

"THE CONSCRIPT FAGS!"

This week's Rollicking Fine Yarn
of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

The

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The Revolt Against the Sixth!

(A stirring incident from this week's unique school yarn of
Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.)

HERE'S A LONG COMPLETE TALE OF THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S—

The Conscript

"FAG!" In the opinion of the chums of the Shell and Fourth at St. Jim's it's just about time for the skies to fall when they have to answer that call from the Sixth Form passage. But they grin and bear it—until Knox and the rest of the rotters' brigade in the Sixth start their bullying tricks. Then there are ructions!



CHAPTER 1. Fags Wanted!

"FAG!"

It was Eric Kildare, of the Sixth Form at St. Jim's, who shouted.

But, though Kildare was captain of St. Jim's, no one answered his lusty call.

"Fag!"

Still there was no reply.

"Fag! Fag!"

This time it was Gerald Knox of the Sixth who sent a harsh voice echoing along the Sixth Form passage.

Another door opened.

This time Rushden of the Sixth raised his voice and shouted:

"Where are those blessed fags?"

Kildare, Knox, and Rushden glanced at one another, and all three frowned. It was no joke, they considered, for the fags to keep the Sixth waiting. The Sixth were very important people—or so they considered. They were

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not used to being kept waiting, and they did not like the experience.

"Fag!" bawled Knox again; and his brow was black.

Still no reply.

"Looks as if the young sweeps are doing it on purpose!" snapped Knox. "Hang them! The fags are getting more insubordinate every blessed day!"

"It seems extraordinary!" said Kildare, with knitted brows. "Hang the kids! Surely they must hear!"

"Of course they do!" exclaimed Knox. "Well, if I have to go to look for mine, I shall go with an ashplant!"

"Fag!" roared Rushden again. And then, when there was still no reply, he added in a puzzled tone: "Well, this is mighty queer!"

"Nothing queer about it," snarled Knox. "The kids are all in league."

"Surely not!" said Kildare, with a shake of his head. "The kids are all right. There must be something wrong."

But even the good-natured captain was looking irritable now. Kildare, like Knox and the others, wanted his tea. And it was almost beginning to look as if, for some extraordinary reason, no fags were going to appear to make the Sixth-Formers' teas for them that afternoon.

—WITH PLENTY OF FROLIC, FUN AND SCHOOL ADVENTURE!

Fags!

By
Martin
Clifford



"This is the limit!" muttered Rushden. Other Sixth-Formers had appeared now at their study doors. They all wanted their tea, and they were all puzzled and a little angry that no Third-Formers were arriving on the scene in order to get it ready. Among the Third it was generally held that the Sixth ought to make their own teas; but that was one of the many little points upon which the Third and the Sixth did not, strangely enough, agree.

"Fag!" yelled Baker of the Sixth. It was a terrific yell that fairly echoed along the passage. If there were any fags within a mile, surely they would have heard it. But Baker's shout went unanswered, and once more silence reigned.

"Well, of all the—" exclaimed Darrell, frowning. He broke off suddenly. Footsteps had sounded on the stairs. The Sixth-Formers all stared along the passage.

But it was not a Third-Former who came into sight. It was Tom Merry of the Shell.

Tom was grinning. With his hands in his pockets he halted at the end of the passage, and nodded in a cheery way to the line of angry Sixth-Formers.

"Did I hear you yelling for fags?" he asked, with a chuckle.

"You did, unless you're deaf!" answered Darrell, a little tartly. "D'you know where the young beggars have got to?"

Tom nodded. "Rather! They're in the sanny. All the Third, and the Second, too. Chicken-pox."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Kildare. "I heard young Jameson had got it, but I didn't know any of the others had. You mean to say, Merry, that the whole of the Third and Second are down with it?"

"Not all of 'em," explained Tom. "But a good number of them have got it, and the doctor's ordered the whole lot to be isolated, to prevent an epidemic breaking out in the giddy school. So those of 'em who haven't got chicken-pox have all been shifted out of the building, and are to be kept apart for a while. They're having lessons in the sanatorium buildings, and sleeping there, and everything."

The Sixth stared at one another in dismay. If all the fags were in isolation the Sixth would have to fend for themselves, apparently. And that was a prospect that did not appeal to the lordly Sixth at all.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Baker. "Confound it!" ground out Knox, his face a picture of anger. "The little beasts—"

"Anyone would think the Third had got chicken-pox for the fun of it, to hear you talk, Knox," said Tom Merry blandly; and the cad of the Sixth glared at him.

"You cheeky little sweep—" "I'll tell you what, Kildare," went on the captain of the Shell cheerily. "Since you Sixth-Form men have been fussed up so long that you've forgotten how to make your own teas, Study No. 10 will do it for you, if you like, Kildare."

Kildare grinned. "Cheeky young rascal!" he exclaimed, with a laugh. "Thanks very much! I'd be obliged!"

"Don't mench!" grinned Tom. "I'll fetch the chaps!" He strolled away whistling, leaving the Sixth to gather in groups in the passage to discuss the startling and unexpected turn of affairs.

Never before had such a thing happened at St. Jim's, so far as they could remember. It was a bolt from the blue, too. Though some of them had heard that there was a case of chicken-pox in the Third, none of them had dreamed for a moment that the infection would spread so swiftly as to make it necessary to isolate that cheeky, but—to them—useful Form. It had all happened with such suddenness that no warning of their fagless state had come to the Sixth.

"It's rotten!" said North. "It'll be the dickens of a time before the epidemic is over!" exclaimed Langton ruefully. "What on earth are we going to do in the meantime?"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Baker, as the prospect of being without a fag for several weeks, at least, came into his mind.

"Something will have to be done," growled Knox. "That's all very well—but what?" put in North.

There was a sound of whistling on the stairs. Arm-in-arm Tom Merry, Monty Lowther, and Harry Manners, the Terrible Three of the Shell, came into sight, making for Kildare's study.

The three grinned cheerfully at the group of Sixth-Formers. It amused the Shell youngsters to see the lordly Sixth faced with the prospect of making their own tea for once.

Though there was not the slightest necessity for the Shell to do anything in the nature of fagging for the Sixth, Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners were only too pleased to be able to lend a helping hand to Kildare, for the captain was tremendously popular with everyone, except, of course, with the black sheep and "sportsmen" of St. Jim's. But though they were willing to make Kildare's tea for him,

Tom Merry & Co. would not have lowered the dignity of the Shell by making tea for any other Sixth-Former. Kildare was a special case, as Tom had just said to his chums.

Hence their cheery grins as they beamed upon the gloomy group.

"Hallo, Knoxy!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "No fags to-day? Never mind! You'll soon get used to fagging for yourself."

"Why don't you all fag for each other?" suggested Manners brightly. "Then you'll all have fags again, and it'll be quite all right."

A good many of the Sixth were good-natured enough to grin, taking the friendly chaff in the spirit in which it was meant. But Knox was not that sort. He scowled, and took a step towards the Terrible Three.

"Enough of that, you young sweeps!" he snarled. "Keep a civil tongue!"

"Bow-wow!" answered Monty Lowther.

Knox's lips tightened into an ugly line.

The cad of the Sixth had always harboured a feeling of bitter animosity towards Lowther, for the simple fact that the cheery humorist of the Shell, even more than any of the other juniors, had always shown pretty clearly that he was not afraid of the bullying prefect.

Knox had tried many times to damp the spirits of the irrepressible Monty, but had always failed. Lowther did not care two pins for Gerald Knox, and that fact rankled with curious intensity in the mind of the Sixth-Former.

"You insolent little rotters!" ground out Knox. "How dare you talk to me like that?"

"Sorry, your lordship!" answered Lowther gravely.

Knox clenched a fist, and seemed about to deal the junior a stinging blow on the ear. Instead, however, he turned to the captain of St. Jim's.

"Do you allow the Shell to talk like this to the prefects, Kildare?" he asked bitterly.

Kildare frowned. As a Sixth-Former, he sympathised with Knox to some extent. Kildare, though a good-natured fellow if ever there was one, was a stern upholder of discipline. But in the present case, since the Terrible Three had come with the express purpose of doing him a good turn, the captain felt he was in rather an awkward position.

"No," he said. "Lowther, remember whom you are talking to, and keep your chaff for your friends!"

"Right-ho, Kildare!" said Lowther amiably. "Sorry!"

The three juniors vanished into the captain's study, leaving Knox fuming.

Though he knew very well that Kildare was the popular idol of the Lower School and that he himself was heartily disliked, it rankled with the black sheep of the Sixth to see the willing way in which Tom Merry & Co. had come to do a fag's job for the captain of St. Jim's.

When the other Sixth-Formers had gone into their studies, resigned to the fact that they would have to make their own teas for once, Gerald Knox still stood in the passage, frowning angrily and biting his lip.

"If the Shell will fag for Kildare, they can jolly well fag for me, too!" he told himself bitterly.

And, with that grim determination, Gerald Knox strode along towards the stairs, on his way to the Shell passage.

Knox was looking for trouble with a vengeance in putting his head into the lions' den as he intended. But he was too angry and bitter at the moment to care.

At the head of the stairs he paused.

"Better have an ashplant with me!" he muttered, and gave a grim smile as he retraced his steps to his study.

When he sallied forth again it was with an ashplant tucked under his arm.

Once again he turned in the direction of the Shell passage.

Gerald Knox was on the warpath in his angry determination to find a fag!

CHAPTER 2.

Nothing Doing!

"THERE!" exclaimed Talbot of the Shell. "Tea's made. Is that toast ready, Gore?"

"You bet!" nodded Gore, turning to the table

and starting to butter the fragrant slices of crisp toast that he had been busy making. "Now then, Skimmy, shift those rotten bugs and things! Tea's ready!"

The third occupant of the study, Herbert Skimpole, the freak of the Shell, looked up from the glass-covered box with which he had been busy. The box contained a variety of unwholesome-looking insects of all shapes and sizes. To Skimpole they were all very fascinating specimens indeed; but to his study-mates they appeared simply as horrible monstrosities.

"Yes," grinned Talbot cheerily. "Move those giddy

specimens of yours off the table, Skimmy; they're enough to put a chap off his tea!"

Skimpole blinked through his spectacles at Talbot and Gore. A faint, puzzled frown appeared on his huge, dome-like forehead.

"My dear Talbot," he exclaimed, "I will willingly accede to your request to remove my specimens from the table, since you wish to start tea; but really I utterly fail to comprehend why they should in any way affect your desire for food. Remember that each little insect in Nature's wonderful plan should be an object for our respect and wonderment. Though I appreciate—"

"Swallowed another dictionary?" asked Gore. "Cut the cackle, Skimmy, and have some toast!"

"I am greatly obliged, Gore. I must say I appreciate to the full your commendable and public-spirited action in toasting these slices of bread for us all," said Skimpole; "but, nevertheless, I would like to point out that your suggestions that I have swallowed a volume of any kind—to be exact, a dictionary—is quite—"

"Sit on his head, Talbot!" snorted George Gore.

Laughing, Talbot sat down at the tea-table, and so did Gore. Skimpole crossed the study in a vaguely-bewildered silence, carefully carrying the glass-topped box containing his beloved insects, intending to put it on the mantelpiece.

But he did not reach the mantelpiece. Half-way across the study Skimpole halted suddenly, and jumped in surprise.

The door had crashed open without the usual preliminary of a knock. Gerald Knox stood framed in the doorway.

"What the thump—" began Talbot.

Knox glared truculently into the study.

"I want a junior to fag for me!" he said, with a growl. "Talbot, you'll do! Go along to my study and make my tea!"

Talbot stared blankly.

The command was so arrogant and so utterly unexpected that at first he thought he could not have heard correctly.

"Eh?" he gasped. "You—you want me to fag for you?" He stared in utter bewilderment. "Is that what you said, Knox?"

"You heard me well enough!" rasped Knox. "Come along! Look sharp about it!"

"My hat!" stammered Talbot.

"Great snakes!" ejaculated Gore.

The two stared at Knox, then they stared at one another. Then they stared at Knox again. Talbot shook his head sadly.

"Raving," he said quietly. "Off his chump!"

Knox's eyes glistened. He had expected to have difficulty in persuading a Shell fellow to fag for him, but he had come prepared for that difficulty.

He shifted the ashplant to his right hand and stopped towards the table.

"I don't want any nonsense!" he said blusteringly. "Understand once and for all, Talbot, that I'm a prefect, and that I command you to do as you are told!"

"Command away!" said Talbot shortly, jumping up. There was an angry flush now on his handsome face. "I think you must be potty, Knox! If you want a fag you'll have to go to the Third for one. The Shell don't fag!"

"Rather not!" put in Gore.

Knox gave a grim smile.

"The Third are isolated through chicken-pox," he said bitingly, "so the other junior Forms will have to carry on in their place. Understand? Come on, Talbot, to my study, and look sharp—otherwise you'll regret it!"

"Go and eat coke!" snapped Talbot, now thoroughly angry. "Of course I shan't fag for you! Best thing you can do is to clear out of this study!"

"Hear, hear!" growled Gore.

Skimpole had been standing in the middle of the floor with his box of specimens under his arm, listening and watching with amazement. Meek and timid fellow though he was, even Herbert Skimpole felt a wave of righteous indignation at Knox's impudent demand. He shook a reproving forefinger at the black sheep of the Sixth.

"Really, Knox," he said severely, "I consider that your preposterous request is extraordinarily high-handed. Pray reflect, my dear Knox—"

"Shut up!" growled Knox, and gave the freak of the Shell a savage push.

Skimpole went flying, and his box of specimens went flying, too. There was a crash as Skimpole landed in the corner, and another crash as the glass lid of his specimen-box shattered against the wall, while the defunct centipedes, beetles, spiders, and all sorts of other weird and wonderful insects were scattered in all directions. A particularly long-legged specimen landed on Knox's face, and he gave a frantic howl.

"Oh!" gasped Knox. "Confound it!"

It was at that moment that Talbot and Gore collared him.

The way in which Knox had treated the inoffensive freak of the Shell had put the lid on it, in Talbot's opinion. The sooner Knox realised that he could not come to a Shell study and behave as he liked, the better for all concerned!

"Chuck him out!" panted Talbot.

"Let go, you young hounds!" shouted Knox furiously, as he was swept off his feet.

He hit out with the ashplant, and Gore gave a yelp of pain as a lashing blow fell across his shoulder. The next moment the ashplant had been wrenched out of the Sixth-Former's hand, however, and he was being whirled towards the door.

"You little fiends!" hissed Knox. "You'll pay for this!"

"Rats!" grinned Talbot cheerfully. "Come on, Gore!"

Knox was struggling fiercely, and it was all the two Shell fellows could do to keep the upper hand. But it was a little unfortunate for Knox that he had picked upon that

"Now then, Talbot," he said, between his teeth, "are you coming to my study?"

Talbot raised himself painfully on to one knee. He looked up with burning eyes.

"You rotten bully!" he muttered. "I'll see you hanged first!"

