" ejaculated Blake.

"Stop him!" roared Herries.

Gilbert was in the saddle with a spring, and he was starting for Wayland, driving hard at the pedals. Talbot and Tom Merry seized him by the arms, and stopped him just in time. Gilbert struggled with them.

"You young asses!" he panted. "Let me go! I've got to give the alarm!"

"Not just yet!" grinned Talbot. "We'll see the Huns first."

"There they are!" shrieked Gilbert.

"Great Scott!"

"Huns, bai Jove!"

The juniors stood almost transfixed. Over the rise by the road came six cyclists in uniform, with spiked helmets and spiked moustaches. Tom Merry & Co. gazed at them spellbound.

"Germans!" gasped Manners.

"Rats!" said Talbot. "They can't be Germans—here! And they're a rather small size for German soldiers, anyway. Let 'em come, we'll soon see who they are!"

But the Huns did not come. As they sighted the bunch of juniors in the road, they jammed on their brakes.

"There they are!" panted Gilbert. "It's too late now! Jack, cut off into Wayland and give the alarm; we'll try to keep them back! You kids back me up!"

"Back you up!" said Tom Merry mechanically.

Was this Gilbert the Filbert who was speaking, or was it a dream?

"Will you get going, Jack?" shrieked Gilbert.

"No, I won't!" said Blake. "I'm not going to give an alarm of Germans on account of a set of duffers in fancy dress."

"Fancy dress!" stuttered Gilbert.

"Yes, you ass! It's a jape!"

"A—a—a jape!"

Gilbert stared blankly towards the Huns. They had

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halted on the slope, about fifty yards from the road, and seemed undecided.

"But—but they're Germans!" stammered the Knut. "One of them had a revolver. I—I wondered why he didn't fire! And—and I had a tussle with them—"

"You had a tussle with them—YOU?"

"Yaas. I knocked down two or three of them, and cleared," said Gilbert. "Look here, they're Huns! They were talking in German."

"Bow-wow!"

"They'd have been on us before this if they'd been Germans," grinned Talbot. "I fancy I can guess who they are, and where they got their clobber. Have you missed any of your stage props, Tom Merry?"

"Stage props!" ejaculated Gilbert.

Tom Merry gave a yell.

"They're our spiked helmets! My hat! New House bounders!"

"Hallo! They're calling out!"

The long-legged leader of the Huns put his hands to his mouth, and hailed the juniors in the road.

"Hallo! School House bounders!"

"Good gad!" ejaculated Gilbert.

Even Gilbert could not suppose that real Huns would hail Tom Merry & Co. as "School House bounders."

His face became crimson. He realised that his nutty leg had been pulled, and he was wrathful.

"Take charge of that escaped lunatic!" shouted Figgins. "Don't let him give any giddy alarm of Huns! Get a strait-waistcoat for him, and shut him up somewhere till you can send him to a home for idiots."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Huns.

"Good gad! I—I—I'll—"

"Good-bye!" sang out Figgins. "We'll return the clobber with thanks presently. Ask the Filbert all about the Germans! He can tell you lots."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. wheeled their machines, and rode back over the moor. Satisfied now that the Filbert would not give the alarm of Huns, they were prudently desirous of getting to a safe distance from Tom Merry & Co. The School House juniors were naturally wrathful—especially at the borrowing of their theatrical "clobber."

"Why, we'll slaughter the bounders!" said Blake. "Japing my fatheaded cousin, and borrowing our props. After them!"

"Gimme that bike!" howled Gilbert.

He wrenched the bike round, and jumped on it, and pedalled after Figgins & Co.

"Here, I want that bike!" roared Blake.

But the Filbert did not heed.

He wanted vengeance, and he was riding as hard as he had run. Tom Merry & Co. mounted and dashed after him, excepting Blake, who had no machine. Blake stood in the road and raved.

"After him!" chuckled Tom Merry. "There'll be slaughter if that ferocious Knut gets hold of them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And they dashed over the rise, and flew down the slope on the other side, and then pedalled away hard after Gilbert the Filbert.

CHAPTER 14.

Gilbert Risks It.

"AFTER us, by Jove!" ejaculated Figgins, looking back.

"Ride for your giddy lives!" said Redfern.

Six spiked helmets glimmered in the sun as the New House japers fled. The jape had been a horrid failure, and vengeance was close behind in the shape of Gilbert the Knut and Tom Merry & Co. That afternoon's outing looked like ending badly for Figgins & Co.

They had become the pursued instead of the pursuers. They had had a hard run already, and they were cumbered with uniforms and helmets. The School House cyclists gained fast on them as they swept over the moor.

"Catching us up!" exclaimed Redfern.

"There'll be a scrap," said Figgins. "My hat, that"

Knut is after us, too! What the deuce has come over him? He ain't slacking now!"

"Oh, what a jape!" groaned Fatty Wynn, panting for breath. "What a rotten jape! Kerr, old man, if you ever say the word jape to me again—"

"Put your beef into it, Fatty! You've got plenty!"

"Go it!" said Figgins.

They pedaled as if for their lives. But the School House party came closer and closer. Gilbert was well ahead. Even Tom Merry and Talbot did not overhaul him. The Knut seemed a new man entirely. Where was his slacking now? The fellow who had felt faint at the prospect of walking half a mile—this was the fellow, riding as if for a wager.

With a rush Gilbert came whizzing among the New House juniors, and he made a grab at Figgins.

"Look out!" gasped Kerr.

"Good gad! I've got you, you speofin', cheeky rotter!" gasped Gilbert.

He had! His grasp was on Figgy's shoulder, and Figgy couldn't shake him off. The New House leader had to halt, and tumble off his bike. Gilbert tumbled off, too, still grasping Figgins. They rolled in the grass together.

"Rescue!" panted Kerr. And he jumped down. The School House cyclists came up with a rush. They jumped off their machines, ready for war.

"Surrender, you rotten Huns!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Rats!"

"Yah!"

Then there was no more said. School House and New House proceeded to business—active business, in which words were not required. There was a wild and whirling combat. Figgins was rolling over with Gilbert. Tom Merry and Fatty Wynn rolled over them; Lowther and Redfern hugged one another like long-lost brothers; Kerr and Digby pranced round one another, sparring. On all sides there was wild combat.

And in the combat helmets came off, and so did beards and moustaches. The Huns were not gently handled, and they were soon looking more like their natural selves, as their disguises peeled off in the struggle.

The odds were on the School House side, and by the time Jack Blake came panting up on foot the struggle was over. Six gasping Huns lay underneath six School House juniors who were sitting on them. Gilbert had been dragged off Figgins, much to Figgy's relief. Tom Merry and Talbot held the Knut back.

"Keep him off!" gasped Figgins. "He's dangerous—a real dangerous lunatic, you know. Bottle him up!"

"Good gad!" said Gilbert. He sank down on a stone, and gasped for breath. "Look at me! Ain't I a shocking sight? I'm fagged out! Where's my hat? Where's my dashed necktie? Good gad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lemme gerrup!" mumbled Fatty Wynn. "None of your larks, you rotters! You're squashing the sandwiches in my pocket, Herries, you fathead!"

"Sit on 'em!" said Tom Merry. "Captured Huns are prisoners of war. Sit on 'em heavy! Where did you get that clobber, Figgy?"

"Borrowed it!" gasped Figgins. "We'll return it with thanks. It was only a jape on your Knut. But it didn't work; I don't mind owning it. We thought he was a rotten funk, and would be scared out of his wits."