At that moment there were footsteps in the passage, and voices came to the ears of those in the study:

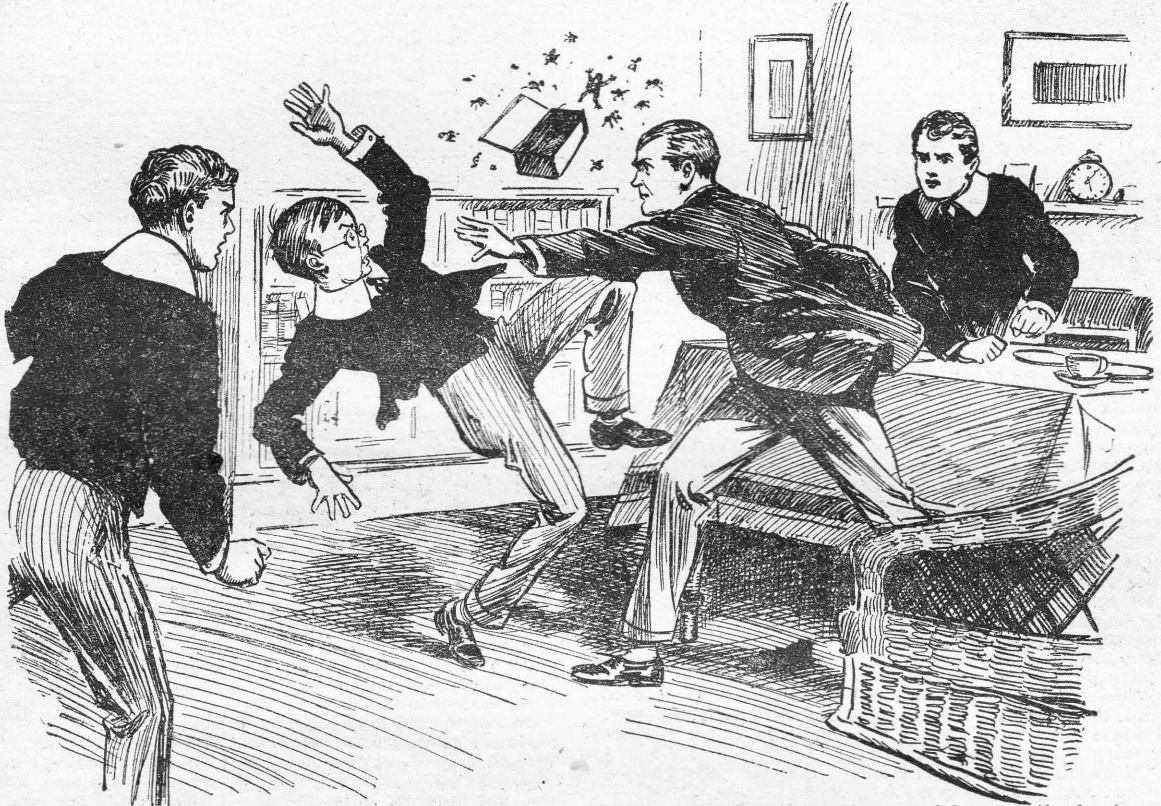
"Hallo, hallo! What the merry dickens—"

"Bai Jove!"

"My hat! Look!"

Talbot, staggering to his feet, turned towards the door, and saw four fellows staring wide-eyed into the study.

They were Jack Blake, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth. And the faces of the four chums of Study No. 6 were set in grim lines as they swiftly took in the situation.



"My dear Knox," said Herbert Skimpole, "pray reflect—" "Shut up!" growled Knox, and he gave the freak of the Shell a savage push. Skimpole went flying, and the defunct centipedes, beetles, spiders, and all sorts of other weird and wonderful insects in his specimen case were scattered in all directions. (See Chapter 2.)

particular study for his experiment in inducing the Shell to fag for him. Both Talbot and Gore were strongly built fellows, and their quick, unexpected attack had robbed Knox of half the advantage of his size. He found himself staggering backwards into the passage before he could regain his balance.

One of his flying fists caught Talbot on the chin, and Talbot reeled. Another blow caught Gore on the chest, and knocked him flying, too. But Knox himself was now in the passage.

"Keep out!" panted Talbot.

But that was what Knox did not intend to do! With a savage exclamation, he came rushing into the study again, intent upon thrashing the two Shell fellows who had dared to lay hands upon him.

"Look out!" cried Gore, in alarm.

Talbot did not need the warning. Grim-faced, he stood up pluckily to the rush of the big Sixth-Former. But, though he landed a blow or two, Talbot could not stand up against the rush of the senior. He went down to a cruel blow in the face, as Gore leapt forward to his aid.

"That'll teach you!" snarled Knox, staring down at the prone figure of Talbot, who lay white and dazed.

"You cad!" shouted Gore, and hit out desperately. But the next moment Knox had knocked him crashing against the wall.

Breathing hard, the black sheep of the Sixth stood glaring down at the two battered juniors who lay on the floor, dazed and panting. Skimpole was struggling to his feet now, but the freak of the Shell was of no account in an affair like this. Knox ignored him.

"Knox at his old games!" breathed Blake.

"The wottah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "He's been thrashin' these fellows—"

"Collar him!" roared Herries.

And, with a whoop, the chums of the Fourth rushed into the study and closed round the black sheep of the Sixth.

CHAPTER 3.

Trouble for Knox!

BLAKE & CO. had been on their way to Study No. 10, where they were going to have tea with Tom Merry & Co. But the Fourth-Formers considered they had plenty of time to see to Knox first of all!

In fact, they did not mind how late they were for tea, so long as they had the satisfaction of helping Talbot and Gore to show Knox what was what.

They collared the Sixth-Former and swept him off his feet and spread him—anything but gently—on the study floor. Blake, chuckling, sat on Knox's chest, Herries and Digby on his legs, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, held down one arm. Talbot grasped the other.

"You young hounds—"

"Go it!" grinned Blake.

"I'll thrash the lot of you—"

"Thrash away!"

"I'll have you flogged for laying hands on a prefect!" hissed Knox. But there was now a glint of fear in his

eyes. He knew that the juniors had him at their mercy. "Report us to the Head, will you?" growled Gore sarcastically, dabbing at his nose with a handkerchief, as he staggered to his feet.

Gore knew, as did Talbot and the rest, that Knox would never dare report them to the Head for laying hands on him. The fact that the Sixth-Former had struck Talbot and Gore in such a brutal fashion because they had refused to fag for him, would prevent Knox from breathing a word about the affair. They knew that—and so did Knox. But he tried to bluster still.

"The Head shall know of this, right enough, if you don't let me go at once!" he panted, his face white with rage.

"Good!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "The Head will be vewy interested to know how you have been knockin' Talbot and Gore about, deah boy!"

"Rather!" nodded Herries. "We'll tell him everything!" Knox licked his dry lips.

"Let me go!" he repeated breathlessly. "I don't want to get you kids into trouble. If you stop this rot, I'll say no more about it—"

"How kind of you!" murmured Digby.

"Shut the door, Skimmy!" said Talbot.

The freak of the Shell moved to obey. As he did so, three more juniors appeared in the doorway. This time it was Tom Merry & Co., back from their voluntary services in Kildare's study.

"What on earth's all this?" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We're just going to teach little Knoxy-woxy a lesson," grinned Blake. "He's been lamming into Talbot and Gore—"

"Because I refused to fag for him!" put in Talbot, with a grim laugh. "He seems to have forgotten that the Shell don't fag. We're going to give him a pleasant reminder."

"I should think so, too!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, and the Terrible Three moved into the study, shutting the door behind them. Knox glared round desperately. But, though he renewed his struggles, the odds were too great, and the juniors held him down with ease.

There was a thoughtful expression on Tom Merry's face. As captain of the Shell, any attempt on the part of the prefects to curtail in any way the liberties of the Form affected him closely, whether he was personally concerned or not. And Knox's attempt to make Talbot fag for him struck Tom Merry as being, possibly, the thin end of the wedge.

What if the rest of the Sixth turned their thoughts in a similar direction, in the present extraordinary situation, when they were without the services of their usual fags?

"Yes, we must teach Knox a lesson," he muttered. "The Sixth must jolly well see that they can't start monkeying with the rights of the Shell!" He picked up Knox's ashplant, which was lying on the floor. "I propose to give the rotter half a dozen of the best—a bit of his own medicine!" he went on. "Just as a gentle hint, so to speak, to keep clear of the Shell when he wants a fag!"

"Good biz!"

"Wippin' ideah, deah boy!"

"Yank him up, you chaps!"

Knox was dragged to his feet, with the juniors clinging to him like leeches. He had no chance of escape. They dragged him to the table and laid him face downwards on the top of it, some of them holding his arms, some his legs.

"Help!" roared Knox. "If you dare, Merry, I—I'll—Ow!"

The cad of the Sixth gave a yelp, as the ashplant descended on his nether garments.

"That's what you'll do, is it?" grinned Digby. "You'll 'ow!' will you? Do you know, I rather thought you would!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Again Tom Merry brought the ashplant whistling down, and there was another yell from the wriggling Knox.

Though he was very fond of applying the ashplant to refractory juniors, Knox did not seem to be relishing the taste of his own medicine that he was now receiving. He struggled and yelled each time the ashplant descended, but he was held fast.

"There!" said Tom at last, when he had administered the promised six. "That's that!"

He snapped the ashplant in two and tossed the pieces into the wastepaper-basket.

"And you can tell the Sixth that's what happens when people try to fag the Shell!" Tom went on grimly. "Tell 'em that from me, as skipper, Knox. Now, you chaps, hold him just a bit longer. Have you got a piece of cardboard, Talbot? And some red ink?"

Talbot had, and Tom Merry proceeded to work on his new idea, while the others, at Tom's direction, fastened Knox's hands behind him.

"We'll just send him home with this on his back," grinned Tom, and held up the square of cardboard upon which he

had been busy. It was now a glaring notice in big red letters:

"LICKED! 'CAUSE I TRIED TO FAG THE SHELL!"

"My hat!" chuckled Manners. "That's the ticket!"

"It's the ticket for Knox!" grinned Blake.

The notice was pinned to the back of the black sheep of the Sixth, and he was hustled to the door, and pushed out into the passage.

"Ta-ta!" chuckled Talbot. "So glad you called!"

"Hope you have a nice tea, when you've made it yourself," remarked Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And, with the laughter of the juniors echoing in his ears, despite his speechless glare at them which, if looks could kill, would have slain them all on the spot, Gerald Knox limped away up the passage with the placard on his back and black rage in his heart.

In his heart of hearts he knew that he had only got what he asked for—just that, and nothing more. He knew that he could never report the juniors for their treatment of him, or awkward questions would be asked concerning his own treatment of Talbot and Gore, and the reason for his uninvited visit to their study.

But these thoughts only served to increase his rage, as did the laughter and jeers of the numerous Shell fellows who had appeared at their study doors to see what the noise was about.

"My hat, it's Knox!" gasped Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth, who, accompanied by Clive and Levison, had come strolling along the Fourth Form passage. "Oh, gad! Knox, dear man, you'll be the death of me!"

"He, he, he!" sniggered Baggy Trimble, who had also appeared on the scene. But the fat Fourth-Former broke off sharply as he caught Knox's furious eye, and edged behind Kit Wildrake, his Canadian study-mate.

Knox hurried away, and cheers and laughter followed him. But, though undoubtedly sadder, whether he was now a wiser man was really rather doubtful!

CHAPTER 4.

A Sixth Form Meeting!

"GENTLEMEN!"

It was Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, whose voice rose suddenly above the murmur of talk in the Sixth Form room. There was an instant silence. The deep tones of the school clock could be heard, striking the hour.

"I fancy everyone is here?" asked Kildare, and there was a murmur of assent.

None of the Sixth was late for the meeting.

"Good!" went on the captain. "Now, gentlemen, to get to business! All of you, I think, realise why this meeting has been called. It is to discuss the extraordinary and annoying situation created by the isolation of all the fags."

"Hear, hear!"

"If possible, something must be done—"

"Hear, hear!" exclaimed several of the Sixth-Formers heartily.

"I'm glad to see I am well backed up, anyway," laughed the captain. "That will make things easier. For what I am going to propose will need the support of the whole Form. We shall have to send in a deputation to the Head, and that means the Sixth must be solid if the deputation is to succeed."

"We're solid, bet your life!" murmured North. "It's a bit thick, being without a fag."

Kildare leaned against the desk by which he was standing, and for a moment his brows knitted with resolve.

"There is only one way out of the difficulty, so far as I can see," he went on. "The trouble is, that it's dead against the unwritten rules. However, desperate matters need desperate remedies. What I am here to propose is that during the isolation of the fags, the other junior Forms—the Fourth and the Shell—do the fagging—"

"Rather!" growled Knox at once. "It'll teach the little cubs to respect the seniors."

"That's hardly the point," put in Darrell dryly, with a glance at Knox.

"Rats!" growled Knox. "The cheeky young sweeps are too—"

"Order, please!" exclaimed Kildare. "Whether Dr. Holmes will sanction the scheme remains to be seen. Let's hope he does. But first we want to have our position clear. Do we want both the Fourth and Shell to fag, or would it be better if only the Fourth carry on during the isolation period?"

"Both!" said Knox promptly.

"I don't see that it's necessary for the Shell to fag," put in Darrell thoughtfully. "Wouldn't it be better if only the Fourth—"

"It might cause less trouble," agreed Baker, with a grin.

"I hardly think the Shell will have a chance of causing trouble if the Head makes the new rule," Kildare said rather grimly. "If our request is granted by Dr. Holmes, I shall certainly stand no nonsense from the juniors."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Knox.

"The thing is," Kildare continued, "by getting the Fourth to fag and leaving the Shell out of it, would cause a good deal of jealousy in the junior school, and as skipper of St. Jim's, I don't want any of that sort of thing. The junior Forms rub along together all right now. It's for the good of St. Jim's that they continue to do so."

"Something in that," nodded Darrell. "I agree with you, Kildare."

"That's my point of view," said the captain. "But it rests with the Sixth to decide the point. I propose a vote by show of hands. Stick up your fists, will you, those who favour fagging the Fourth only?"

About five or six hands alone went up.

"No good," grinned Monteith of the New House. "Now, hands up those in favour of the Shell as well as the Fourth being required to fag."

A forest of hands were raised, and Kildare smiled.

"No need for a count, I think!"

"Rather not!" exclaimed Knox triumphantly. For some reason the black sheep of the Sixth seemed to take a keen pleasure in the idea of having the Shell to fag for the Sixth—provided, that was, that Dr. Holmes could be persuaded to agree to the idea.

"Then I propose that a deputation of three goes to the doctor at once!" said Kildare decisively. "The deputation will be right in saying that it has the support of the whole Form?" he added, glancing at some of those who had voted with the minority.

There were nods of assent, and the business of choosing the deputation was gone through. Kildare himself, Darrell, and Monteith were decided upon.

The meeting rose, and a move was made towards the door. As it was opened, a faint scuffling of feet along the passage might have been heard had not the noise of the dispersing seniors drowned it.

For the discussion between the mighty men of the Sixth had not gone unheard!

Baggy Trimble had been very anxious indeed to know just what went on in the Sixth Form room that evening, and had indulged in his favourite pastime—keyhole listening.

To all the members of the Fourth and Shell the thought of fagging for the Sixth was extremely unpleasant, to say the least. But to Baggy Trimble, to whom work of any kind was a thing to be dodged at all costs, the idea was absolutely terrifying. Form work was bad enough, but unfortunately, he could not quite avoid that, although he slacked as much as he dared. But to have to fag for some hefty senior, who would see to it that he was lively over his work, fairly made Baggy quake.

"Oh lor'!" gasped Trimble, as he scuttled away from the Sixth Form room. "The beasts! So they're going to ask the Head if he'll make us fag? Oh dear!"

With his fat little legs fairly twinkling, he sped away intent upon spreading the dreadful news. Perhaps, he told himself desperately, something could be done even yet.

On the stairs the fat junior almost ran full-tilt into a fellow coming down. It was Grundy of the Shell.

"What's the giddy hurry, you fat frog?" growled the great George Alfred Grundy, and his hand shot out, grasping Trimble by the collar. "You nearly barged into me!"

"Ow! Leggo!" squealed Trimble.

"I'll let you go when I choose," said George Alfred majestically. "You need a lesson not to bump into chaps—"

"I—I was in a hurry!" gasped Trimble, wriggling like a fat fish on a hook. "I—I say, do you know, Grundy, the Sixth are sending a deputation to the Head to ask if the Fourth and Shell can fag while the Third's in the sanny? It's a bit thick, and something ought to be done—"

"What's that?" boomed Grundy, and his rugged face took on an expression of incredulous amazement. "The Sixth want the Shell to fag?"

"And the Fourth!"

"Blow the Fourth!" roared George Alfred. "It'd do the Fourth good to have to fag always! But the Shell—why, I would have to fag! Me!"

From the tone of his voice it was quite evident that to George Alfred Grundy such a thing was impossible to contemplate.

"Rather!" sniggered Trimble. "I—oh! Ow!"

He gave a yelp as Grundy boxed his ear with a heavy hand.

"Don't snigger!" roared Grundy. "Don't you see, it's

impossible for me to fag? I've got my position in the school to think of!"

With frowning brow, he glared at Trimble as though the fat junior himself were responsible for the trouble.

"Then you'd better be quick and do something to stop the Sixth getting their own way about it," said Trimble desperately. "Go and tell Tom Merry to see the Head at once—"

"Blow Tom Merry!" sniffed George Alfred loftily. "I think that if anyone should go to the Head it's me, not Tom Merry. The Head knows me; he'd listen to me—"

He released Trimble, who promptly scuttled up a few stairs out of harm's way. Clearly, from the gathering wrath on his face, George Alfred Grundy was at the moment a fellow to be away from!