"By gad!" said Gilbert. "Did you?"

"Yes, we did; and instead of that he went for the lot of us, and bolted to give the alarm," said Figgins.

"And what would have happened if he'd called out the police, I'm blessed if I know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that's why you were chasing him?" exclaimed Blake.

"Of course it was. The silly ass thought we were after his scalp, I suppose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgy has cracked the Knut, and got at the kernel," grinned Monty Lowther. "I withdraw a lot of things I've thought about your cousin, Blake."

"Take that clobber off the bounders," said Manners.

"That's our stage props."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Redfern, in alarm. "Our own clothes are in the wood, more than a mile from here."

"Can't be helped!"

"Look here—"

"Can't be helped!" repeated Tom Merry. "You're jolly well going to hand over our props, unless you like to ask us very nicely to let you wear 'em as far as the wood. You must say please pretty!"

"I'll see you boiled first!" roared Figgins.

"All serene; strip the bounders!"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on; please pretty!" yelled Figgins desperately.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a confession of defeat, and the victors were satisfied. And Figgins & Co. were allowed to recover their own clothes, and change in the wood before they handed over the "clobber" belonging to the School House Junior Dramatic Society.

The New House jape could not be called a howling success, and when the school learned the story it was generally considered that the laugh was up against Figgins & Co. The New House had certainly not scored. But the jape had had an unexpected result.

Gilbert was observed to be very thoughtful during the next couple of days—very thoughtful indeed. Then came his departure, and Tom Merry & Co. saw him off, and Figgins & Co., too. And as Gilbert shook hands with Jack Blake he made an announcement.

"I've been thinking, Jackie."

Blake refrained from asking "What with?"

"Yes, old chap?" he said.

"I'm goin' to risk it."

"Risk which?" asked Tom Merry.

"The khaki."

"Hurrah!" chortled Blake. "Good old Filbert—I mean Gilbert! We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to get a move on, you know."

"Khaki's the fashionable colour at pwsent, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus.

"Yaas, I'm goin' to risk it," said Gilbert.

"Well, lots of fellows are risking the shells, you know," said Tom.

"Shells!" said Gilbert. "What shells? I'm not thinkin' about the shells. I'm goin' to risk the khaki. I think I mentioned that it doesn't suit my complexion, and I look horrid in it. But I'm goin' to risk it."

"Hurrah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, that little game the other day started me thinkin'," said Gilbert seriously. "I couldn't help thinkin' about what would happen if the real Huns got here—murderin' women and children, and all that—seemed to bring it home to my mind, you know. I'm goin' back to town to apply for a commission, and if I can't get one I'm goin' in as a ranker. I s'pose you won't want to cut me, Jackie, if you meet me as a private?"

"Cut you, old chap!" said Jack, squeezing his hand. "I'll be jolly proud of you, and so will all of us. Good old Filbert!"

"Yaas, I'm goin' to risk it," said Gilbert, with a nod. And he departed amid cheers from the juniors.

* * * * *

Gilbert kept his word, and the next time Jack Blake saw him he was in khaki. And a few weeks later there was a letter from Gilbert, announcing that the last weight had been lifted from his mind. For training in sun and wind had completely abolished his pallid complexion, and he informed Jack Blake that he was red and sunburnt, and that khaki suited his complexion down to the ground. Study No. 6 chuckled over that letter; but, although Blake acknowledged that Gilbert couldn't help being an ass, he was very proud of the Knut of St. Jim's.

THE END.

"Grundy's Great Game!" is the title of next Wednesday's magnificent story of St. Jim's. Grundy being such a popular character, there is bound to be a big demand, so order to-day!

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LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

THE DANGER OF PROMPTITUDE.

They were a motoring party, and were careering along at some thirty miles an hour, when out of a field came a dog, which was too busy barking at the man who was following it to notice the oncoming motor-car. The animal was run down and killed instantly.

The car was pulled up, and one of the party alighted and met the pedestrian emerging from the field.

"We're very sorry," he said apologetically.
 "Yes; but the dog's dead, and a fine one he was."
 "Well, look here, will five pounds make it right?"
 "I don't know. I think it might."

"Here, then, take this, and we'll think no more about the matter, except that we're awfully sorry!"

The car resumed its journey, and the pedestrian, pocketing the five, softly remarked:

"Well, here's a rum go. I wonder whose dog it is?"—Sent in by C. Shannen, Landport, Portsmouth.

A BELATED ADMISSION.

Two men sat on the river bank fishing. One of them got a bite, and in the excitement he fell into the water. The other man watched his struggles, but did nothing to aid him.

"I can't swim!" shouted the man in the water. He went under the surface, and when he came up he shouted again, "I can't swim!"

The man on the bank watched him with interest. The man in the water sank again. On coming to the surface, the drowning man uttered a last despairing gasp, "I can't swim!"

"Well, my friend," commented the man on the bank. "this is a queer time to be boasting of it!"—Sent in by J. Harris, Marpurhey, Manchester.

WHEN SCOT MEETS SCOT.

The widow was the owner of a small shop, and her admirer was in the habit of seeing her home after the shop had closed for the night. Naturally, the gallant lover carried the lady's bag for her, which was usually very heavy, as it contained the day's takings.

"You must be doing well?" he often remarked.
 "Oh, ay," she would reply coyly, "business is nae sae bad!"

But she did not acquaint her unsuspecting admirer with the fact that it contained the counter weights as well as the takings; he made that unfortunate discovery after the wedding.—Sent in by R. F. Genton, Kidderminster.

THE BETTER PART OF VALOUR.

'Bus Conductor (to small-sized special constable who happened to be riding on the top of his 'bus): "Please come down at once. There's a chap inside kicking up a row!"

The "special" reluctantly complies, and is confronted by a huge navvy.

Conductor: "That's him; he won't pay his fare."

Special Constable: "Then I suppose I must pay it for him!"—Sent in by T. F. Plumb, Small Heath, Birmingham.

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The Minister's Age	-	-	-	Parson-age.
The Cabman's Age	-	-	-	Cabb-age.
The Broker's Age	-	-	-	Bond-age.
The Lawyer's Age	-	-	-	Dam-age.
The Lover's Age	-	-	-	Marri-age.
The Cashier's Age	-	-	-	Short-age.
The Deadhead's Age	-	-	-	Pass-age.
The Plumber's Age	-	-	-	Leak-age.
The Coal Dealer's Age	-	-	-	Tonn-age.
The Doctor's Age	-	-	-	Pill-age.
The Butcher's Age	-	-	-	Saus-age.

—Sent in by I. T. Elias, Neath, Glam.

WHAT FATHER SAID.

Sunday School Teacher: "Now, boys, why do we say grace before and after meals?"

No reply.
 "Come, come! Surely one of you can answer me? Tell me what I mean by grace."

Still no answer.
 "This is terrible! Now, Johnny, tell me what your father does after a meal!"

Johnny: "Please, miss, he rubs his waistcoat."
 Teacher: "That's not what I mean. I want to know what he says."

Johnny: "Please, miss, he says, 'Ha, ha! Richard is himself again!'"—Sent in by A. H. Crowter, Hove.

A SURE WINNER.

"Backing horses is ruination," observed a man, looking round for someone to contradict the statement.

"Nothing of the kind," said a listener. "I once backed a horse, and made fifty pounds!"

"You're exceptionally lucky. How did you do it?" inquired the first speaker.