"The cheek of the Sixth!" spluttered Grundy, his rage suddenly overflowing. "My hat! I'll show 'em! I'll show 'em who's who at St. Jim's! Me—fagging! Oh, my hat! Me!"

He began to stride on down the stairs, with a black brow and clenched fists.

"Where are you going, Grundy?" squeaked Baggy hopefully.

"To see the Head, of course!" boomed George Alfred, and strode majestically on his way.

George Alfred Grundy had evidently taken it upon himself to act in the capacity of champion of the Shell. But it remained to be seen whether he was the ideal fellow to fill that position.

CHAPTER 5.

Terrible for Two!

AT the foot of the stairs the angry Grundy came face to face with the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hallo, Gwunday, deah boy," murmured Arthur Augustus, adjusting his celebrated eyeglass. "Why the wowed frown, old fwuit?"

George Alfred stopped.

"I'll tell you!" he roared. "Have you heard the latest? The cheek of it! The thundering nerve! It's the limit! The Sixth want me to fag for 'em—me, mark you! Me—Grundy!"

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus in great surprise. "How vewy extwaordinaw! How can one chap fag for all the Sixth, I wondah?"

"Oh, the rest of the Shell, too," snorted Grundy. "Of course, you ass! And the Fourth. The others don't matter, though; it's me that matters. Me—fagging! I've got my position at St. Jim's to consider!"

"Your which?"

"My position."

"What posish, deah boy?" asked Arthur Augustus in perplexity.

Grundy breathed hard.

"Well, hang it, I'm a bit different from the rest of you, aren't I?" he roared.

"Oh, yaas, wathah!" nodded Arthur Augustus. "Yaas, vewy diffent, I'm glad to say—"

"What!"

"Nothin', deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus hastily. He wrinkled his noble forehead with a frown. "But, bai Jove, weally! If the Sixth are weally out to twy and get us to fag for them, somethin' ought to be done at once—"

"I'm doing something!" retorted Grundy. "I'm going along to tell the Head what I think about it."

"You are? Bai Jove! But suahly Tom Mewwy, as skippah of the Shell, is the chap to—"

"Rats! The Head will take more notice of a chap like me than of Tom Merry, you ass!"

"Weally, Gwunday, I refuse to be chawacterised as an ass! But your news is alarmin'. I shuddah at the thought of havin' to fag for the Sixth! Now I come to think of it, Tom Mewwy has gone to Wylcombe, so it is no good askin' him about it. What is weally needed is a fellow of tact and judgment to go to the Head—"

"Well, I'm going, aren't I?" growled Grundy.

"I—ah—was weally thinkin' of myself when I spoke of a fellow of tact and judgment," explained D'Arcy kindly.

"I think you had bettah leave this to me, Gwunday—"

"Why, you silly ass!" roared Grundy. "I—"

"Pewwaps on consideration it would be bettah still for us both to go," went on D'Arcy calmly. "That will be a membah of each of the Forms concerned. Come on, Gwunday—you can back me up if you wish. But leave the mattah to me when we see the Head."

"Why, you frabjous lunatic—"

But already Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had turned and was going his elegant way in the direction of the headmaster's study. Grundy followed, breathing hard.

"I never asked you to butt in on this!" he snorted.

"Pway modewate your voice, deah boy. We are vewy neah the Head's studay now," said Arthur Augustus severely.

He halted outside the door, tapped upon it, and heard the deep, kindly tones of the Head bid him enter. Arthur Augustus pushed open the door and strolled in, with a determined expression on his aristocratic features. He was followed by the powerful, calmed figure of the fuming George Alfred.

Grundy was furious at the calm way in which the swell of St. Jim's had usurped his position! But it was too late to protest now before the Head.

Dr. Holmes looked considerably surprised at the entry of the two juniors.

He was not alone in the study. Kildare, Monteith, and Darrell were there, and at sight of them D'Arcy drew a quick breath. Evidently the Sixth had already begun their attack, so to speak.

"Well, my boys, what do you want?" inquired the Head.

"I am rather busy at the moment—"

"That is all wight, sir," returned D'Arcy, with an airy wave of the hand. "I have come—that is, Gwunday and I have both come to discuss the mattah of faggin' for the Sixth sir. The ideah is, of course, pwepestewous—"

"It's like this, sir," broke in Grundy, with a snort. "If the Sixth think they can jolly well do as they like with—"

"Pway shut up, Gwunday, and leave this to me," murmured Arthur Augustus reprovingly. "You see, sir—"

"Dry up, Gussy, you ass!" roared Grundy. "I'm telling him—"

"Boys, how dare you?" gasped the Head.

"Pway don't get excited, sir," said Arthur Augustus soothingly. "The wights of the Fourth and Shell cannot be tamped with without a stwong pwotest—"

"How dare you, D'Arcy!" stuttered Dr. Holmes. "How dare you talk to me like this—"

"Oh deah! I am sowwy if you are watty, sir!"

"R-r-ratty?" stammered the Head, passing a hand dazedly across his brow. "Ratty? Upon my word—"

Grundy pushed his way forward, glaring at D'Arcy.

"That's all right, sir!" boomed Grundy eagerly. "He means he's sorry if he's made you hot under the collar, but then you can always trust Gussy to make a mucker of things. You'll do better to listen to me, sir, really. I want to point out that it's beastly cheek of the Sixth to want us to fag, and we jolly well won't fag, and if they think we will they're up the pole! The Sixth are all fat-heads, everybody knows, but—"

"Grundy!"

The Head's voice was like thunder. Grundy broke off with a startled jump.

"Yes, sir?"

"How dare you, boy! Your language is most impudent! I am aware that a good deal of regrettable slang expressions are in use in the school, but to use them when addressing me, Grundy, is the height of impertinence!"

"S-s-s-sorry, sir!" mumbled Grundy, going crimson. "I only meant to say that it's the giddy limit for the Sixth to get this bee in their bonnet—"

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"Grundy!"

This time the Head's voice was truly awful, and Grundy trailed off into silence. Arthur Augustus stepped forward.

"Pway allow me to say a few words, sir—"

"Not a word, D'Arcy!" replied the Head bitingly. There was now an expression of intense annoyance on his kindly old face. "I consider it impudent of you two boys to come here to argue concerning this matter. Kildare has laid his case before me, and I have considered it. Naturally, I should have considered it from every angle, and trust that I should have come to a right decision. Whatever that decision should prove to be, my orders will be obeyed!"

"Of course, sir, but, weally—"

"Silence, D'Arcy!" thundered the Head. "I may say that at first I received Kildare's suggestion—namely, that the Fourth and Shell should fag for the Sixth during the temporary isolation of the Third and Second Forms owing to the unfortunate epidemic—in a very doubtful frame of mind. But now my doubts are at rest. It is quite clear to me now that you junior boys have developed a very regrettable spirit of aggressiveness, almost of insubordination. This must be checked! You must learn that it is not for you to say, but for me to say!"

He turned to the three Sixth-Formers, who had been standing silently by.

"Kildare, I have come to the conclusion that your idea will prove a very useful disciplinary measure for the two Forms in question. I will give orders that it is to be carried into effect."

"Thank you, sir!" said Kildare quietly.

"Crumbs!" gasped Grundy.

"Oh deah! This is tewwible!" breathed Arthur Augustus in dismay.

"You two boys may go!" said the Head sternly; and Grundy and the swell of St. Jim's left the study, looking—and feeling—decidedly sorry for themselves.

"You ass!" hissed Grundy, when they were clear of the door. "Oh, you cuckoo! It was all your fault! You made him waxy and landed us in this mess!"

"Weally, you uttah lunatic, it was all your fault!" said the swell of St. Jim's wittingly, surveying the seething Grundy through his eyeglass. "I wegard you as an uttah ass! I wegard— Oh! Bai Jove! Yawooooop!"

Grundy, in his exasperation, had taken hold of Gussy's nose and was pulling it—hard. Then he let go so suddenly that Arthur Augustus went sprawling on the floor of the corridor.

"Oh deah! You wuffian! My nose! Yow! Gwunday, I shall administah a feahful thwashin'—"

But George Alfred Grundy was no longer there to receive a "feahful thwashin'" from Arthur Augustus.

George Alfred had gone his way, having relieved his feelings on Gussy's nasal organ, and vanished—leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to vent his wrath upon the empty air!

CHAPTER 6.

The New Order!

"I T'S the limit!" declared Jack Blake, his face red and angry.

"The giddy outside edge!" growled Herries.

"Fagging for the Sixth!" snorted Digby. "Oh, my hat!"

The chums of the Fourth were in their study. It was after dinner on the following Wednesday, a half-holiday. There was no football that afternoon as it happened; but, even so, it was not usual for the occupants of Study No. 6 of the Fourth Form passage to waste any time in their study on a bright afternoon. In ordinary circumstances, Jack Blake & Co. would have departed long ago for a spin on their bikes, or a visit to the cinema in Wayland.

Instead, Jack Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy still lingered in their study, with frowning brows and dejected attitudes. Gloom reigned with a vengeance in Study No. 10.

"It's wotten!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There was a knock on the door, and the face of Tom Merry appeared. He entered, followed by Monty Lowther and Manners.

Their faces were just as gloomy as those of Jack Blake & Co.—if not more so.

"Well, it's happened!" growled Tom Merry. "The notice is up, signed by the Head himself—Shell and Fourth to fag until the chicken-pox epidemic is over—and goodness knows how long that will be!"

"Ages and ages!" groaned Monty Lowther. "We'll all have whiskers before the Third are out of isolation!"

"It's too thick!" said Manners.

"It wouldn't be so bad for the Fourth to fag, but the Shell—" began Monty Lowther tactlessly.

"What?" roared Jack Blake. "You cheeky bounder—"
 "Weally, Lowthah—"
 "You've nothing to grumble at, anyway, Gussy!" put in Manners. "You're fagging for Darrell."
 "I know, deah boy. But it's wotten! It's the pwinciple of the thing."
 "You're a lucky bounder, too, Tom Merry!" exclaimed Jack Blake. "Fagging for Kildare won't be too bad—"
 "Yes, I'm lucky there," nodded Tom. "It's poor old Monty I'm sorry for."
 "I should say so!" snorted Monty Lowther. "I've been bagged by Knox for a fag!"
 "Bai Jove!" ejaculated the swell of St. Jim's. "I didn't know that. How feahfully wotten! Pway accept my sin-cwrest sympathy, deah boy."

from the Head, you Shell kids are fags these days," he said, with surprising calm. "And I've chosen you for my fag. I don't want any trouble, but I shall insist upon discipline."

Monty Lowther faced him unflinchingly, but did not speak.

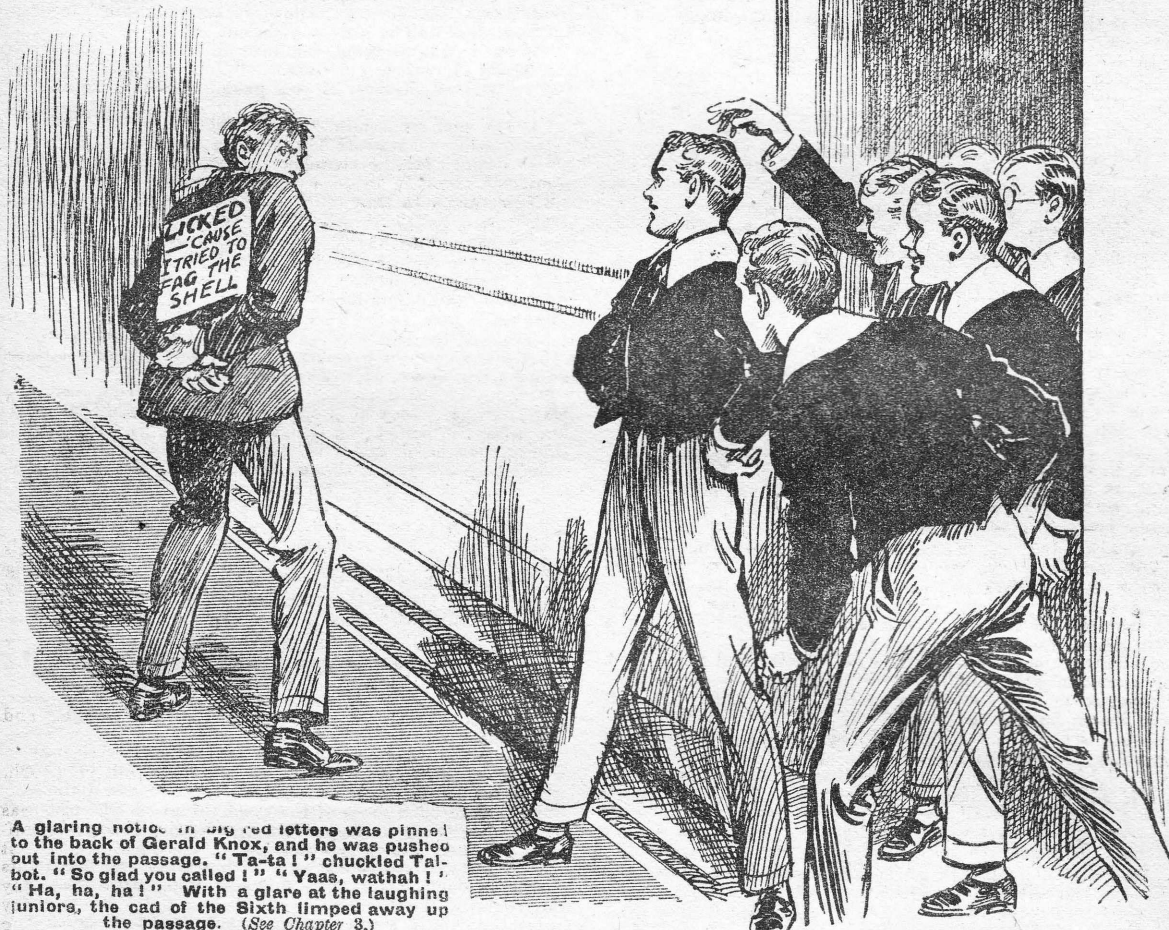
"Answer me!" rapped out Knox.

"There's nothing for me to say, that I can see," Lowther told him coolly, "except, perhaps, that I understand why you've picked on me to be your fag."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know well enough!" retorted Lowther, with a curl of his lip.

Knox breathed hard. He knew very well what the junior meant—that he had been chosen to fag for the bullying



A glaring notice in big red letters was pinned to the back of Gerald Knox, and he was pushed out into the passage. "Ta-ta!" chuckled Talbot. "So glad you called!" "Yaas, wathah!" "Ha, ha, ha!" With a glare at the laughing juniors, the cad of the Sixth limped away up the passage. (See Chapter 3.)

"I fancy I shall need all the sympathy going, too," grunted Monty Lowther, with a wry expression on his usually cheery face. "Knox is out to make the fur fly, I believe, and—"

He broke off abruptly as the door swung open. The face of Gerald Knox stared angrily into the study.

"Ah, there you are, Lowther!" he snapped sharply. "I have been looking for you everywhere. Why didn't you come when I called?"

"I didn't know you called," said Lowther calmly, but his face flushed.

"Don't lie to me!" grated Knox. "I shouted myself hoarse! You must have heard me calling 'Fag!' just now!"

"If you are calling me a liar," said Monty Lowther quietly, though his voice quivered with suppressed anger, "I'll say that you are a cad!"

Knox caught his breath. His eyes gleamed. Slowly he moved into the study. Lowther faced him squarely.

That there was going to be trouble all the juniors knew. Knox, with his new power to wield, was going to rule the new fags of St. Jim's with an iron hand.

The Sixth-Former's hand fell on Lowther's shoulder with a vice-like grip.

"You'd better realise, Lowther, that, by the new order

perfect in order that he might be made to "sit up" for some of his past independence. But Knox did not choose to admit he understood.

"You seem to be talking a lot of nonsense," he said icily. "Remember that fags should be seen and not heard. And now come along. I've got a job for you to do."

Monty Lowther glanced at his chums.

"Is it anything important, Knox?" he asked quietly. "You see, we were going for a ramble this afternoon."

A gleam came into Knox's eyes. He had guessed that Tom Merry & Co. had planned some outing, and it was the pleasant idea of knocking it on the head, so far as Monty Lowther was concerned, that had made him seek out his fag.

That gleam of triumph did not pass unnoticed by the grim-faced juniors.

"Whether it's important or not is not for you to ask!" snapped Knox. "You will do as you're told! Come along at once."

Monty Lowther glanced round at his chums. They were looking distinctly mutinous.

Knox saw the look on their faces and secretly exulted.

He would have wished for nothing better than that Monty Lowther should defy him.

But Lowther was too sensible to fall into Knox's hands as easily as that. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Right you are, Knox," he said calmly. "I'll come along. So-long, you chaps! Sorry I can't come with you."

It was a disappointment to Knox that Monty Lowther had proved to be tractable, after all. With a final glance round at the others—a glance in which his feeling of triumph was only thinly veiled—the prefect strode from the study, followed by Lowther. There was an indignant murmur from the others. Knox swung round instantly.

"What was that?" he demanded angrily.

There was no answer. The six juniors stared at him in grim silence.

"What did you say, Merry, just then?"

"I said it was a shame," said Tom coolly. "But I wasn't speaking to you."

"That's enough. Take a hundred lines for impudence!"

"Thanks very much!"

"Make it two hundred, for further impudence!" exclaimed Knox, with a black brow.

"Thanks very much!"

"Three hundred!" gritted Knox.

"Thanks very much!"

This time Knox thought it wiser to pretend not to hear.

"Come along, Lowther!" he snapped, and left the study, breathing hard.

He strode up the Fourth Form passage with tight lips and a thunderous look upon his face. Monty Lowther followed, a couple of paces behind, his face pale and set.

In Study No. 6 the juniors looked at one another with dismal expressions.

"Poor old Monty!" muttered Tom Merry. "He's in for a thin time!"

"It's wotten!" agreed Arthur Augustus miserably.

"I vote we all clear out of the House quick," said Manners, "before any of the other Sixth-Formers start wanting fags!"

"Good idea!" nodded Digby; and the six left the House in a body.

From the window of Knox's study Monty Lowther watched them cross the quad, and sighed.

As Lowther had suspected, the job that Knox had found for him to do was really quite unnecessary. It was to go through a pile of old newspapers and cut out all the accounts he could find of public school football and cricket matches, and paste them into a scrapbook. Knowing though he did that Knox did not care two pins about public school sports, even when St. Jim's itself was concerned, Lowther realised that it would be useless to argue. That was, very likely, what Knox was hoping he would do, so that he could have an excuse for administering a dose of the ashplant.

So he got to work dismally with scissors and paste, with an occasional glance out of the window at the sunlit quad.

With a triumphant gleam in his eyes, Knox had left him there, remarking:

"And if you've not finished by tea-time there'll be trouble! Understand?"

"Trouble?" echoed Monty Lowther to himself, when the door closed behind the Sixth-Former. "I'll bet there's going to be trouble all right before this fagging is finished! The Shell jolly well won't stand for it, if this is a sample of how the Sixth are going to behave."

And, with a grim face, he began snipping out an account of a St. Jim's—Greyfriars' match, which he knew that Knox would never read.

CHAPTER 7.

Fagging for the Sixth!

HE was just pasting in the last few cuttings when Knox returned.

"Finished?" asked Knox. "Good! Now clear up that mess and get tea. Buzz down to the tuck-shop and get in some doughnuts, too."

Lowther rose without a word.

"And try to look a bit more pleasant about your work!" snapped Knox. "I won't have you going round my study with a face as long as a fiddle. Jump to it, and look pleasant!"

Monty Lowther left the study seething inwardly with anger. On the stairs he ran into Tom Merry, who had returned to St. Jim's with the rest.

Tom was not looking very cheerful himself. He was on his way to Kildare's study to get the captain's tea ready. Though he knew that he was lucky to have Kildare to fag for, and had always been ready enough to oblige the captain in any case, it was a very different matter to do a job voluntarily and to be forced into it.

Tom Merry had a common-sense outlook on things which

made him take the inevitable cheerfully as a rule. But even Tom was smarting a little under the indignity of having to fag—he, the captain of the Shell!

"Hallo, old chap!" he exclaimed, at sight of Lowther.

"How goes it?"

Monty Lowther grinned wryly.

"Rotten!" he said. "But I'm hanged if I'm going to give Knox a chance to make things really hot for me!"

"That's the spirit," nodded Tom. "Keep smiling!"

In the tuckshop, Monty Lowther found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy purchasing supplies for Darrell's tea. Arthur Augustus was not looking exactly happy over his duties. The smile with which he greeted Monty Lowther had lost almost all its usual cheerfulness.

"Hallo, deah boy! Dawwell has sent me along to get in some cakes and things for his tea, you know."

"I didn't know," grinned Monty. "But I'll believe you. How do you like fagging?"

"Not at all, deah boy! I considah it was most thoughtless of the Head to ordah the Fourth to fag. It is weally most infwa dig for a fellow of my standin' to fag! Luckily, Dawwell is a pwetty decent fellow—"

"Wish I was fagging for him instead of Knox," put in Monty Lowther gloomily. "You don't know when you're well off, Gussy, if you grumble about fagging for Darrell."

"I am not gwumblin'," answered Arthur Augustus, a little frigidly. "I twust I am not a gwousah. I have a gwreat wegard for the Head, deah boy, and if he ordahs the Fourth to fag it is no use gwumblin' about it. Howevah, I must get along to Dawwell's study."

He turned to the counter, where Dame Taggles was awaiting his order. Arthur Augustus had brought a cricket bag with him for the supplies, and he now began to order things in his usual lavish way.

"One dozen jam-tarts—twopenny ones, please, Mrs. Taggles."

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"A large cake—a five-shilling cake, I think—and a dozen mewingues, please, Mrs. Taggles."

Arthur Augustus paused reflectively. Then he continued his order. It was a long order, and he reeled off the items one after another—tarts, doughnuts, cakes, and all sorts of things that he deemed necessary for Darrell's tea. He ordered by the dozen, though how Darrell, who was having tea alone, could hope to find use for tarts, meringues, and chocolate eclairs by the dozen was a little point which did not seem to occur to the swell of the Fourth.

He ended at last, however, for the simple reason that he could think of nothing else to order.

"Pway weckon up that little lot, Mrs. Taggles," he requested. "Dawwell gave me ten bob to do the shoppin' with, Lowthah. I twust I have not passed my limit, bai Jove!"

"That comes to seventeen shillings and sixpence, please, Master D'Arcy," Dame Taggles informed him; and Arthur Augustus gasped.

"Oh deah!"

He gazed at her in dismay.

Fortunately, Arthur Augustus was always well supplied with cash, and so he was able to settle the bill. He felt it would have been too "infra dig." to have asked the good lady to take back some of the good things he had ordered.

"You're going to find it an expensive privilege being a fag," grinned Monty Lowther.

He gave his own order, and, with a couple of paper bags tucked under his arms, he left the shop, accompanied by the swell of the Fourth.

In the Sixth Form passage they found a number of Shell fellows and Fourth Formers going to and from the various studies. Since it was the first day of the new fagging order, most of the temporary fags were rather like fish out of water in their new duties. Most of them, too, looked very glum and exasperated at having to perform the tasks usually carried out by the inky-fingered fraternity of the Third.

"Rotten, isn't it?" growled Racke of the Shell, as he passed Monty Lowther at the end of the passage. "I only smashed a teapot and a couple of plates, but Baker was quite waxy about it!"

"Go hon!" grinned Monty Lowther.

Outside Rushden's study they ran into Ralph Reckness Cardew of the Fourth.

The slacker of the Fourth had a faintly amused smile on his handsome, bored-looking face. He nodded to Monty Lowther and D'Arcy.

"Hallo, chaps!" he murmured. "Great fun, this, what?"

"Weally," protested Arthur Augustus. "I uttably fail to agree with you, Cardew! I wegard it as a feahfully wotten situation! Howevah, it must be done, so it is no use gwousin' about it, but—"

"I find it rather amusin'," yawned Cardew. "I mean to say, trottin' round gettin' tea for another fellow. I'd never have believed it possible that I'd be doin' that, y'know."

That's why it's so amusin'. It's a break in the giddy monotony!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew always liked to be different from the majority of his fellow juniors. Since almost all of them very bitterly resented having to fag, it was just like Cardew to find it "amusin'!"

With a smile and a nod Cardew passed on. Lowther snorted.

"He wouldn't find it so giddy amusing if he had to fag for Knox instead of Rushden!" he growled. "The silly ass!"

He halted outside Knox's study, knocked on the door, and, with a wry grimace at Arthur Augustus, entered.

"You've been a confounded long time!" snapped Knox.

"Have I?" returned Monty Lowther.

"Don't answer in that tone! Buck up and get my tea, fag!"

"My name's Lowther!"

"I choose to address you as 'fag'!" retorted the black sheep of the Sixth unpleasantly. "Now then, jump to it!"

From the easy-chair Knox watched, with a gleam of derision in his eyes as Monty Lowther got to work with the tea-things. It was a delight to Gerald Knox to see the junior he had always disliked under his thumb.

He found fault with everything, and it was a long while before Lowther was allowed to go.

"Come back in half an hour to clear up!" snapped Knox, as he left the room.

It was with a dejected air that Monty Lowther returned to the Shell passage.

Even his usually cheery spirits were successfully damped this time. The future was looking very black. Knox was out to make things just as unpleasant as he knew how for his new fag, and Lowther felt that he would not be able to stand it for very long. The time would come when he would answer Knox back, tell the Sixth-Former what he thought of him! Even if he kept himself in check for quite a long while, in the end he would break out, Monty Lowther felt sure. Flesh and blood could not fail to do so under the strain of Knox's tyranny.

And then the fur would fly, with a vengeance!

"There's trouble brewing all round," Lowther told himself, as he remembered the bitter looks upon the faces of many of the Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers that afternoon. "There's going to be a high old row before we're finished!"

Monty Lowther seemed to find something rather comforting in that thought, and his face was a good deal brighter as he went along to Study No. 10. Tom Merry and Manners were already at tea.

"Buck up, Monty!" exclaimed Tom. "You're late!"

"Knox kept me as long as he could," grunted Monty Lowther.

"I thought so." Manners nodded sympathetically. "Well, this silly fagging business can't last for ever. The Third will be out of isolation one of these days—"

"A good deal may happen before then!" snorted Monty Lowther. "I'm hanged if I'll stand Knox's bullying much longer!" He dropped into a chair at the table. "He's trying to goad me into cheeking him, so that he can lick me. I know that!"

"I hear there's been trouble in the New House," said Tom Merry. "Figgins got ratty with Monteith."

Tea passed almost in silence in Study No. 10 that afternoon. An atmosphere of gloom seemed to fill the study. All three of the chums of the Shell were feeling keenly the indignity that had been put upon the Form, in their opinion, by the order to fag. And in addition to that, the fact that Monty Lowther was in Knox's hands, so to speak, made them feel restive and mutinous.

"Well, it's the Head's order," said Tom Merry at last. "It's no good kicking against that."

"Suppose we've got to make the best of a bad job," agreed Manners gloomily.

"Rats!" grunted Monty Lowther. "Knox has got his knife into me, and I'm jolly well going on strike unless he treats me decently!"

"I'll tell you one thing," said Tom Merry slowly. "If Knox does start lamming you one day, or anything like that, the Shell won't stand for it. We'll be solid in that, I think. The chaps would back you up. If ever we hear you yelling for help, you rely on the Shell to rescue you all right!"

Monty Lowther brightened.

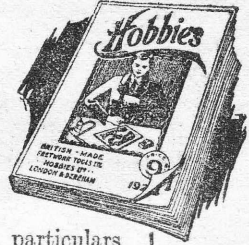
"Good egg!" he grinned. "I bet I'll need rescuing one of these days! The trouble is, you'd never hear me yelling, unless you were somewhere near. But you know that two-finger whistle I can do?"

He put two fingers in his mouth, and blew a soft whistle—a whistle that could be made shrill and piercing if he wished.

(Continued on next page.)

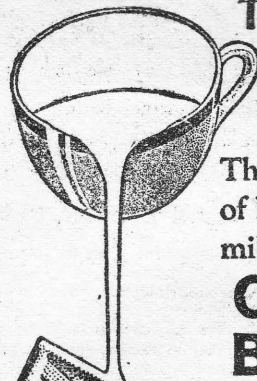
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"That's a good scheme!" cried Manners. "If we ever hear that whistle, we'll pile in to the rescue!"

"I'll tell the rest of the fellows to remember," said Tom Merry. "Any chap who hears your signal must come at once."

"Good egg!" repeated Monty Lowther cheerily. "That's the spirit! And then the Shell will show Knox what's what!"

CHAPTER 8.

Cardew Says "No!"

DURING the rest of the week the Shell and the Fourth found that they were getting no better used to their new state of having to fag, than they had felt on the first day of the Head's "conscription" order, as Clive, the South African junior, had called it with wry humour.

It was not, in most cases, the actual trouble of the fagging that they minded. It was what they felt to be the indignity of it which rankled so bitterly.

The majority of the Sixth were quick to realise how their temporary fags felt about it, and understood their feelings. Such fellows as Kildare and Darrell saw to it that they asked very little of their fags, and were polite and considerate into the bargain. But there was a section of the Sixth, of whom Knox was the worst by far, who rather enjoyed making the Shell and Fourth "sit up," as they thought, and thought it good fun to irritate their "conscripts" by excessive shouts of "Fag!" at all hours of the day.

Instead of settling down with resignation to the new order of things, the Shell fellows and the Fourth-Formers were as restless and resentful as ever by the end of the week.

Monty Lowther was the worst sufferer by the new order of things, of course. Under the iron hand of Knox, Monty Lowther found that a fag's lot was not a happy one! He had scarcely a moment of spare time to himself, and was snapped at continually for his services to the bullying Sixth-Former. Lowther's only satisfaction was that so far he had kept himself under control, and had not given Knox a single excuse for laying into him with an ashplant—a fact that secretly chagrined Gerald Knox considerably, as Monty Lowther and everybody else in the Shell knew.

Some of the other fellows, however, though under far less provocation, had not the same patience as Monty Lowther was showing.

Racke and Crooke of the Shell and Mellish of the Fourth held a meeting on the following Monday evening with the object of starting a mutiny against the Sixth. But since no one but a few of their own cronies attended their "meeting" it came to nothing, and Aubrey Racke & Co. went round the School House sneering at what they chose to call the "chicken-heartedness" of their fellow juniors in not backing them up.

But though scarcely anyone had bothered to attend a meeting called by such fellows as Racke and Crooke, there was no doubt but that a big majority of the Forms concerned were seething with discontent by this time. It was that same evening that Ralph Reckness Cardew came lounging into Tom Merry's study with a thoughtful frown upon his handsome face.

"Just looked in, dear men," he murmured, "to talk to you a moment about this faggin' business. It's a bit thick—what?"

Tom Merry & Co. were busy with their prep. Monty Lowther looked up, with a grunt.

"I thought you found fagging rather amusing, Cardew?" he said tartly.

Cardew yawned, and dropped gracefully on to the arm of the easy chair.

"A home-thrust, dear man," he drawled, with a slight smile. "I admit I did say I found it a bit of a change from the usual bore of life at St. Jim's. It was a most extraordinary sensation to find oneself puttin' out cups and saucers an' things for another man's tea! I always like new sensations!"

"Then, what on earth are you grumbling at?" cried Manners impatiently. "Here's a new sensation that we've all got—a bit too new for my fancy!"

"My complaint," murmured Cardew, "is that you can have too much of a good thing, don't you know. See? Now the newness has worn off a bit, I find it a beastly bore, this faggin'. A most horrid bore! I told Rushden so!"

"And what did Rushden say?" asked Tom Merry, laughing.

"Said somethin' about cheek," grinned Cardew. "Couldn't see my point of view at all, I suppose."

"Well, what have you come along to see me for?" asked Tom.

"Wondered if you couldn't do something about it, Thomas," explained Cardew. "You, as skipper of the Shell

and junior captain, and a big noise in the land, ought to be able to do somethin', if anyone can!"

"Ass! What on earth can I do?"

"Well," yawned Cardew, "you might start a sort of rebellion, for one thing. That's just a suggestion. Or you might issue poison to the chaps, to stick in the Sixth-Formers' teas—"

"If you've come here to be funny," growled Monty Lowther, "we'd sooner you were funny on the other side of the door. We want to do our prep!"

"I'm serious, dear man!" exclaimed Cardew, in surprise, and nodded gravely. "About the rebellion, I mean. Why not tell the Sixth to go to the dickens? If you banded the two Forms together, Tom Merry, we would get a run for our money, anyway."