"Oh, I backed him down a cellar, and then sued the owner for leaving his cellar-flap open!"—Sent in by Henry A. Kelley, Seacombe, Ches.

HE SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY.

Small Boy (who is staying at the seaside, to officer of submarine, which has just appeared off the pier): "I say, mister! When you go down again, would you mind looking for my pocket-knife? It's got two blades and a black handle!"—Sent in by F. Sharrod, Nuneaton.

KINDLY INTENTIONS.

"John," whispered the terrified wife, "there must be a burglar downstairs. He has just knocked against the piano and hit several keys!"

"I'll go down, my dear," said John, in a businesslike tone.

"Oh, John," murmured the wife, "don't do anything rash!"

"Rash!" he snapped sarcastically. "I'm just going down to help him. He can't get that piano out of the house alone!"—Sent in by W. Connor, Midlothian, N.B.

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The previous instalments told how:—

NORRIS BRENT, a young Englishman, agrees to accompany his unworthy cousin, GUY MELVILLE, on an exploration tour in China for a rare plant only to be found in that part of the world. Misfortune dogs their footsteps, and a crisis is reached when the Chinese pack-carriers, who are with them, mutiny. Stranded in a wild, inhospitable land, there is nothing for it but to return to civilisation, and the cousins, together with YEN HOW, Norris Brent's faithful servant, set out on the weary journey.

The little band is overcome by thirst, and Melville, refusing to share his water with the others, pushes onward through the desert, leaving his companions to their fate. Fortunately, however, Yen How lights upon an oasis, and the danger is averted.

Norris Brent returns to England with Yen How, and Guy Melville pretends to be pleased at seeing his cousin again. He informs him that, owing to the death of an uncle, he is owner of the estate, Eagle's Cliff, and offers Brent a position thereon, which he accepts.

One day Yen How surprises his master by informing him that MING YUNG, a Chinese mandarin, and his ward, SILVER PEARL, whose acquaintance Brent had previously made in China, are staying at Eagle's Nest.

Brent discovers that Ming Yung has come to Eagle's Nest in order to experiment with an invention with which he hopes to gain world-wide power.

Guy Melville, for some sinister reason, still desires his cousin's death, and secures the assistance of a gipsy, KARL MARROK, to assist him in his foul purpose.

Brent finds a ruby of great value, which Ming Yung gains possession of.

Ming Yung, owing to a quarrel with Melville, destroys a magnificent yacht belonging to his guest, Kenneth Gramme.

The Chinaman and his ward then hurriedly leave Eagle's Nest, and go into hiding. The hue and cry is raised by Brent, however, and a search-party sets out to find the fugitives.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Death Flash—A Baffled Pursuit.

The hush and solitude of night brooded over the woods.

Yet, where all was dark and silent, the pulse of life stirred with insistent strength. In the shadowy blackness falling from the overhanging foliage, Ming Yung and Silver Pearl moved over the thick, mossy turf with swift and noiseless tread.

On Ming Yung rested a dangerous calm. Confronted by a deadly peril that threatened to overwhelm him in irremediable ruin, he was losing no time in escaping from it. Fear of his life he had none. Had it been only a physical danger that faced him, he would have scorned to turn away from it.

But there was far more than that at stake. The future destiny of the yellow race was in his keeping. He possessed the secret of a mighty power that made him supreme. The violet ray was his discovery. It was a phenomena of chemicalised electricity that was certain to revolutionise the whole course of history.

The terrific success of his final experiment with it Ming Yung had regarded as a foregone conclusion. With ruthless deliberation he had planned the destruction of the Gloria, giving not a thought to those on board the yacht, caring only for the triumph that he knew would be his.

So sure was he of the result, that he had secretly made every preparation for a speedy departure from Eagle's Nest. That the annihilation of the splendid steam-yacht would be traced to his agency he had foreseen, but the quickness with which detection came had taken him by surprise and compelled him to venture on an immediate flight.

Peremptorily summoned to accompany her guardian, Silver Pearl had no option but to obey the command. To question it, she knew, would be useless. Wondering and perplexed, she went out with her silent companion from the ancient mansion, whose roof had sheltered them for so many eventful days.

They had not gone far when the sound of voices and the tramp of feet came to their ears. Lights flashed along the drive in front of the house. Without speaking, Ming Yung quickened his pace. By the course he was shaping, Silver Pearl gathered that it was his intention to reach the main road at a point some considerable distance away.

Whatever his purpose might have been, however, force of circumstance prevented Ming Yung from carrying it out. Something had gone amiss. The signal that he was evidently expecting was not given, and, realising that he was running, an increasing risk of being discovered, he turned off into the thickest part of the wood.

At last he paused before the black, yawning mouth of a large cave. Instinctively Silver Pearl shrank back, dread of the unknown strong upon her; but her companion seized her by the wrist and forced her onward.

"Remember that while you are with me," he said, "no harm can befall you. The danger is back there."

Entering the cave, Ming Yung turned on the light of his black rod, and speedy progress was made along the subterranean passage. In spite of her troubled doubts and misgivings, Silver Pearl looked about her with eager interest.

She had never been in such a place before in her life, and the mystery and novelty of it all made a strong appeal to her imagination. Yet she wished that Norris Brent was there, and sadly wondered if she was ever to see him again.

Suddenly there was a sound that brought both her and Ming Yung to a halt. It was that of murmuring voices, and it came from behind them.

"We are being followed," said Ming Yung, extinguishing his light. "The feringhees are on our track."

In total darkness now they moved on again. The noise of the pursuit continued. It was apparent that those taking part in the search were led by someone who was no stranger to the cave. Who could this be? Silver Pearl was convinced that it must be Brent, although she had no definite reason for such a belief.

This conviction pleased and yet terrified the girl. It could not be as a friend, she reflected, that Brent was looking for Ming Yung. Her guardian was fleeing, like a thief in the night, from some great disaster that was threatening him, and

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in which she herself would be involved should he fail to escape.

This thought made Silver Pearl urgently anxious not to be overtaken. The fear that Norris Brent might condemn her as well as Ming Yung filled her with a burning sense of undesired shame and humiliation. Never would she be able to stand before him and see a look of stern and angry condemnation in his handsome face.

"Faster—faster!" she cried, glancing quickly back over her shoulder. "They are drawing nearer to us! I can see the glimmer of lights!"

Ming Yung smiled grimly.

"Fear not!" he said, in a cold and toneless voice. "Should they not turn back it is death that will leap upon them. In this rod that I carry with me is hidden a power that will sweep them all into eternity."

Silver Pearl trembled at the words, and hastened on in advance of her companion, whose every movement was one of serene confidence. Still closer came the sounds of the pursuit. Discovery seemed to be inevitable.

A sharp little cry of dismay broke from Silver Pearl's lips, and she came to an abrupt pause. Two steadily-shining points of light had stabbed out from the darkness ahead.

"Look!" whispered the girl. "There are men waiting for us! We are lost!"

A curious change came over Ming Yung's face. His expression was instantly one of eager alertness. Holding up his black rod, he switched on a brilliant stream of electric light.

At once there was a shout from behind, but neither Silver Pearl nor her companion gave a thought to it, so intent was their gaze upon what the illuminant had revealed to them.

Not more than a yard or two away, its monstrous bulk blocking up the whole of the tunnel, was a creature of abnormal size and appearance.

Its long, giraffe-like neck and head were stretched forward, and Silver Pearl perceived that what she had taken to be lantern-lights were the large, globular eyes of the animal.