"And what about the Head?" asked Tom dryly.

Cardew shrugged his shoulders.

"He might then see sense," he answered laconically.

Tom gave a dry laugh.

"No good, Cardew," he said. "If you can't think of anything better than that, you'll have to carry on fagging. A mutiny is out of the question—unless the Sixth give us very good cause to mutiny."

Cardew rose to his feet.

"Oh, all right!" he murmured lazily. "If you won't do somethin' for us, Thomas, it's every man for himself, I suppose. Personally, I'm givin' up faggin' from now on."

With a nod Cardew strolled towards the door. But he paused with his hand on the knob when Manners exclaimed:

"What the merry dickens do you mean by that?"

"What I say, dear man. I'm givin' up faggin'."

"And what does Rushden say about it?" cried Lowther.

Cardew grinned.

"He hasn't said nothin'—nothin' at all!"

"He agreed to let you off?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Oh, no! He's said nothin', because he doesn't know yet that I'm givin' it up," explained Cardew. "I haven't told him yet."

The Terrible Three stared at the slacker of the Fourth blankly. Cardew smiled and opened the door to depart.

From the distance came a lusty yell:

"Fag!"

"Dear me," murmured Cardew. "Blessed if that isn't dear old Rushden! He wants me."

Footsteps entered the corridor, and a few moments later Rushden himself appeared outside the doorway of Study No. 10. The Sixth-Former was frowning angrily.

"I've been yelling for you, Cardew!"

"Have you?" drawled Ralph Reckness Cardew. "Sorry I didn't hear you! Awfully interestin' little talk!"

"Really?" snorted Rushden angrily. "Well, I want you, Cardew! I want you to bike into Rylcombe for me with a message."

"Sorry!" said Cardew. "I'm not faggin' any more!"

"W-w-w-what?" gasped Rushden.

"Given it up," explained Cardew airily. "Found it a bit of a bore, don't you know. I've changed my mind about faggin'. Sorry, and all that. But I'll tell you what. I'll lend you my bike, if you like. I oiled it myself yesterday, too."

Rushden stared at him open-mouthed. So did the chums of Study No. 10.

"My hat!" breathed Manners.

They had always known that Cardew had "cheek" galore and a will of his own. But, despite his talk of "giving up" fagging, they had never expected he would dare thus openly to defy the Sixth.

Rushden looked as though he could not believe his ears.

"What—what did you say?" he stuttered, going very red.

"That I've quit faggin', dear man."

And Ralph Reckness Cardew, cool and imperturbable, turned on his heel and began to stroll away, his hands in his pockets.

Rushden's face was a picture. Suddenly his hand shot out, and he grasped the carelessly-smiling Fourth-Former by the shoulder and swung him round.

"You cheeky little sweep!" roared Rushden, in a voice that brought several Shell fellows to the doors of their studies to see what the trouble was. "How dare you? You're my fag, and you're jolly well going to do as I tell you! You're going into Rylcombe for me at once—"

"Wrong," answered Cardew calmly. "Right off the bullseye, Rushden! I'm not goin' into Rylcombe for anybody!"

Rushden breathed hard. He faced the nonchalant Fourth-Former with gleaming eyes. But Cardew was still quite cool and collected. Only a faint heightening of the colour in his cheeks betrayed the fact that in his heart he knew he was "up against it."

"You refuse to obey me?" said Rushden grimly.

Cardew nodded.

"That's the idea. Sorry, and all that!" he drawled.

CHAPTER 9.

Arthur Augustus Gets Tea.

"I shall thrash you!" snapped Rushden.
 "You won't!" grinned Cardew. "I refuse to be thrashed!"
 "I shall be within my rights to thrash you if you won't do as I tell you, as my fag," Rushden told him, controlling his anger.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Cardew. "Quite within your rights. However, I still refuse to allow you to do the thrashin' stunt with little me! So what are you goin' to do about it?"

By now the Shell passage was crowded with breathless juniors, watching the scene with excited faces.

Cardew had mutinied! Someone had at last set the lead in defying the Sixth. And all the Shell fellows were agog to see what would happen. Rushden glanced round, and realised that his behaviour now would probably influence the whole relationship between the junior Forms and the Sixth. He bit his lip, then faced Cardew again.

"You're out of your senses, Cardew!" he said quietly. "If you persist in defying me, you'll regret it, I assure you. It may not be very agreeable, perhaps, for the Fourth and Shell to have to fag, but it is only for a short time—and by the Head's own order. For your own good I advise you to obey the new order with as good a grace as possible. I'll give you one more chance to act sensibly."

Cardew did not speak. He only smiled, and lounged against the edge of the doorway of Study No. 10, from which the Terrible Three watched with bated breath.

"Now," went on Rushden, "I want you to go into Rylcombe for me, Cardew. This is your last chance, remember."

"I'll remember," nodded Cardew.

"Well? Will you go?"

Ralph Reckness Cardew yawned.
 "The answer," he said, "as the johnnies say in Parliament, is in the negative. In other words—no!"

THERE was a breathless, excited murmur all along the passage. That the fellows were delighted at Cardew's final refusal was obvious. But then, they would not have to face the consequences! It was easy to be pleased with Cardew; but Tom Merry, for one, was wondering what the slacker of the Fourth could do now.

"Right!" said Rushden. "Then come along to my study."

"Why?" asked Cardew politely.

"To be licked."
 "Nothin' doin', dear man," drawled Cardew. "Lickings are off to-day!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Racke of the Shell. Rushden glanced round angrily. There was a dangerous gleam in his eyes.
 It looked, for a moment, as though the big Sixth-Former intended to take Cardew by the scruff of the neck and haul him by force to the Sixth-Form passage to receive his punishment. But Rushden did not quite like the look of the big gathering of Shell fellows on all sides of him. He was no coward, but he knew there was a dangerous amount of feeling in the Form, and he did not wish to risk being roughly handled by a crowd of exasperated juniors.

"If you refuse, my only course will be to report your behaviour to Kildare—or, perhaps, the Head."

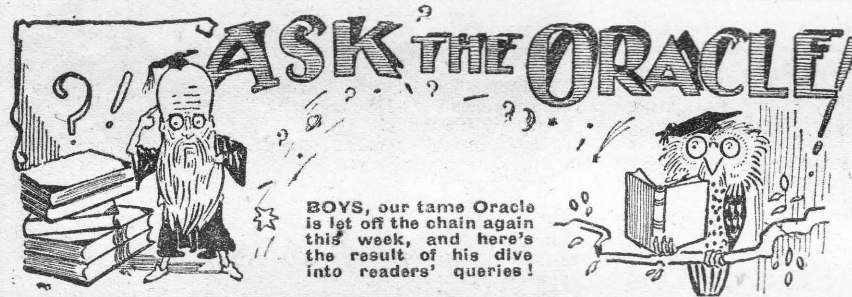
"Certainly," agreed Cardew, with only mild interest. He looked bored, but his voice conveyed the idea that he was trying hard to show interest for the sake of politeness.

"That would be pretty serious for you, Cardew," snapped Rushden, keeping his temper with an effort.

"Might get expelled," nodded Cardew. "Well, the loss would be to St. Jim's."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Racke again, and many of the other Shell fellows joined in the laugh. Rushden flushed

(Continued on next page.)



BOYS, our tame Oracle is let off the chain again this week, and here's the result of his dive into readers' queries!

Q. What is a matamata?

A. Well, Arthur Bloomfield, as I've seen several of these reptiles in my travels I'll deal with your query first. This is probably the most extraordinary-looking reptile of the tortoise family. A curious thing about this tortoise is that it is unable to withdraw its neck and head under its shell like most other kinds. Also, my old friend, it has a beak not unlike that of a bird. It is found in South America, Australia, and New Guinea, and spends a deal of its time in water. When motionless it looks simply like a rock with weed on it, and there is little doubt that its appearance helps it in capturing prey such as fish or



Do you know that if you touch this big round stone it will rock? Marvellous, isn't it?

frogs, which do not recognise it as an enemy.

Q. Is it true that a fisherman's job is the most paying?

A. This is what a young reader, Bobby Blythe, has heard, and I dare say it is true. Certainly, such work should be lucrative—it is all net profit.

Q. What is a tumbrel?

A. A cart with two wheels for conveying the stores of artillery and so on—scarcely used in these days of lorries and other mechanical transport. It is best remembered, however, as the name given to the carts which bore victims to the grim old "Widow," otherwise the guillotine, during the French Revolution.

Q. What is a kukri?

A. This, George M., is a curved knife—one might almost say a sword—used by the Gurkhas of India. Owing to the breadth of it near the point it is of a goodly weight, and the little Gurkha is an expert in its use. By a single blow he is able to decapitate an enemy, and during the War the gallant Gurkha troops made themselves greatly feared among the Turkish snipers on Gallipoli, and on other fronts, by dexterous use of it.

Q. What is a logan?

A. A young reader—John Samson, of Manchester, heard this expression while on a visit to the Derbyshire hills. A logan,

my chum, is a heavy stone poised on another which can be made to rock by a mere touch.

Q. What is a cleat?

A. A piece of wood or metal usually fixed on the deck of a ship to which a rope may be fastened.

Q. Who was the first Lord Mayor of London?

A. His name, Jack B., was Henry Fitz-Alwyn, and he was appointed to that office in the year 1189 by King Henry II. So I am sure that you received no marks in your examination paper from your erroneous statement that it was Dick Whittington—he came later.

Q. What is the translation of "Iusus naturæ"?

A. As "Third-Former" says he cannot find this in his Latin dictionary, I will answer it for him. Firstly, however, let me explain why the query worries him. It seems that in Form he was asked for the translation of the Latin *fiat*, and he answered, "A sort of a motor." His



This would make a fine penknife, wouldn't it? But it's actually the weapon used by the Indian Gurkhas.

Form-master then remarked that he was a *Iusus naturæ*. So "Third-Former" wants to know if this means a natural genius. I am afraid not, my poor young friend, for the translation of *Iusus naturæ* is "a freak of Nature." It is not a surprising remark, considering your translation of *fiat*, which means "Let it be done."

Q. What is the A.A.A.?

A. The Amateur Athletic Association.
 (Our Tame Oracle is open to answer any interesting queries sent in by GEM readers. Have a shot and see if you can catch him napping.)

angrily. Cardew's calm cheek might amuse the Shell, but it made Rushden long to deal the Fourth-Former a box on the ear.

"Very well," said Rushden, and swung on his heel, and strode away.

Jeers and cat-calls followed him, while an excited crowd at once surrounded Cardew, who smiled cheerfully at the enthusiastic Shell fellows.

That Cardew was the hero of the hour was obvious. He was chaired and carried up and down the passage, and it was some while before he could escape his admirers. But he got away at last, and the crowd broke up into eager groups to discuss the thrilling question of what would happen.

In Study No. 10, Tom Merry wore a thoughtful frown. "Just like Cardew!" he muttered. "Now what's going to happen? I fancy the Sixth will make things harder for the Shell and Fourth now, anyway! The chaps don't think of that."

The door opened, and Aubrey Racker put his head in. In the passage behind him, a swarm of excited fellows could be seen.

"Good old Cardew!" bawled Racker. "That's what you ought to have done, Merry! You're supposed to be skipper of the Shell—and you let Cardew lead the way! Yah!"

"Hurrah!" yelled the crowd outside. Racker closed the door hurriedly, as Monty Lowther snatched up a football boot and hurled it.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, wending his elegant way in the direction of the Sixth-Form passage on the following afternoon, at tea-time, met Talbot of the Shell. Talbot stopped him.

"Heard about Cardew, Gussy?" Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"No, deah boy. What's the news?"

"He's in the detention-room," said Talbot, unfolding the story, "waiting for the Head's decision about him. It means a flogging, at least—calmly defying the Head's order like that. Of course, Cardew asked for it. But it's rough luck."

"Wathah! Poor old Cardew!" And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went on his way with a gloomy look upon his noble countenance.

He was on his way to Darrell's study, to make tea for that good-natured Sixth-Former. D'Arcy had been lucky to be chosen by Darrell for a fag—as Tom Merry was lucky to have been picked by Kildare. Some of the fellows were saying openly that if Tom Merry had had to fag for anybody else but Kildare, he would have been quicker to lead his Form in rebellion. Tom had heard that said more than once of late, but he had treated the remark with contempt, as it deserved to be treated.

"Hallo, young 'un!" was Darrell's greeting, when the swell of the Fourth presented himself. "Come to brew tea? Good man! And what about a bit of toast? Do you mind?"

"Wathah not, Dawwell. Vevy glad to oblige," returned Arthur Augustus, with aristocratic dignity.

He went to the cupboard where the crockery was kept, took out a cup and saucer and plate, a sugar-basin and a milk-jug. Darrell eyed him doubtfully.

"Think you can carry all that lot at once?" he murmured.

"Oh, wathah, deah boy!"

Darrell was not used to having a fag who addressed him as "deah boy." But he said nothing, and Arthur Augustus turned, his arms laden with crockery, to set it on the table.

Crash!
"Bai Jove!"

The plate had, somehow, slipped from Gussy's clutch, and fallen to the floor, where it broke into about a hundred pieces! Arthur Augustus stared down at it in dismay.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Darrell. "I say, look out—"

His warning came too late. This time it was the sugar-basin that slid, and it crashed upon the floor beside the plate, scattering broken china and sugar in all directions. Darrell groaned.

"Don't quite wreck the happy home!" he begged plaintively.

"Fearfully sorry, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Weally, it's most extwaordinawy, how those things slipped. I uttably fail to undahstand it."

He set down the remaining articles on the table, and got to work to gather up the wreckage. That done, he got to work with the kettle, and then turned his attention to finishing the laying of the table.

"Waspbewwy jam, Dawwell?" he inquired. "Or apwicot? They're both here."

"Don't mind," said Darrell, who was deep in a book.

"Personally, I should recommend apwicot," said Arthur Augustus kindly.

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"Just as you like," murmured Darrell absently, and Gussy reached out for the jar of apricot jam.

How it slipped from his fingers, he never quite knew. But it did—just as he was turning towards the table. The jar was sticky, and Arthur Augustus was holding it rather gingerly in consequence—perhaps that was the reason. But Darrell jumped in his chair and glanced up in dismay as he heard another tremendous crash.

"Oh, deah!"
"What on earth is it this time?" groaned Darrell.
"The jam, deah boy!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "It slipped in a most extwaordinawy mannah. I uttably fail to undahstand—"



"Gwunday and I have come to discuss the mattah of faggin' fer' the St. Jim's." "The ideah is pwepostewous." "Dry up, Gussy, you ass!" gasped Dr. Holmes. "How dare you

Darrell surveyed the sticky mess of broken glass and spilt jam, and breathed hard.

"I think I'll have raspberry after all to-day," he sighed.

"Vevy good," nodded Arthur Augustus—Darrell's sarcasm had been completely wasted on him. "Awfully sorry, and all that."

"Don't mench!" retorted Darrell dryly. "As long as you leave me a chair to sit in, break what you like!"

With a sigh, the Sixth-Former settled himself in his chair again. Arthur Augustus carried on with his preparations for tea. The kettle was soon boiling, and the swell of St. Jim's took out the teapot, and lifted the kettle off the little oil-stove.

As he began to pour the boiling water on to the tea-leaves, a sudden shrill sound broke the quiet of the Sixth-Form passage. A splitting whistle, long and piercing, that was cut off suddenly.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

He knew that whistle! It was Monty Lowther's two-finger whistle—the signal that help was wanted!

The Shell and the Fourth had been prepared for that

signal during the last few days. Knox's bullying nature had at last broken out, evidently, and Monty Lowther was in urgent need of help from his fellow juniors!

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus set the kettle down hurriedly—a bit too hurriedly. Some of the boiling water splashed over his foot, and the swell of St. Jim's gave a yell.

"Yawooooogh!"

Arthur Augustus hopped wildly on one foot, clasping the other with his hand. The teapot in his hand went flying, and there was a crash as it landed on the oil-stove, and knocked stove and kettle flying, too.

"What the dickens—"



...sixth, sir!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to the astonished Head of the school who had just broken in Grundy. "I'm telling him—" "Boys, how dare you! I talk to me like this?" (See Chapter 5.)

Darrell jumped to his feet. Arthur Augustus was still hopping round, nursing his scalded foot, and gasping.

"Ow! Ow! Bai Jove—"

"Look out!" yelled Darrell.