It was the mysterious denizen of the under-world that Ming Yung had seen before when Norris Brent had guided him through the cave. Then a mischance had stopped him from staying it, but now he had it at his mercy, and a smile of proud satisfaction showed on his lips.

Irritated by the blaze of light playing upon it, the hideous monster came forward with a ponderous rush. There was a bright click, a moment of darkness, and then a long, violet ray darted from the lens of the black rod that Ming Yung clasped in his right hand.

The gleaming eyes, the swaying head, vanished, and the immense body of the brute crumpled up and dwindled into mere dust with the swiftness of thought itself.

Immediately the violet ray was extinguished, and again a bright, searching beam of electric light illuminated the cave. It swung round and alighted on a startled, awed little group of men, led by Norris Brent and Yen How, who had witnessed everything that had taken place.

Keeping the light playing full upon them, Ming Yung moved slowly on along the passage. He looked a grim and sombre figure, presenting a striking contrast to Silver Pearl, whose fresh, young charm and beauty served but to intensify the gloom of the place.

"Keep back!" cried Ming Yung harshly. "Advance another step and you are doomed! Nothing can save you!"

The light from the black rod grew fainter, and at last vanished from sight. The pursuit had been stopped, and before it was taken up again Ming Yung and Silver Pearl were out of immediate danger.

Emerging from the cave at an exit close to the edge of the cliff, the fugitives once more set off for the point Ming Yung had purposed to reach at first.

It took them some time to traverse the intervening distance, as it was nearly an hour later before they came to a dark lane leading from the woods to the main road, where, in response to a peculiar whistle from Ming Yung, a man came forward to meet them.

It was Ho Beng, whose fat, yellow face expressed both alarm and relief from suspense.

"Is the car here?" Ming Yung sharply inquired, giving the other no time to answer. "Then we will start at once. Not another moment must be lost."

Going to the motor-car that was waiting for them, they entered it, and in a minute or two later were out on the London road.

Once more had Ming Yung baffled his enemies.

A ship flying the Chinese flag was streaming across the Indian Ocean.

The time was afternoon, and scarcely a soul moved on board the vessel, for the heat was intense, and the siesta so beloved by the people of the East was being generally indulged in.

Reclining on a long chair, and protected from the burning sun by the thick canvas awning of the deck, was a beautiful girl. There was a wistful, pathetic look in her face, and her dark eyes, gazing dreamily at a group of palm-fringed islands in the distance, told of thoughts that were centred on sad yet happy memories of the past.

She was Silver Pearl, and she was returning to China with Ming Yung, the yellow wizard. After their escape from Eagle's Nest no time had been lost by her guardian in leaving the country where he had, by his own act, become a dangerous outlaw.

In eluding the hue-and-cry raised after him, Ming Yung showed marvellous skill and adroitness. On the same day that they had reached London he and Silver Pearl were safe on board the vessel that was now taking them home.

Obviously this ship was a Chinese passenger boat, but in reality she belonged to the Imperial Government at Peking, and had long since been secretly placed at Ming Yung's disposal.

The Rang Kang, as she was named, left her place of anchorage off Gravesend an hour after Ming Yung set foot on board, and by the next morning was far out at sea. Since then nothing had occurred to vividly recall to Silver Pearl's recollection the startling events that took place at Eagle's Nest on the night of her hasty flight from the place.

It was curious, then, that on this particular afternoon her thoughts should be so persistently concerned with the days she had lived at the old Devonshire mansion.

"Silver Pearl!" murmured a voice at her elbow. "Are you all alone?"

She started, her face paled, and then she slowly turned her head. There, peering round a corner of the deck-house, was Norris Brent himself.

"Don't cry out!" he whispered warningly. "Someone will hear you else, and come here."

The warning was needed, for the girl had forgotten everything but the fact that he whom she had been thinking of as one lost to her sight for ever, was actually present there. Keeping silent by a supreme effort of will, she rose to her feet and looked swiftly up and down the deck.

No one was in sight. Ming Yung was asleep in his cabin, and any danger from him, therefore, was not to be apprehended for the time being.

Trembling with emotion, she crossed over to where Brent had drawn back behind the deck-house. Here a sheet of canvas hanging from one of the boats hung to its davits effectually concealed them from the observation of anyone who might pass along the deck.

Her first close glance at Brent caused Silver Pearl to utter a little cry of dismay.

He was pale, haggard, and unwashed, and his clothes were shockingly dirty and ragged. It was evident that he had suffered the greatest misery and privation since she had last seen him.

"What has happened to you?" she asked breathlessly. "Why are you here? How did you get on board? Where have you been hiding?"

The questions came tumbling from her lips one after the other.

"Yen How is with me," Brent answered, smiling at her impatient eagerness. "We followed you to London. A letter Ming Yung had left behind in the Magician's Room put me on to his track. It was from the commander of the Rang Kang. When we reached Gravesend we watched for our opportunity to steal on board the ship. At first it was my intention to denounce Ming Yung and have him arrested; but I soon realised the uselessness of such a proceeding, for, being on a ship owned by his own Government, the English police would have no power to take him into custody."

"So I took the desperate resolution of hiding on the ship, becoming a stowaway, in fact, and travelling with you to China. This plan Yen How agreed to with enthusiasm. The very thought of seeing his native land again filled him with delight."

"We managed to find a place to hide in below one of the store-rooms. It's a black, little hole, and the heat is frightful, but we've managed to exist somehow."

"Fortunately, we brought some preserved food along with us, and we each take it in turn to slip into the store-room when it's open, and renew our fresh water supply. That's

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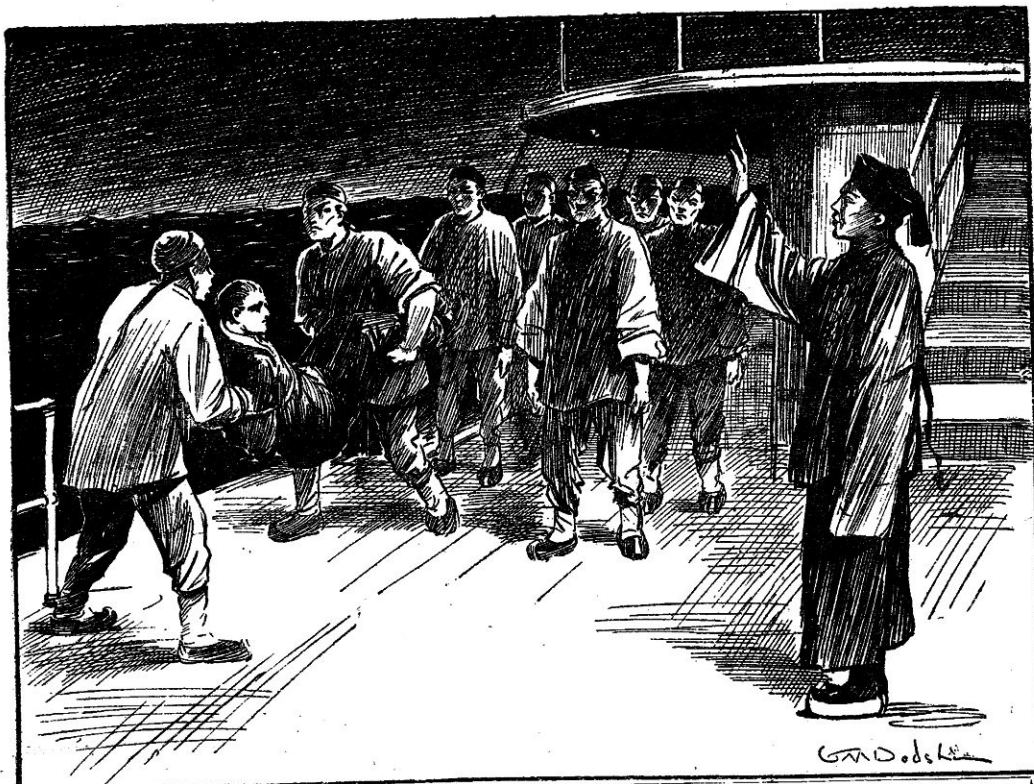
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Ming Yung glanced at the Chinese near him, and waved his hand. Immediately Norris Brent was seized, lifted from the deck, and carried to the taffrail. Then with a long swinging heave his body was hurled far out into the ocean. (See page 26.)

mighty risky work, and I've had some narrow escapes from being spotted. I've been up on deck a time or two before now when the way's been clear, but this is the first time I've had the luck to see you."

While Brent was speaking, Silver Pearl had recovered from her first overwhelming shock of amazement. "But what made you come?" she inquired. "There must have been a strong motive in your mind."

A dark and sombre look clouded Norris Brent's face. "How can you ask me that question?" he rejoined. "The deed of monstrous evil that Ming Yung committed I witnessed with my own eyes, and I made a vow there and then that I would never rest until I had taken from him the power that he possesses to scourge the whole world."

"What has he done?" asked Silver Pearl, puzzled and astonished. "I know nothing of what you refer to."

As he heard the words it seemed to Norris Brent as if a great load slipped from off his shoulders. Her fight from Eagle's Nest with Ming Yung had inevitably prompted the thought that Silver Pearl knew of the Gloria's destruction, and it seemed to Brent that, knowing of that terrible act, she ought to have faced any danger rather than accompany her guardian.

Now he realized that she had never heard the real reason for Ming Yung's precipitate departure from Eagle's Nest. Should he enlighten her ignorance in the matter? He decided that it was his duty to do so.

"You've seen the violet ray at work?"
 "Yes," Silver Pearl replied wonderingly. "It was with that Ming Yung destroyed the dreadful creature that we encountered in the cave. But what has it to do with the subject we are talking about?"

"Everything," said Brent gravely. "With the violet ray your guardian swept the Gloria, Kenneth Gram's lovely steam yacht, out of existence. There were several persons on board her at the time. They all perished. So utterly com-

plete was the work of annihilation that not even so much as a ship's spar was picked up afterwards."

A horror of repulsion showed in Silver Pearl's face. "Did you see it?"

"I saw it done with my own eyes," answered Brent. "Yen How and I were on the cliffs facing Rocksby at the time, and it was probably owing to that circumstance that his evil deed was traced to Ming Yung so quickly. He was compelled to leave Eagle's Nest sooner, no doubt, than he expected to."

Silver Pearl did not speak again for several moments. She was deeply moved and distressed by the nature of the revelation that had been made to her. It intensified the feeling of dread and aversion she had long experienced for Ming Yung, and, had it been possible to do so, she would have gone away and never seen him again.

But she was out on the wide ocean, a caged prisoner, with less prospect than ever before of escaping from the power of the man who had controlled her life from its earliest years.

Mingled with the feeling of Norris Brent's dangerous position. Leading the wretched existence of a stowaway, and surrounded by a hundred different perils, his outlook was black and hopeless in the extreme.

"You should never have left England," she said, with sudden earnestness. "It was madness to do so. And how you must have suffered! Listen! This ship stops at Singapore. We shall be there in another five or six days. Then you must go on shore. It is British territory. You will be perfectly safe there. Friends will help you."

Brent interrupted her with a quick shake of the head. "I shall do nothing of the sort," he said, in a firm and determined tone of voice. "If I did so, the only chance I have of destroying Ming Yung's infernal power would be taken from me. By going on to China I shall keep in touch with him."

Admiration for his courage shone from Silver Pearl's dark eyes, but there was also pity in her look.

"You are wonderfully brave," she said, "but you can do

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nothing to Ming Yung. In England you were powerless against him. How, then, can you expect to be anything else when he is back in his own country surrounded by those who are devoted to him, protected from every enemy? It is folly to set yourself in opposition to such a man."

The lines of stubborn resolution that were there deepened in Brent's face.

"Ming Yung is a living menace to the white race," he said, "and I regard it as a sacred duty, knowing what I do, to do my utmost to baulk his plans. Only death itself shall turn me from my purpose."

A shadow fell across the deck, the canvas sheet was pushed aside, and Ming Yung stepped between Silver Pearl and Brent, a cruel, mocking smile on his lips.

"It is death that is waiting for you!" he said, speaking the words with a sibilant hiss. "To be saved from further trouble, you will be turned from your purpose before another hour is over!"

There was silence for a moment, and then Norris Brent, an angry growl in his throat, sprang straight at his enemy. He hurled Ming Yung back against the canvas, and would have dashed him to the deck had not the other called out and brought a crowd of Chinese running to his assistance.

The men flung themselves on Brent, striking him over the head and face, and he was dragged violently away from Ming Yung. When he looked round again he could see no sign of Silver Pearl, who had been hurried away to her cabin.

The Chinese were all around him, silent now, and regarding him with stolid indifference. Behind them stood Ming Yung. He also betrayed no sign of emotion. His face looked as if it were carved out of a block of yellow marble. Only the eyes shone with a basilisk glare.

"Lead him out into the light," commanded the yellow wizard. "It is getting dark here."

Taken on to the open part of the deck, Brent noticed that the flaming orb of day was close to its setting. The whole of the western sky was a glory of colour. Smooth as an inland lake was the surface of the vast sea. The hush of rapidly approaching night was over all.

At a sign from Ming Yung two men pinioned Brent's arms tightly to his body with a length of stout rope. That done, they stood aside. The lad knew that he was doomed. His life was to pay the penalty of his daring.

As the realisation of this awfully solemn truth rushed over him a momentary feeling of despairing bitterness came to Brent. He told himself that he had been mad to do what he had done. All that he had endured had been of no avail.

His thoughts were read by his great antagonist. A fiendish smile shone out on Ming Yung's face.

"It is too late for regrets," said the yellow wizard. "You were clever and ingenious, I grant you, to succeed in hiding yourself away on this vessel with the object of settling your little differences with me at some future date. But see what it has led you to—a vain and profitless fate."

The mockingly-uttered words aroused Brent's pride and courage as nothing else could have done. Holding up his head, he met Ming Yung's look with dauntless gaze.

"You're wrong!" he exclaimed, in a bold, ringing tone of voice. "I regret nothing that I have attempted to do and failed in doing. Had I foreseen what is going to happen to me now, I should still have acted in the same way."

The same slight stirring of admiration that Ming Yung had felt for Norris Brent before came again to him, but he betrayed no sign of it.

"You will think otherwise," he remarked, "when the deep waters are closing over your head. And remember that this is an ocean that abounds in sharks. You will be fortunate to escape the jaws of one or more of those ferocious rovers of the sea."

Turning his head, he glanced at the western sky.

"When the sun sinks behind the horizon," he said slowly, "you will be thrown overboard. Before the end there is something that I wish to tell you. Guy Melville, your cousin, is not the man you think him to be. It was the intention of your late relative, Mark Paington, to leave you three thousand pounds a year. Your cousin knew it. That made him hate you. It was because of that he attempted to take your life. Do you wish to leave any kindly message for me to send on to him?"