The fallen stove had spilled oil on the carpet, and the carpet had caught alight. But Arthur Augustus was far too busy with his own troubles to worry about Darrell's nice carpet.

"Oh deah! Ow! Bai Jove! I've scalded my foot most feahfully, deah boy—"

"Look out! The place will be on fire in a minute!" Darrell roared.

"My foot!"

"Blow your foot!" Darrell jumped forward in alarm.

"Weally, I'm most frightfully hurt—"

Still hopping on one foot, Arthur Augustus seemed quite heedless of the fact that he had set the study on fire. As a fag, the swell of St. Jim's was not, perhaps, exactly a shining light. He was worrying far more about his own foot than about Darrell's carpet, or of the broken teapot, or of the terrible mess he had contrived to make.

Already Darrell was stamping out the smouldering patch. Arthur Augustus limped across towards the door.

"Excuse me, Dawwell, I must be goin'—"

"What?" roared Darrell.

"Have to get along," explained the swell of St. Jim's. "That was poor old Lowthah's signal, don't you know. All the chaps are pledged to go to the wescue—"

He opened the door. Darrell glared at him speechlessly.

"Well, I'm blessed!" gasped the Sixth-Former. He glared down at the blackened patch of the ruined carpet. "You start off by busting everything and setting the happy home alight, then you clear off before you've even brewed tea! Hang it, come back!"

But already Arthur Augustus had vanished, closing the door politely behind him, and was sprinting off along the passage towards the study from which Monty Lowther's shrill signal of "Help needed!" had come.

Darrell passed a hand dazedly across his brow and stared round at the ruin that Arthur Augustus had left in his train, with feelings that could only be guessed at.

Darrell of the Sixth was beginning to wonder, strangely enough, whether the Fourth and Shell were not right, and whether it would not be far better to be without their services as conscript fags.

CHAPTER 10.

To the Rescue!

THAT Monty Lowther's shrill whistle had been heard on all sides was obvious.

From all directions Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers were racing to the rescue.

Tom Merry had been one of the first to arrive on the scene. Manners was with him; and the faces of both were grim. Blake came sprinting along the passage with Herries, and Digby arrived in the Sixth Form passage a few moments later. Talbot, Clive, Levison, Grundy, and Julian came running into sight. Bernard Glyn, Kangaroo, and Dane—the three Shell fellows from Study No. 11—were quick to appear, too. So was Hammond, and so was Racke, and even Clarence York Tompkins, the meek and mild Fourth-Former from Study No. 4, was not deaf to the call. Lumley-Lumley and Kerruish, Kit Wildrake, and even Herbert Skimpole, all came hurrying on to the scene. The Sixth Form passage outside Knox's door was swarming with juniors in a few moments, and that they meant business was obvious from their faces.

"Bai Jove! Back up, deah boys!" gasped D'Arcy, as he joined the seething crowd. "Knox shan't bully Lowthah, if we know it—what?"

"Rather not!" roared Grundy.

"You bet he won't!" snapped Lumley-Lumley.

"Rescue, chaps!" yelled Glyn.

And, with Tom Merry at their head, the swarm of indignant juniors fell upon Knox's door in a body.

The door was locked, but it creaked and groaned beneath the onslaught.

"One more heave, and it'll give!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Now, then—all together!"

Tom put his shoulder to the door again, with Herries on one side of him and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the other. The swell of St. Jim's had quite forgotten his scalded foot now. The others piled in behind them; and, with a sudden splintering sound, the lock gave, and the uman battering-ram went sprawling into the study in a struggling mass.

As he sprawled forward at the rear of the crowd Talbot glimpsed the face of Kildare in the passage. The captain had come out of his study to find out what the tremendous din was about, and his face was a picture of amazement and anger as he came hurrying along towards Knox's study, with several other Sixth-Formers at his heels.

"Here comes Kildare!" muttered Talbot to Tom Merry.

"Shut the door!" snapped Tom; and the fellows crowded into the study, and the door was shut. Levison, Clive, Talbot, and Dick Julian dragged a heavy bookcase against it—the lock being now broken. There was no danger from interference by the rest of the Sixth now.

Above the noise Knox's furious voice could be heard.

"How dare you! You young hounds—"

Tom Merry pushed his way through to the front of the crowd.

"You cad, Knox!" breathed the captain of the Shell.

In one corner of the study Monty Lowther was leaning against the wall, breathing heavily. His face was as white as chalk, and his fists were clenched at his sides, the nails biting into the flesh in his effort not to groan or cry out. The drawn look on his face went straight to Tom's heart—as it did to the other angry juniors.

Knox was standing by him, an ashplant gripped in his hand—an ashplant that had been broken—the broken end was lying on the floor. Clearly Knox had been thrashing

Lowther so severely that he had broken the stick across the helpless junior's back.

Knox was quivering with rage as he faced the crowd of tight-lipped juniors. His own face was nearly as white as Lowther's—white with anger and fear.

"You young hounds!" he cried hoarsely. "Get out of here, hang you!"

But his attempt at bluster faltered. Knox knew that he was in for a bad time; that he was going to suffer, whatever happened to his attackers afterwards. And help was impossible.

From the passage the sound of angry voices could be heard. The Sixth-Formers were banging on the door. For a moment a gleam of hope sprang into Knox's eyes. But when he saw that half a dozen of the juniors were standing by the door to see that the bookcase that held it shut was not shifted by the efforts of the Sixth-Formers outside, the face of the bullying prefect paled again.

"Scrag him!" roared Grundy.

"Yaas—swag the wotah!"

"Lick him! Give him a taste of his own medicine!"

"Hurrah!"

The juniors pressed forward. But Tom Merry kept them back. Tom was grim-faced but cool.

"Half a minute!" he said. "Let's get the facts first. What was he doing to you, old chap?" he went on, turning to Monty Lowther.

"I burnt the toast," said Lowther thickly, "and he started licking me. He broke the ashplant across me. I—I couldn't stick it any longer, so I—I gave the signal—"

He broke off and reeled.

Manners caught him and helped him to a chair. It was clear that Lowther was in a bad way; his licking had evidently been a terrible one.

"Anything to say, Knox?" snapped Tom Merry through his teeth.

"I was giving him what he deserved!" blustered Knox. "If you young cads lay a finger on me the Head shall know, and—"

"We're risking that!" said Tom Merry, with a curl of his lip. "Collar him, you chaps!"

And Tom himself led the rush.

Knox, his back to the wall, desperately hit out with the broken ashplant, and Digby reeled back with a stinging lash across the face that made him cry out. Knox's clenched left fist landed with staggering effect on D'Arcy's chin, but the swell of the Fourth recovered himself and sprang forward again with indomitable pluck.

"Hands off!" shrieked Knox, in a panic. "I—I'll apologise, hang you—"

"Too late for apologies!" said Tom Merry fiercely. And Knox was dragged to the floor and pinned there. He lay dazed and breathless, his clothes disordered and torn. The angry juniors had not handled him lightly.

He glared up with panic-stricken eyes at the flushed faces of his captors. His lips moved, but no words came.

"Now," said Tom Merry, "we gave you a licking the other day, you'll remember. A pity for you, Knox, that you didn't learn your lesson then! This time we'll make you sorry you ever came to St. Jim's, you bully!"

There was a chorus of angry agreement.

From outside the study the attempts of the Sixth-Formers, headed by Kildare, to break in could be heard. But the heavy bookcase held the door, and Tom Merry gave a grim smile as he listened a moment to the sounds without.

That what he and the others were doing was a grave matter, the captain of the Shell realised well enough. But he meant to go through with it all the same.

Some of the Form had called him a coward for not having led a mutiny before. But now that he felt the time had really come to do so, Tom was not shirking his responsibilities as captain. Whatever the consequences, Tom Merry was determined to revenge Monty Lowther's sufferings at the hand of the blackguardly prefect.

CHAPTER 11.

Running Wild!

"HELP!" Gerald Knox shouted desperately. "Open this door!" came the angry voice of Kildare.

"Rats!" Racke howled back at him and Kerruish took out Knox's handkerchief and stuffed it between the prefect's teeth, silencing further cries.

"Now, what's the programme, Tom Merry?" asked Talbot.

Tom frowned thoughtfully.

That Knox's punishment must be severe was obvious.

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But the problem was, what to do with him—how really to teach him a lesson? Then the captain of the Shell had a sudden brain-wave.

He had glanced out of the window, and had seen Wilkins and Gunn, the two fellows who shared Study No. 3 with Grundy, crossing the quad.

Clearly Wilkins and Gunn had been somewhere out of earshot when Monty Lowther's signal for help had been sounded, and so were not with the rest of the juniors in Knox's study now. But possibly their presence in the quad might prove to be still more useful.

Tom flung up the window and called to them softly.

Wilkins and Gunn glanced up in surprise. Except for them, the quad was deserted, barring the distant figure of Taggles, the school porter, by the gates.

"Hallo!" called up Gunn. "What's up?"

"Quiet!" warned Tom. "We're ragging Knox; he's been laying into Lowther." A look of startled understanding leapt into the faces of the two Shell fellows below.

"We want your help now. You know that bucket of tar in the shed behind the gym? The one Taggles put there yesterday? Bring it along. Don't let anyone see, of course."

Tom withdrew his head from the window, and Gunn and Wilkins hurried off excitedly to do his bidding. In the study Knox had heard Tom's instructions, and had recommenced his vain struggles. Kildare and the other Sixth-Formers had ceased their battering upon the door now, and were talking together in low, muffled tones.

It was not long before a low whistle brought Tom again to the window. Wilkins and Gunn had safely returned with the pail of tar, and Tom quickly lowered a length of cord he had found in a cupboard. Wilkins fastened the end of it to the handle of the pail, and the bucket was hastily hauled up, and landed inside the study. Tom closed the window.

"Somebody open up a couple of cushions," he said quietly. "We're going to tar and feather this bully."

Knox could not cry out, but he gurgled weirdly behind his gag as he was hauled to his feet. The juniors dragged off his coat and collar and tie. The table had been pushed back to a corner of the room, and Tom pulled aside the carpet. Knox was stood in the centre of the floor, held by a dozen willing hands, and his arms were fastened with the cord that had been used for drawing up the bucket. Then Tom got to work with the tar, using a hairbrush for the purpose.

To tar and feather a prefect was no light matter—in fact, it was terribly serious. But Tom was not thinking of the consequences—though he was prepared to face them when they came. His furious indignation at the way Knox had treated his chum steeled him to carry out the sentence he had passed upon Knox. Tom meant to teach the bullying prefect a lasting lesson.

He stopped the tar freely over the spluttering Sixth-Former, till Knox was covered with it from head to foot.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Racke. "Knox looks like a canibal chief now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Racke.

But Tom Merry and the others did not laugh. Their faces were grim.

"Where are the feathers?" asked Tom, and Talbot and Manners stepped forward, and emptied the contents of two cushions over the blackened figure. The feathers rained down like snow, and stuck where they fell. In a few moments Knox looked like a feather-bed, as Herries remarked.

"There now!" exclaimed Tom. "That's that!"

Knox stood in the centre of the floor, gurgling. His eyes peered out of his feather-covered features, and flashed with demoniacal fury.

Tom turned and helped Monty Lowther to his feet. Lowther still looked terribly white and ill from his flogging at Knox's hands.

"Think you'll be able to walk all right, Monty?" asked Tom quietly. "We shall have to fight our way out through the Sixth!"

"Yes, I can manage!" muttered Lowther.

"Good egg! Now, you chaps, are you ready? We shall have to dash out and get through before the Sixth have time to stop us."

"And if they try to stop us, I'm sorry for 'em!" growled Blake.

"Rather!" grunted Talbot.

"So-long, Knox," chuckled Herries. "Don't let the cook see you, or she'll take you for a chicken and wring your neck!"

"A vevy good thing if she did, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy severely.

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather!"

The bookcase was lifted silently aside from the door, and at a signal from Tom Merry the door was suddenly flung back.

"Charge!" yelled Blake, and the crowd of juniors rushed out in a stream.

A group of Sixth-Formers was standing near the doorway, and they gave startled exclamations at the sudden rush. But in a moment they were swept aside. Baker was knocked flying, and collapsed, and Kildare was sent reeling against the wall.

"Stop them!" gasped the captain furiously.

But it was impossible to stem the rush.

The juniors went pouring along the passage towards the head of the stairs, Tom and Manners supporting Monty Lowther between them.

"Cardew!" panted Levison suddenly. "Let's rescue old Cardew!"

There was a yell of appreciation on all sides, and the swarm of excited juniors changed their direction and poured up the stairs in the direction of the detention-room.

"I say, hadn't we better leave Cardew alone?" gasped Tompkins. "The Head—"

"Funk!" bawled Racke. "We've already tarred and feathered a prefect, haven't we? We may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb!"

"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry's face had taken on a look of startled doubt at the idea of freeing Cardew from the detention-room. But now he shrugged his shoulders. After all, he told himself, Racke was right for once. Since they had already put themselves beyond the pale, so to speak, there was no real reason why they should not be hung for a sheep as a lamb, as Racke had said.

"Anyway, the chaps are out of control—too excited to know what they're doing!" Tom muttered running on with the rest. "I couldn't stop 'em if I wanted to!"

"Rescue Cardew!" yelled the juniors.

Cardew, they felt, had suffered for the "cause"—it was he who had sown the first seeds of mutiny. They meant to rescue their hero at any cost—in the face of all St. Jim's!

CHAPTER 12.

The Mutineers!

RALPH RECKNESS CARDEW sat on the hard wooden chair in the detention-room, with his hands in his pockets and his feet on the table, and lolled back, gazing absently at the ceiling.

His expression was quite serene, though a little thoughtful.

Most fellows, when alone in Nobody's Study, as the dreaded apartment was called, looked worried and miserable. But not Ralph Reckness Cardew! His careless, recklessly wild nature did not allow the slacker of the Fourth to worry himself when worrying could do no good.

Cardew yawned.

"This is the dickens of a bore," he murmured lazily. "Wonder what the Head is going to do to me? A whacking, I expect." He grinned. "Well, it will be worth it. No fagging for me!"

He yawned again. But suddenly Cardew turned his head, listening.

A far-off noise had disturbed the silence of the detention-room. Cardew had heard no sound from within the building for a long time; but now there seemed to be quite a din somewhere.

"It's gettin' louder!" muttered Cardew, with mild interest. "Sounds like a crowd of chaps runnin'—"

He broke off and jumped suddenly to his feet. There was no doubt about it any longer, a crowd of fellows were swarming in the direction of the detention-room. He could hear them shouting as they came, and suddenly an odd look sprang into his eyes.

"My hat!"

For the muffled shouting, as it grew louder, had become clear enough for the words to be distinguished:

"Rescue Cardew! Good old Cardew!"

Thundering feet tore along the passage. There was a crash upon the door. It was locked, of course, but it shook and quivered before the onslaught upon it from the other side.

Cardew stood staring at the door in sheer amazement. At first he had been scarcely able to believe his ears; but gradually a smile spread across his face. He drew a deep breath.

"Well, I'm blessed! The chaps must be mad!"

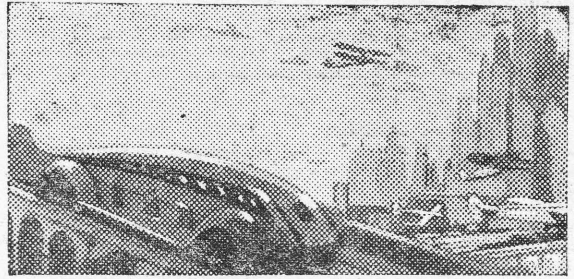
Then a fuller realisation of the facts came into his head, and he whistled.

"Whew! It must mean the chaps have mutinied! Mutiny, at last!"

With a crash, the lock gave, and the door went spinning open, and a crowd of flushed, wildly-excited faces filled the opening. Cardew grinned.

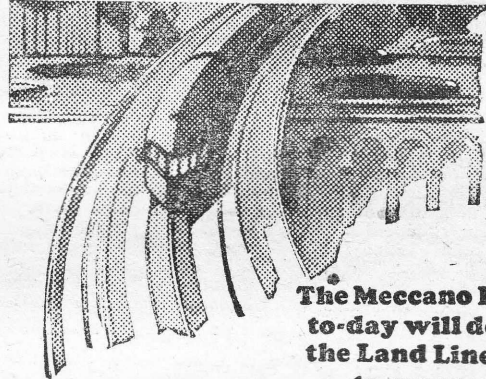
"Hallo, you chaps!" he drawled. "What's the idea?"