The blood rushed hotly into Brent's cheeks. This fiendish attempt on Ming Yung's part to torture him in his last moments was intolerable. But his strong will saved him from making a display of weakness that would have been hailed with cruel glee by his inhuman foe.

"No," he said; "there is no message that I wish to send to my cousin."

Ming Yung approached a step nearer to his victim. "Nor to Silver Pearl?" he said softly. "She will mourn for you when you have gone."

A look of contemptuous scorn was the only rejoinder given. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 400.

by Brent to these cruel words. The last red rim of the setting sun was fast narrowing down to invisibility. A moment later, and the light of day was extinguished. Ming Yung glanced at the Chinese near him, and waved his hand.

Immediately Norris Brent was seized, lifted from the deck, and carried to the taffrail. Then, with a long, swinging heave, his body was hurled far out into the ocean. Striking the water with a great splash, he sank out of sight.

At the same moment a Chinaman dived into the sea astern of the vessel. It was a beautifully clean dive, and almost noiseless, and none on board the Rang Kang saw the man who made it.

It was Yen How who had plunged overboard. Alarmed by the prolonged absence of his comrade from the hold where they lived in concealment, he had crept up on deck, to find Brent a prisoner in the midst of foes.

Crafty and quick of wit, Yen How remained hidden while he listened to the sentence of death passed by Ming Yung upon his comrade. Then, taking only a minute or two in which to decide how to act, he made his way to the stern part of the ship, and there stayed until the splash of Brent's body falling into the sea told him that the moment had come for him to go to the other's rescue.

Not until he was compelled to rise to the surface to draw breath did Yen How emerge from underneath the water. The swift darkness of a tropic night was already sweeping down over the ocean. Shaking his head like some spaniel, the brave Chinaman looked round with a searching gaze.

Ah! A dark object caught his eye between forty and fifty yards away. Cleaving through the water with a long, powerful stroke, Yen How headed towards it. Suddenly it disappeared, but on he swam. There it was again!

Now he could distinctly see the head and shoulders of his drowning comrade. Before Brent sank again he was caught and held up by a strong arm. The rope binding him was severed and thrown off. Again he had the free use of his limbs.

"That velly good thing!" said Yen How. "You more better float till you buck up, Mista Brent. No use you trying to do any more now. My look after you."

The voice of his loyal and faithful comrade sounded in Norris Brent's ears as from a long way off. His body was stiff and numb. Soon, however, the flow of blood quickened in his limbs. His brain started to do its work properly once more.

"Hallo!" he said, with suddenly returned animation. "Where the dickens am I? Oh, I know! Ming Yung had me flung overboard, and you, Yen How, came to my help. But how in the world did you manage it?"

Yen How chuckled with glee.

"Velly easily," he replied. "When you stay on deck so long my follow you and hear all that Ming Yung say to you. That give me a cue. When you go pip into the water, iny spring in, too, and here we are."

This amusing explanation caused Norris Brent, in deplorable plight though he and his companion were, to laugh aloud. Then his thoughts reverted to what had happened, and a sense of his own impotence settled down upon him. He had dared to set himself in opposition to Ming Yung, the Chinese magician of science, and this was the end of it.

Far off now he could see the Rang Kang, her black hull studded with lights, lessening in size each minute. The great, yellow star of the Orient shone down from the vault of the heavens upon the ocean with soft, yet brilliant radiance.

The water was warm. There was no fear of the comrades taking cramp, or a chill from it, and this was something to encourage them. On the other hand, they were faced with the unnerving prospect of a lingering death.

The Rang Kang had not followed the usual track of ocean-going steamers, and it was altogether unlikely that any ship would pass near enough for them to hail it, however protracted their existence might be.

Carried by the tides, at the mercy of the sharks which infested those vast seas, there seemed to be no chance of rescue for the castaways. Yet the very fact of their being together in misfortune was a source of encouragement and hope to them both.

Side by side they had braved many dire perils in the past. There was no sound reason even now why they should succumb to despair. Floating on the water, they remained inactive for a considerable time. Then Yen How began to look more attentively about him.

"You see that land away there?" he said at last. "That not velly far away, and the tide is taking us to it."

The land was a small island, one of an archipelago extending from north to south for a great distance, although the comrades were unaware of this at the time. As the tide carried them nearer towards it they saw that the island rose steeply up from a beach of yellow sand.

Lofty palm-trees covered the slopes. Seen in the starlight,

the picture was an entirely pleasing one. The hopes of the comrades soared high. They forgot their unenviable situation in the thought that they would soon be setting foot on dry land.

"This is a gorgeous surprise!" cried Brent. "We parted company from the Rang Kang at precisely the right time. Had it happened ten minutes later we might never have seen the place, or have been unable to reach it."

Yen How did not reply. He was intently watching a lengthening streak of white foam, above which a black fin moved with amazing velocity, that had suddenly appeared on the smooth surface of the sea.

"One shark have got this side," he announced. "My think he see us."

Brent, himself catching a glimpse of the white streak, realised the fearful danger threatening him and his companion in a moment.

"Keep quiet!" he whispered. "We may get safely past the brute yet. Do you know what to do in case we're attacked?"

Yen How nodded his head. Off the China coast he had more than once been in danger from sharks, and knew exactly how to act in case of such an emergency. It seemed at first, however, as if he and Brent were in no particular peril.

The shark shot past them, and was quickly lost to sight. During the next two or three minutes they saw no more of it. Then it reappeared, passed by them again, and then swung round and dashed at them with the speed of an express train.

As they swam to right and left the tiger of the deep flashed in between them, and they heard the horrid snap of its terrible jaws. Both shouted and frantically splashed the water, and the noise they made frightened the brute, for it sheared off and kept at some distance from them.

Growing bolder, it drew nearer to them again. There was another quick, but futile rush. Again the shark retreated, but it displayed less caution now, and swam rapidly round and round the castaways in ever-narrowing circles.

"In another minute or two we shall be safe," said Brent, his gaze on the yellow beach of the island. "We're close to the shore now. Ha! Look out!"

There was a swirling rush of water that swept right over him. When he had shaken the salt drops from his eyes, and looked round, the shark was not to be seen. Neither was Yen How.

A sickening fear assailed him. Was he to look upon his comrade no more? The moments passed. He shouted again and again. There was no response. All hope left him.

"You see me?" spluttered a well-known voice. "That shark nearly catch me, though, the saucy fellow. My go down under him. There was only one thing to do, and I did it. That shark go round blind for the rest of his life."

Saying which, Yen How, who had reappeared at his comrade's side, expressively held up his two thumbs, which he had driven into the eyes of the voracious monster, and so blinded it, his escape being only a matter of quickness then.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Brent, laughing merrily after the suspense he had endured. "Your luck is something for any fellow to envy. But here we are at last."

The deep water had abruptly shallowed. It was now not much above their knees. A few moments later they were on shore. Crossing the beach to the edge of the palm-trees, they flung themselves down on the ground, and there, wearied out, speedily fell asleep.

From their sleep the comrades awakened soon after midnight. Then they sat up, and looked questioningly at one another. From across the island came the rolling beat of Chinese war-drums.

The Pirates.

Starting to their feet the comrades gazed in the direction whence the sound came. They were unable to see anything at first, but, moving inland for two or three hundred yards, they at last sighted the glimmer of several lights.