(Continued on next page.)



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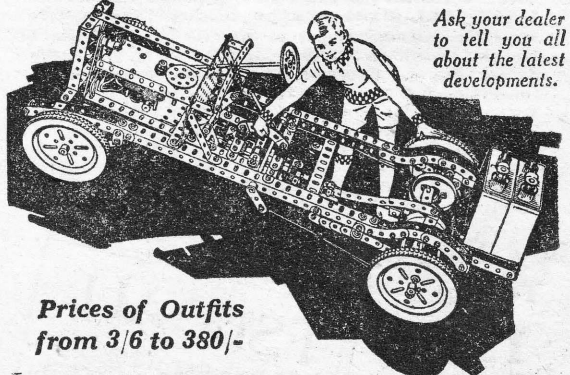
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The juniors came swarming into the study and surrounded him. Ralph Reckness Cardew was lifted shoulder-high.

"Hurrah!" yelled Kerruish. "Good old Cardew! We've come to rescue you, Cardew! We're on strike against the fagging. We've tarred and feathered Knox, and we're not fagging any more!"

"That's right!" grinned Blake. "No more fagging!"

"Wathah not, deah boy!"

"It's mutiny!" roared Grundy. "Hip, pip, hurrah!"

The juniors poured out of the detention-room, grinning and shouting, with Cardew swaying above their shoulders. Cardew was grinning, too.

"Good men!" he exclaimed. "This is the stuff to give 'em! Plucked up courage at last, then, Tom Merry?" he added, smiling down at the junior captain ironically.

"This is not my doing," said Tom shortly, flushing. "I fixed Knox, but your rescue was Levison's idea. I couldn't have stopped it if I'd wished. The chaps are out of hand. But I'm standing in with them now."

"Hurrah!" cried Racke, clapping Tom on the back in his excitement. "Good old Tom Merry!"

It was not often that Aubrey Racke, the blackguard of the Shell, said that. But all the fellows were deliriously excited, and old enmities were forgotten for the time being.

"For he's a jolly good fellow!" began someone—whether Cardew or Tom Merry was meant, no one quite knew. But the rest took up the chorus, and, singing lustily, the rebellious "conscripts" marched along, heading for the Shell passage. The few stragglers who had not been on the scene of Knox's punishment now joined the main body, and it was a strong, dangerous army of juniors that made its noisy way along to the stairs and down them.

But their triumphal progress was not to go unchecked.

"Look out!" yelled Digby suddenly, as they turned into the Shell passage. "Ware Sixth!"

Barring their way, a solid phalanx of Sixth-Formers, quiet and grim, all armed with ashplants, faced them at the end of the passage.

For a moment the crowd of juniors wavered. Cardew was set down hastily. Those in front halted, but those behind, who could not see the Sixth-Formers, and had not heard Digby's warning cry, tried to push them on.

"What's the matter?" roared Grundy.

"It's the Sixth!" squeaked Baggy Trimble nervously.

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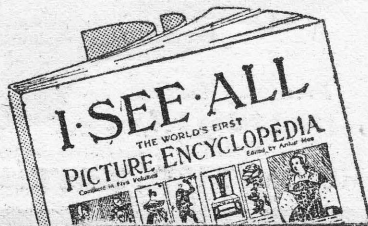
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"Who cares about the Sixth?" yelled Grundy in a booming voice. "Carry on!"

The grim-faced Sixth-Formers stood their ground, barring the juniors' entry to the Shell passage. Then Kildare called out sharply:

"Merry!"

"Well?" said Tom, stepping forward.

"You must all be mad!" rapped out Kildare. The school captain was white with anger—more furious than Tom had ever seen him. "You're captain of the junior school, and I suppose you're the leader of all this!" he exclaimed. "You tarred and feathered Knox?"

Tom nodded.

"You are responsible for taking Cardew out of the detention-room?"

Tom hesitated a moment, then nodded again. As captain he felt he had to accept responsibility for that, too.

"You will regret this, Merry," went on Kildare in a steely tone. "I should never have thought you would be such a young fool! Now this nonsense has got to stop, of course—"

"If you mean that you want us to fag again, you'll be disappointed," said Tom quietly. "We were willing to fag for the Sixth, since the Head ordered it, if we were treated decently. But we're not going to stand bullying, and so fagging is off!"

Kildare breathed hard.

"I don't believe it!" he rapped. "Knox told me he was only administering a mild stroke or two to Lowther, and with good cause. Knox is a prefect and had a right—"

"He has no right to bully anyone!" said Tom fiercely.

"It is not proved that he did," retorted Kildare, with black brows.

The swarm of juniors were getting restless.

"Chuck the jaw, Kildare!" roared Grundy. "We won't be bullied and we won't fag!"

"Rather not!" yelled a dozen others.

"Make way!" snorted Gore.

Silent and grim-faced, the seniors stood their ground.

"You will not be allowed to enter this passage until you have all promised to chuck this foolery and take your punishments," said Kildare quietly.

"Rats!"

"Go and eat coke!"

The Sixth-Formers moved shoulder to shoulder and gripped their ashplants firmly. Kildare's face was set.

"Rush 'em!" muttered Blake.

Tom nodded. He was in for it now, he knew, and he meant to back up his side to the last. It was necessary for the fellows to install themselves somewhere, and where better than the Shell passage? They could not stay on the stairs, and they were not going to give in to Kildare's demands. Besides, Tom felt that he had right on his side.

"Come on, you chaps," he said coolly. "Get ready to rush 'em. Kildare, I warn you that it would be better for you to stand aside!"

Kildare's eyes gleamed dangerously.

"That's enough!" he snapped. "Give in, or it will be the worse for you!"

Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"Rush 'em!" he cried.

And, with a thunder of feet, the mutineers hurled themselves in a body at the grim phalanx of Sixth-Formers!

CHAPTER 13.

The New House Joins Up!

SWISH, swish, swish!

The ashplants in the hands of the prefects hissed through the air, slashing the shoulders of the foremost attacking juniors.

"Oh! Ow! Wow!"

Howls and exclamations rent the air. But the juniors were determined and desperate. They were in open rebellion against what they felt to be the injustice of fagging, and they were not to be checked by a few stinging blows from an ashplant. Those behind pressed on the unfortunate ones in front, and by sheer weight of numbers the Sixth-Formers were slowly forced to give ground.

Swish, swish!

The seniors were grimly determined, too—as determined to quell the rebellion as the juniors were determined to carry on with it. With set faces, the dozen or so Sixth-Formers hit out at the swarming juniors who now surrounded them. In their opinion, they were dealing fairly with a collection of refractory juniors who needed a lesson. Even Kildare, whose temper took a lot of rousing, was hitting out in grim earnest. The captain of the school was a good-humoured fellow, as a rule; but he was keen on discipline, and this flagrant defiance of law and order had roused him to an angry determination to restore discipline at almost any cost.

As yet none of the Sixth-Formers quite realised how solidly the mutineers had made up their minds to stand by their position.

Swish! Swish!

Some of the ashplants were still being wielded, but a good many of the Sixth-Formers had by now had theirs snatched from them. And slowly the seniors were being driven back along the passage, vainly resisting the weight of the combined Shell and Fourth.

"Push 'em out!"

"Kick 'em along!"

"Down with the Sixth!"

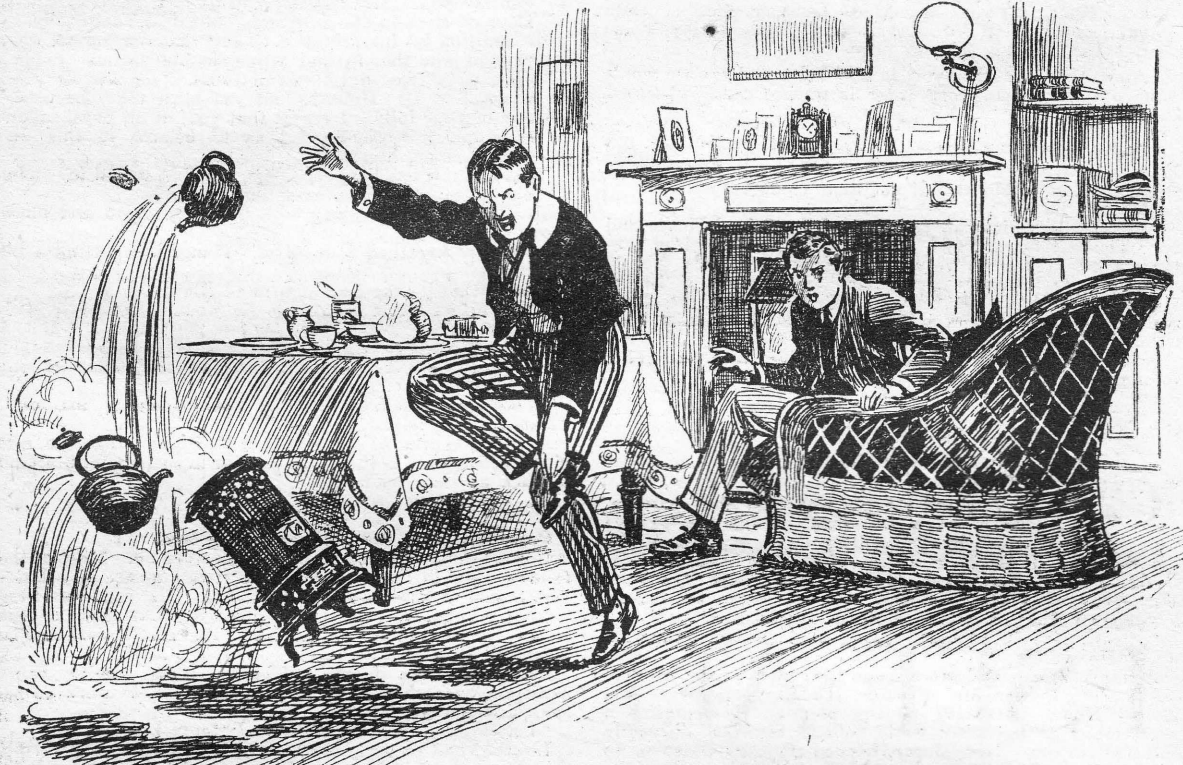
The juniors' blood was up, and they were not dealing lightly with their antagonists. Kildare's collar and tie were

for as captain of the junior school he regarded the future safety of the two Forms as his own responsibility. He swiftly picked a "council-of-war"—Manners and Talbot from the Shell, and Blake and Cardew from the Fourth. And a meeting of the five was held there and then.

"They'll try to smash the mutiny by force," said Tom grimly. "But we mustn't let 'em succeed. Of course, the Shell and Fourth must stick together like glue. I propose we all stay where we are—in the Shell passage. It's a good spot to defend, because we can hold both ends of the passage pretty easily."

"My hat! You're planning a barring-out!" muttered Blake.

Tom shrugged his shoulders.



"Yarooooogh!" As Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hopped wildly on one foot the teapot in his hand went flying and sent the oil-stove crashing over. "Look out!" yelled Darrell. Oil from the fallen stove had caught the carpet alight and the study was in danger of being set on fire! (See Chapter 9.)

sadly disarranged by now, Rushden's coat was almost torn from his back, and Baker had a black eye and a nose that was streaming crimson. From the faces of most of them it was becoming clear that at last the Sixth-Formers were realising that they had bitten off far more than they could chew.

"Come on!" snapped Kildare savagely, at last. "We can't deal with all these young hooligans!"

It had occurred to Kildare that this was one of those occasions where discretion is the better part of valour. It was less undignified, he felt, for the Sixth-Formers to retreat with as good as grace as the circumstances permitted than to stay scrapping with a swarm of juniors, who would undoubtedly handle them very roughly before they had finished.

"Yes, let's get out of this!" gasped Darrell; and the Sixth-Formers turned and departed with as much dignity as possible.

"Yah! Funks!" yelled Baggy Trimble, brandishing a fat fist; though Baggy had skulked at the rear throughout the fight.

A storm of triumphant howls followed the retreating prefects. Kildare's brow was black. When he spoke his voice was quivering with anger.

"This is a disgrace to the school!" he snapped. "The kids are utterly out of hand! They must be made to pay for this, or there will be no more discipline at St. Jim's! The Head must know, of course, and as soon as possible."

"The kids are potty!" growled Baker, applying a handkerchief to his nose. "Ow! I'm hurt!"

With furious faces the Sixth-Formers went their way, leaving Tom Merry and his followers in victorious possession of the field of battle.

Most of the juniors engaged in a kind of triumphant war-dance. But Tom knew that there was no time to waste,

"What else is there for it?" he exclaimed. "It's either that, or giving in to Kildare and the rest and fagging again, and getting bullied by the blackguards of the Sixth. We shall never be able to persuade Kildare that some of us have been bullied. He thinks we've made that up as an excuse. Well, I say, nothing doing! And we shall have to stick here till we come to terms."

"But are we strong enough to stand a siege?" asked Manners doubtfully. "If the Sixth roll up in a body—they were not all here just now."

"And Taggles will be got in to help, perhaps," put in Cardew, with a grin.

"I know," nodded Tom. "So I propose we send someone to invite Figgy & Co. to join us. We know that the New House chaps themselves have been pretty near mutiny already, through some rotten treatment. I bet they'll come over like a shot! Then, when we're all together, the Head may realise we mean business."

"We shall want a lot of grub, if we are to be besieged here," put in Blake.

"We'll get in food at once, before the Sixth have time to twig our scheme," Tom answered. "Half a dozen chaps can buzz down to the tuckshop and get in grub. It'll be safe enough now, because the Sixth will all be in their room, I fancy, talking things over. And if the Fourth buzz down to their studies and bring along all the grub they've got, that'll be a big help."

"Good egg!" grinned Blake.

The scheme was carried out without delay. A whirlwind produced enough money for all the food that would be needed, and Manners took a small party, all armed with cricket-bags, down to the tuckshop, whilst the Fourth-Form fellows hurried off to bring back the supplies from their studies. All returned safely. And shortly afterwards

Cardew, who had volunteered to go over to the New House, returned at the head of the New House fellows.

Figgins & Co. and the rest of the New House chaps had been delighted to hear of the mutiny, and had agreed to join in with the School House rebels very cheerfully. As they came marching in a body into the Shell passage, a rousing cheer greeted them. It was not often that New House and School House met on such friendly terms, but now they were really delighted to see each other.

"Good man!" cried Figgins, gripping Tom Merry warmly by the hand. "This is fine! We won't stick this fagging stunt any longer!"

"Rather not!" grinned Fatty Wynn. "I only hope there's plenty of grub laid in, though, 'cause I've got a pretty healthy appetite, you know."

"Heaps enough, even for you!" laughed Tom.

"Wathah, deah boy!" beamed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Tom Mewwy's seen to everythin'."

"All we have to do now is to stay here, and say we won't come out till the fagging order is washed out!" chuckled Clive.

"Good!"

"We've got hold of some garden squirts," grinned Herries. "We've filled 'em with ink. If the Sixth try to storm us, I'm afraid they'll get their clobber spoilt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And when sentries had been posted the School House and New House fellows broke up into groups and retired into the various studies in very high spirits. In Study No. 10 Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther entertained Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, and George Figgins and his two chums, Fatty Wynn and Kerr. The ten of them were cheery enough, but thoughtful.

As the leaders they were busy wondering what was going to happen next.

CHAPTER 14. No Surrender!

"COO-EEE!"

The call echoed sharply along the Shell passage. Kangaroo, on sentry duty at the top of the stairs with Glyn and Clifton Dane, was responsible for the call. Instantly a swarm of fellows emerged from the line of studies. Tom Merry was amongst the first. For Kangaroo's signal meant that someone had been sighted—possibly an attack in force by the Sixth.

"It's Railton!" exclaimed Glyn, as Tom Merry hurried up. "He's alone."

A figure in cap and gown came into view at the head of the stairs. It was Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House. At sight of the popular Housemaster a good many of the more timid fellows vanished discreetly into the studies. Tom Merry, backed up by a dozen or so of the others, waited for him, however, at the end of the passage.

Mr. Railton halted in front of them. His brow was knitted, and his lips were tight with anger.

"Kildare has told me of your mad behaviour!" he exclaimed. "It is a disgrace to the school! Kildare is reluctant to inform the Head, for your own sakes, which shows a very commendable spirit, in my opinion. But, of course, this rebellion against authority must cease at once. And the leaders must be punished."