"That's where the festive gathering is," said Brent. "Come on, Yen How. We'll see something of it."

Threading their way between the closely-growing clumps of palm-trees, they pushed steadily on for over two miles. Then they discovered that they were near the opposite shore of the island to the one they had landed on. The beach here was an extensive one.

At the far edge of it were two large Chinese junks, of the ocean-going type, and a crowd of yellow men swarmed near them. Preparations for a feast on a large scale were in progress. Huge pots of steaming rice, freshly-cooked fish, and quantities of cakes and fruit, were being conveyed from the junks to the shore.

Several men were beating drums and playing instruments that raised fearful discords, while others were smoking, or engaged in the exciting game of fan-tan. Silently the comrades watched the scene from the sheltering shadow of the palm-trees.

It struck Brent that he had seldom seen a more ferocious and ruffianly-looking crew than most of these unknown Chinese were, and he said as much to his companion.

"A villainous lot!" he remarked. "Those fellows, Yen How, look as if murder was an everyday pastime with them."

"So it is," Yen How replied. "They are pirates!"

"Pirates!" Brent exclaimed quickly. "How do you know?"

"Velly well," the other rejoined. "They wear those bands tied round their heads like no other sailormen. Then look at the knives and pistols in their belts. What for they have them unless it is to attack peaceful people with on the sea? My tell you they are pirates right enough."

"In that case," said Brent, "we can expect no help from them. The safest course for us to take is to return to the other side of the island again."

Yen How appeared to think otherwise.

"Suppose we stop here for a little while?" he suggested. "A strange fancy have come into my head. The smaller junk no belong pirate boat. The other one captured it and brought it here."

"How does that affect us?"

"In this way," Yen How replied. "The passengers on the captured junk are being held to ransom. Chinese pirates never kill their prisoners unless they can get no money out of them, or their friends at home. Then they are soon rid of them. Now my plan is that we release the prisoners on the junk, help them to fight the pirates, and then sail to China with them."

(Another thrilling, long instalment of this splendid serial story next Wednesday. Order your copy early.)

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For Next Wednesday:

"GRUNDY'S GREAT GAME!"

By Martin Clifford.

The humour of next week's grand, long, complete story of St. Jim's can only be described as terrific. It is the ambition of George Alfred Grundy, of the Shell, to shine as a footballer, so for the first—and last!—time he makes an appearance in the Form team. Tom Merry resolutely refuses his services after this, so Grundy, being as a prophet without honour in his own country, endeavours to secure a place in some local eleven. To further his purpose, he places an advertisement, in his own peculiar brand of spelling, in the newspaper, and as a result he is called upon by many distinguished and undistinguished persons. One offers to teach him the rudiments of spelling, another how to kick a football, and so forth. Exasperated beyond measure, the luckless Shell fellow is forced to flee, and

"GRUNDY'S GREAT GAME!"

instead of materialising in the way he wished, terminates in complete, inglorious failure.

WHERE ARE THE GRUMBLERS?

Master W. Malpas, Master F. Stephens, and other prominent members of the Association of Grouzers, Limited, have suddenly and unaccountably vanished—not with the firm's cash-box, I hope! They have poured out the vials of their wrath upon the "Gem" Library; and now, instead of sticking to their guns, they have slunk away like whipped curs before the cutting abuse of a crowd of loyal readers. Good riddance to them, I say; and good riddance to all such bad rubbish! These juvenile whipper-snappers, who fondly hoped, by forming anti-Gem societies, to sweep this journal from the market, have failed—utterly, completely, and ignominiously. Their whole precious plot has come tumbling about their ears. We have smoked these vipers out from our midst, to snarl and bicker, maybe, at some other journal, but so far as the "Gem" is concerned they will for ever hold their peace.

I compute that for every letter I receive from cads of the Malpas breed, ten thousand loyal letters pour into my sanctum. Would that space permitted me to publish them all, for they go to prove that the "Gem" is at the height of a great and glorious popularity. However, though I cannot cope with them all, I can thank their writers most heartily for their magnificent enthusiasms.

The following letter, typical of the many thousands I have recently been bombarded with, is well worthy of publication:

"324, High Road, Leyton, Essex.

"Dear Editor,—I have been going to write to you for a long time, to thank you for the fine stories you put on the market. It is this week's story that has given me my opportunity.

"When people told me to give up reading your paper, the 'Gem,' I asked the reason why, and was told that it was a 'blood-and-thunder' book, and not fit for boys and girls to read. Then I used to ask if they had read them, and the reply was invariably 'No; I haven't had time to read such rubbish.' Then I used to get indignant, and say that some books were certainly not fit to read, but if a book taught boys to be more manly, to scorn to tell lies, and always to play the game, and if it taught girls to be honest and to play the game as well, then I would always read it, and advise others to do so, too.

"I have no doubt that the good old 'Gem' has gone far

to build up some of the fine men we have in our Army to-day, and for whom Britain has cause to be thankful.

"I am nineteen years of age, and shall continue to read the 'Gem' till I am old and grey-headed, so long as it teaches British boys and girls to be real gentlemen and gentlemen.

"Wishing you every success, yours sincerely,
"A LOYAL GEMITE."
"P.S.—I may add that I am a girl, but every bit a boy at heart."

That is the sort of letter which would gladden the heart of any editor. It is well-written and sincere, and my Leyton friend, with her simple, unwavering faith in the 'Gem' Library, is an ideal of what I think a reader should be. Long life to her, and may she be reading this journal fifty years hence! Such a letter must make Master Malpas squirm, and his fellow conspirators, on reading it, will probably gnash their teeth with vexation.

So, now that the "GEM" has fought down calumny, let us swing merrily on our course. And once again I repeat, Where are the grumblers?

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO "GEM" READERS.

Private J. R. Lennon, No. 13630, 4th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, 9th Brigade, 3rd Division, British Expeditionary Force, would be extremely grateful if any fellow-reader of the "Gem" Library would forward him some puzzles to be made from wize. Who will oblige?

The following Tommies are in need of spare copies of the companion papers to cheer their lonely hours:

Corporal H. Wilson, No. 983,
Ammunition Column, 1/3rd West Riding Brigade, R.F.A.,
49th (W.R.) Division, British Expeditionary Force.

Trooper H. Readman, No. 2161,
Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry,
15th Divisional Cavalry, British Expeditionary Force.

Grove Hall Football Club require away matches for the present season.—Apply to the Secretary, 102, Fairfoot Road, Bow, E.

A football team (average age 15½) desires home and away matches for the present season, within a six-mile radius of Enfield. Will secretaries wishing to make fixtures please write to Mr. B. Macey, Cotswold, Park Avenue, Bush Hill Park, Enfield?

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"A Girl Reader."—I think I had more letters from "Gemites" praising "The Housemaster's Homecoming," than I have ever received in connection with any other story. The question is, how and where am I to answer them all?

"Eric" (Halifax).—Sorry, but the reader in question did not send me his full name and address.

"Milliss" (Manchester).—What a champion letter! I should have liked to publish it, but space forbade. The boys in question spend their vacations, as a rule, with Tom Merry. Best regards to yourself, your girl chum, and your brothers, who, I gather from your epistle, are thorough sports.

(Continued on page 111 of cover.)

REPLIES IN BRIEF—continued.

George Franklin (Silvertown, E.).—Thanks very much for your interesting letter, and for the splendid work you are doing to further the interests of your favourite paper.

S. Butler (Teddington).—You are off the track, my son. The picture in question appeared on the cover of the "Magnet," not the "Gem," and it wasn't supposed to be the prize-giving at St. Jim's at all. You should look before you leap. As to your statement that the management of the "Gem" is very shaky, I must say that with such a small staff as we have at present we are doing remarkably well. If you wish, come up to the Fleetway House and see for yourself. I shall be glad to entertain you for a moment or two, or, in my absence, the Fighting Editor will do so.

Joseph W. B. (East Dulwich).—I have had many letters urging me to alter the size of our companion paper, "The Boys' Friend," and an article explaining why such a proceeding is impossible appeared in that paper a short time ago.

"Old Reader" (Goole).—You had better consult a physician.

W. G. Brooks (near Abergavenny).—Thank you for your letter. Why should we quarrel over which school produces the best junior athletes out of St. Jim's and Greyfriars? Both lots play the game, and that's all that matters. No, A. S. Hardy, the author, is not the Aston Villa custodian.

"An African Girl" (Kimberley).—Many thanks for your nice letter. Glad the "Gem" is so popular in your district.

C. Barthell (Streatham).—Storyettes for the Weekly Prize Page need not be original. There is no "Gem" League in the vicinity of Streatham Common—at any rate, not to my knowledge. Gussy is fifteen years of age.

F. Barlow (Oldham).—The St. Jim's football season commences in October. Winning storyettes appear several weeks after they are sent in.

"Kentish Lassie" (Maidstone).—Thank you very much for your splendid letter. I have passed on your good wishes to Mr. Clifford.

"Z. A. H." (near Gravesend).—Very glad to get such a splendid letter from you. It is certainly well for "Invent" that he never gave a full name and address! I never fancy Kildare could hit Darrel if the two ever came to loggerheads. The best way in which you can assist the "Gem" is, of course, to get new readers, and many of 'em!

"A Puzzled Reader" (Leytonstone).—You cannot be a consistent reader of "The Penny Pop," or you would have seen that Lumley-Lumley did not die. He was in a trance.

F. Winkworth (Jersey).—Write to the Admiralty, London, for the particulars you require.

Harry M. (Salford).—Rugger is not played at St. Jim's. Your suggestion for a "Gem" story dealing solely with sport will be considered. Send up your storyettes on postcards, please!

Bernard G. (Nottingham).—I hope Nottingham is ready to welcome "Tom Merry's Weekly" with open arms. There is no "Gem" Club in your town, if my memory serves me correctly. Why not form one yourself?

E. C. B. (Manchester).—The reason why Talbot's grammar is good and Joe Frayne's bad is obvious. The former was a trained criminal, and the latter had never received an education. I will get Mr. Clifford to do as you suggest. Yes, Discover Minor is still at Greyfriars. Joke not quite good enough for publication. Try again!

Any junior rifle club requiring a match should write to C. 56, Ripley Road, Belvedere, Kent.

E. Cook (Crawley).—Mr. Railton gained promotion before he left the Army.

W. Tonkinson (Loughborough).—When "Under the Dragon" is finished, we are having a school serial—"Cousin Eddie's School-days." It's a ripping yarn, too, with Martin Clifford as the author.

George R. Lea (Dartmouth).—A plan of St. Jim's has already been published in the "Gem." Brooke of the Shell is a top boy.

J. W. A. (Limerick).—Glad you like the stories of Dick Sorey. I cannot fathom the correct working of the "Gem," so you send me. Far too busy, old chap!

"Cherry-Merry" (Nottingham).—Thanks for pointing out the error of our ways. With regard to Tom Merry's defeat at the hands of Bob Cherry, perhaps on some future occasion the result will be reversed. It's all very well for you to say that Tommy's defeat was distasteful to "Gem," but what would the "Magnetites" have said if their champion were knocked out?

Will the following readers, who have written to express their contempt for the idiotic remarks of Master Malpas, please accept their Editor's best thanks and good wishes:

A. W. (Hollinwood), "A Loyal Gemite," "A Well-wisher," Beckerleg, Robert (Penzance), Butler, P., Davies, Private H. W. (Purfleet), Deane, Sidney (Birmingham), Geldard, Harry (Wakefield), Gilligan, John (Jarrow-on-Tyne), Hamilton, William, Letts, Edward, junior (Blackburn), "Leeds Boy," "Loyal Reader" (Manchester), "Loyal Girl Reader" (Staffordshire), "Loyal Girl Chum" (Newmarket), Phillips, John (Tunstall), Pyne, Miss F. (Greenwich), Saunders, W. (Rotherham), T. H. (H.M.S. Impregnable, Devonport), "Type" (Norwich), White, Hannah (Bucks).

Private J. D. (Aldershot).—Thanks for your letter. Lord Eastwood resides in Hampshire, and the fee for tuition at a school like St. Jim's would be about £80 annually.

Irene D. (West Kilburn).—Yes, I am also the Editor of the "Magnet" Library, in which paper your previous query was answered. No, there is no such place, to my knowledge, as that you name. Your last remark touched me very much, and in view of what you said I shall most certainly be delighted to hear from you at all times. You may glory in the knowledge that your father's death was the most honourable which any Britisher can die.

H. Stuart Alexander.—Could Talbot lick Grundy in a fight? Oh, no! Decidedly not! But I shouldn't care to be engaged to pick up the pieces of Grundy which lay about afterwards, all the same. And as for Grundy being able to beat Coker, of Greyfriars—well! Coker would simply make shavings of him.

"Kaiser Bill" (Bristol).—Look here, old chap, if you give yourself a nom de plume like this you'll be scragged! A film play on Tom Merry's school-days? Well, it's a good idea, but presents serious disadvantages to the Editorial eye.

P. C. Shattock and W. Vicary have clubbed together to send one hundred copies of the "Gem" Library to the Front. There's patriotism for you! My two chums may have the satisfaction of knowing that they have cheered up numerous lonely Tommies.

W. F. T. (Beckenham).—Sketch quite good, but hardly up to publication standard.

"A Constant Reader" (Kingsbridge).—Tom Merry and Bob Cherry are equally good boxers. They have met but once, when the Greyfriars fellow won, causing a good many "Gem" readers to go straightway into hysterics. But one of them had to win, didn't he?

Gerald W. (Dublin).—I am unable to supply you with the information you require. Sorry!

Stuart Smith (Enfield).—You may be a very clever chap, Stuart, but you can't write poetry. Your "Lines to the Crown Prince" would make an angel weep. Try your hand at writing about a more important animal than the Director of the Legion of Looters, Limited.

"A Loyal Reader" (Kensington).—I still adhere to my statement that it is perfectly easy for a boy to spend five pounds in a day. Were I to hand a fellow a fiver and tell him to take a walk through the premises of Messrs. A. W. Gamage, for instance, and purchase what his heart desired, I guarantee he would be "stony" again in half an hour!

F. Stanley (Manchester).—Our back numbers are mostly out of print. A few of the schools who have football fixtures with St. Jim's are as follows: Greyfriars, Rookwood, Abbotsford, and Ryleombe Grammar School.

Maurice Wood.—The money prize you received from us was quite in order. Tom Merry is fifteen years of age. I cannot say how much pocket-money Talbot receives weekly, but it's precious little.

"Opium" (Liverpool).—You had better see a dentist about your teeth. He will be able to advise you better than I. The "Gem" has been in existence since 1907, and is now voted better than ever!

"A Loyal Oxonian" (Dulwich).—I much admire the splendid tone of your letter.

Your Editor

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