"I am sorry this has happened, sir," said Tom quietly. "But the fact is, to put it bluntly, some of our chaps have been bullied; some of the Sixth have taken the opportunity of the new fagging order to treat our chaps in a rotten way. And until we know that that sort of thing will be stopped, we mean to stick to our guns."

"I cannot believe that any of the Sixth have been guilty of bullying!" returned the Housemaster sharply. "Kildare told me that was the excuse for the mutiny—"

"It's more than an excuse, sir!" said Tom grimly.

"Nonsense! Give me the names of the guilty prefects, if you are so positive!"

"Sorry, sir, but we aren't sneaking, all the same."

"Hem! That's all very well, but it seems to show that alleged bullying is imaginary!" said Mr. Railton tartly.

"Sorry you think that, sir."

"This is a very serious matter for you, Merry. I understand that you are the leader of this?"

"That's so, sir. I accept the responsibility."

"But we're all in it!" protested Figgins; and Blake, Manners, Cardew, and several others chimed their agreement.

"Silence!" thundered the Housemaster. "Now, Merry, understand that this nonsense is to stop. The New House boys will return instantly to their own House, to be dealt with as Mr. Ratcliff thinks fit. Cardew, you will return to the detention-room immediately, and the rest will at once

go up to their respective dormitories. You, Merry, will come with me to my study."

No one moved.

"You hear me?"

"We're sorry, sir, but we intend to stick it out until we have assurance that we are protected against rotten treatment by the Sixth, and that the leaders aren't punished," said Talbot. "Isn't that so, you chaps?"

"Rather!" exclaimed the others.

Tom Merry stepped forward.

"I must stick by the chaps, sir. But I'll go with you and take my medicine if we get the assurances we ask for."

"I have said all I have to say! Are you going to obey me? Remember, if you disobey, this may mean expulsion for some of you," Mr. Railton said quietly.

"Then we stick to our guns, sir," returned Tom coolly.

Mr. Railton bit his lip. But he saw that the juniors were determined, and that further argument was useless.

"Very well," he said in grim tones, "the matter shall be referred to Dr. Holmes, and you must take the consequences of your folly. I regret that you, of all boys, should be so stupidly wrong-headed as to behave in this disgraceful manner, Merry."

"I'm sorry it has happened, too, sir; but it had to, under the circumstances," Tom said, flushing.

Mr. Railton strode away with fluttering gown and black brow.

"Whew!" breathed Manners. "Things are getting a bit warm!"

"Now what'll they do?" muttered Blake.

"If Waitton knew the twuth he would sympathise with us, deah boys," exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "But I suppose we can't expect Waitton or Kildare to believe how Knox and the other wottahs have tweeked some of our chaps!"

"That's the trouble," nodded Tom, frowning anxiously. "But we stick to our guns!"

And the chorus of "Hear, hear!" showed that the rest of the rebels were still as solid as ever in their determination to back up their leader!

Quiet reigned in the Shell passage at last.

It was evening-time, and the lights were on. Most of the fellows were in the studies, but a strong group of sentries was posted at each end of the passage. The rest were busy having supper, and from the looks on the faces of the fellows in Study No. 10, at least, the rebels were by no means downhearted.

"Nothing like plenty of grub when you're being besieged," mumbled Fatty Wynn, as he got to work on his fourth pork-pie. "These pies are prime!"

"I notice you like 'em!" grinned Monty Lowther.

Lowther had recovered now from the effects of his terrible thrashing at the hands of Gerald Knox, and was well on the way to becoming his old cheery self again.

Tom Merry was the only occupant of the study who looked really grave and thoughtful. The responsibility on Tom's shoulders rested rather heavily. He was doing what he considered to be his duty by the Form, but even so the realisation that he stood to lose almost more than any of the others could not be forgotten.

What was to happen? He could not imagine. All he knew was that he meant to stand by the fellows who had accepted him as their leader. But the shadow of expulsion hovered at the back of his mind, to make his face grave and worried.

And then the silence of the passage was suddenly broken. A shout of alarm had come to the ears of the Terrible Three and their companions round the supper-table.

Instantly they were all on their feet. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was nearest to the door, flung it open, and they all hurried out into the passage—Fatty Wynn stuffing the remains of a pork-pie into his mouth as he ran.

From the other studies fellows were pouring excitedly.

"Look out! The Sixth!"

The cry came from one of the sentries at the head of the stairs, where an exciting struggle seemed to be in progress.

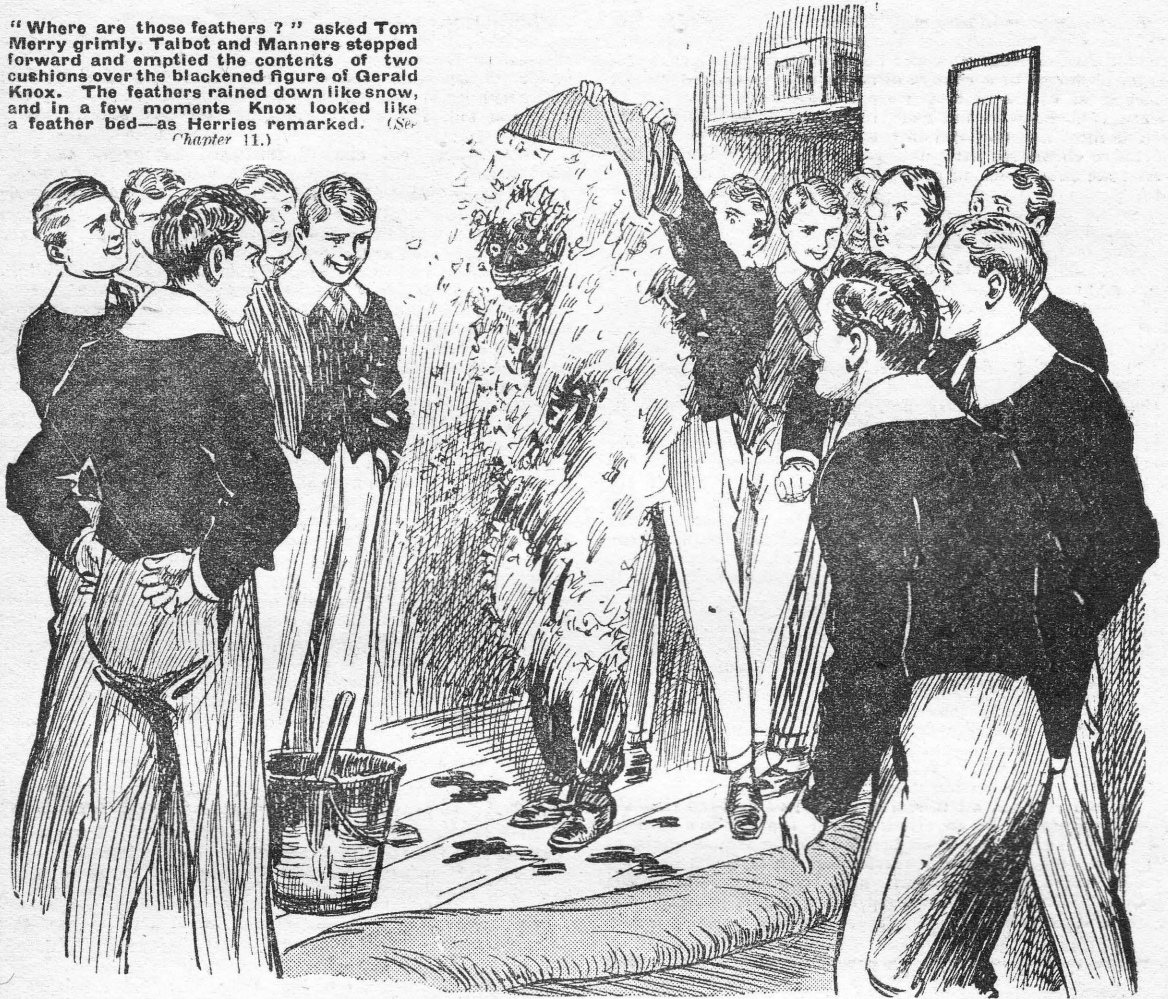
Evidently the sentries had been taken by surprise. The Sixth, having planned their attack, had stolen silently, on rubber-soled shoes, to within a short distance of the end of the passage. Then they had made their rush.

The sentries, taken completely off their guard, were battling manfully to keep the seniors at bay. But they were swept aside, and the Sixth-Formers came along the passage in a determined body. Monteith & Co from the New House were with the rest.

That they had come with the intention of capturing the ringleaders was soon obvious. Figgins was already collared by a couple of hefty prefects, and at sight of Tom Merry emerging from Study No. 10 Baker gave a shout.

"There he is! Collar him!"

"Where are those feathers?" asked Tom Merry grimly. Talbot and Manners stepped forward and emptied the contents of two cushions over the blackened figure of Gerald Knox. The feathers rained down like snow, and in a few moments Knox looked like a feather bed—as Herries remarked. (See Chapter 11.)



"Back up!" yelled Fatty Wynn, and a dozen or more of the juniors closed round Tom in a defensive ring, while others rushed to the rescue of Figgins.

"Get young Merry!"

It was the voice of Gerald Knox. The black sheep of the Sixth had come into sight—a grim-lipped figure, with a very ugly look in his face. He had changed his clothes, but traces of tar still lingered in his ears and hair. At sight of him there was a tremendous storm of yells and catcalls.

"Back up, you chaps!"

"Down with the Sixth!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Hurrah!"

In a moment a terrific struggle was raging along the whole length of the Shell passage.

Blows and yells and the trampling of feet echoed noisily, making a tremendous din. The Sixth were outnumbered by about three to one; but the hefty seniors were putting up a big fight against the odds, and it was doubtful which way the battle would go, for each of the Sixth-Formers was a match for any three juniors.

"Now, you young warmints!"

It was an angry, familiar voice—the voice of Ephraim Taggles, the school porter! The Sixth had enlisted his aid, and with heavy feet the whiskery figure of Taggles came stamping into sight.

It was clear that he had instructions to capture Tom Merry, for he stood and glanced round until he caught sight of the captain of the Shell, then made a move in his direction.

"You come with me, you young rip!" growled Taggles.

But Herries barred his way with his hands behind his back.

"I should hop it, Taggles," advised Herries.

"Out of my way, Master Herries!"

As he spoke, Taggles made a grab at Herries to swing him aside. But he got no farther!

Herries had brought his hands from behind his back, and one of them held a long syringe. It was one of the syringes that had been prepared for just such an eventuality as this.

Herries raised the syringe, pulled back the handle, and squirted.

A stream of ink shot out, and there was a yell from Taggles.

"Yarooooooh! Grooooooh!"

Since his mouth had been open at the moment, a good deal of the ink had entered it, and the porter gasped and choked. His face was black, and his eyes goggled.

"Oh!" gasped Taggles. "My heyl! What I says is——"

A second dose from Herries' syringe splashed over him, and this time Taggles could not stand it any longer. He turned with a yell and rushed heavily away down the stairs, followed by a yell of laughter.

Meanwhile, other syringes had been brought to bear with equally deadly effect!

There were half a dozen in all, and each of them was squirting busily! In the excitement, the contents of them did not entirely fall upon the Sixth—some of the inky streams landed partly on the juniors themselves, and a good deal of the resulting yells and gasps and gurgles came from Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers, as well as from the seniors.

But, on the whole, it was the seniors who suffered.

"Oh!" gasped Knox, as Blake drenched him with a stream of black liquid. "Ow! Oh! Groooooh! Yarooooop!"

And, like Taggles, Knox turned and fled.

In a few moments the rest of the Sixth followed Knox's example. They simply could not face those syringes! They broke and ran, and triumphant howls followed their vanishing, inky figures.

It was an utter rout, a complete victory for the juniors. Thanks to the syringes, they had beaten off the attackers, and still remained masters of the situation!

But they were not all feeling cheerful about it. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who had suffered from a carelessly wielded syringe worked by Cardew, was loud in his complaints.

"My clobbah!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh, my twousahs! Uttahly wuined! Cardew, you weekless idiot——"

"Sorry!" grinned Cardew. "I meant it for Rushden!"

"Then why not have let Wushden have it, deah boy?" groaned Arthur Augustus, and he turned away, a bedraggled figure, in search of a change of garments.

But most of the fellows were feeling very pleased with themselves, and were not worrying about a few ink splashes such as most had received in the struggle.

"Three cheers for little us!" suggested Monty Lowther. And the cheers echoed lustily along the Shell passage.

CHAPTER 15.

For the Sake of the Head!

BOOM! The last stroke of midnight sounded across the dark quad. In Study No. 10 Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"That's that, I think," he exclaimed. "Now to get it to the Head!"

He held some sheets of notepaper in his hand, and he folded them and put them in his pocket.

It was an important document. Tom had come to the conclusion that the juniors should put their case before the Head, so that Dr. Holmes should see both sides of the matter, and not only hear the accounts of the meeting from Mr. Railton and Kildare, since the Housemaster and the captain of the school were already prejudiced against them.

So they had written a letter to the Head, explaining their attitude. Tom Merry himself had undertaken to take it to the Head's study.

It was a dangerous task that lay ahead of him. He felt sure that the Sixth had posted some of their number in the vicinity of the Shell passage, in order to capture any junior who ventured forth in the night for any purpose, and he was right. Knowing Tom Merry, Kildare realised that if there was any dangerous mission to be undertaken, Tom himself would probably try to carry it through. And to capture Tom Merry, the leader of the rebels, would be a big stroke for the Sixth. Without Tom's leadership, it was possible that the rebellion might fizzle out.

Tom had realised all this, and so he had decided that the safest way would be to climb out of the window and be lowered into the quad, then break into the House again at a lower window, and so circumvent any Sixth Form sentries.

"The Head's a good sort, and jolly fair," remarked Figgins. "That's a well-worded letter, and I fancy it may do good, if he gets it!"

"Let's hope so, anyway," said Tom quietly.

The light in the study was put out, and Tom silently raised the sash of the window.

A rope had been procured from one of the other studies, and gripping it tightly, the captain of the Shell swung out over the sill, the others gripping the end and lowering slowly.

"Good luck, old chap!" muttered Manners, as Tom vanished.

Tom Merry reached the quad in safety, and hurried away in the shadow of the wall. Here and there a light was burning in a window, where masters were still up. But the quad was deserted and silent.

Tom moved cautiously round the corner of the building. He was making for a pantry window at the back, for he had heard Taggles remark earlier in the day that the catch was broken and needed repair.

It did not take Tom long to find the window, and he had no difficulty in opening it. In another moment he was inside, and with the aid of a pocket electric torch, was making his way silently through the back premises.

At last he reached the Head's study, and paused outside the door. There was a chance that Dr. Holmes might be sitting up late. But Tom saw that there was no light coming under the door, so he opened it softly and stepped inside.

It was pitch-black within the room. Tom closed the door and switched on his electric torch, and the beam of light fell on the Head's desk. Tom went towards it and laid the letter open in the centre of it.

"He can't help but see that first thing in the morning when he comes in," Tom told himself with satisfaction, and was returning to retrace his steps, when he halted suddenly.

A faint sound had come to his ears—the sound of breathing. Tom stiffened. It was heavy breathing, as of a man asleep. After a moment's uncertainty, the captain of the Shell swung the ray of light round, and gave a sudden exclamation as it fell upon a huddled figure in an easy-chair in one corner of the room.

It was the Head himself, sitting with his head sunk upon his chest.

"My hat!"

Tom caught his breath. For a moment he fancied that the Head was sleeping. Then he felt a thrill of horror as he realised that the Head was not in a natural sleep.

"He's ill!" gasped Tom, and darted across the room to the switch of the electric light. The room filled with a blaze of light.

Hastily Tom hurried to the old gentleman's side. Dr. Holmes' face was white, and his hands felt strangely damp. The look of consternation on Tom's face increased.

That the headmaster of St. Jim's had had a seizure of some kind was obvious. A doctor was wanted—and at once.

Tom darted to the telephone, and within a couple of minutes the midnight call for help was through! Then, after raising Dr. Holmes' head and putting a cushion behind it, Tom ran from the room and made his way swiftly in the direction of that occupied by Mr. Railton.

He was half-way up the stairs when a dark figure suddenly loomed out in front of him. A hand gripped his shoulder, and a light was flashed into his face.

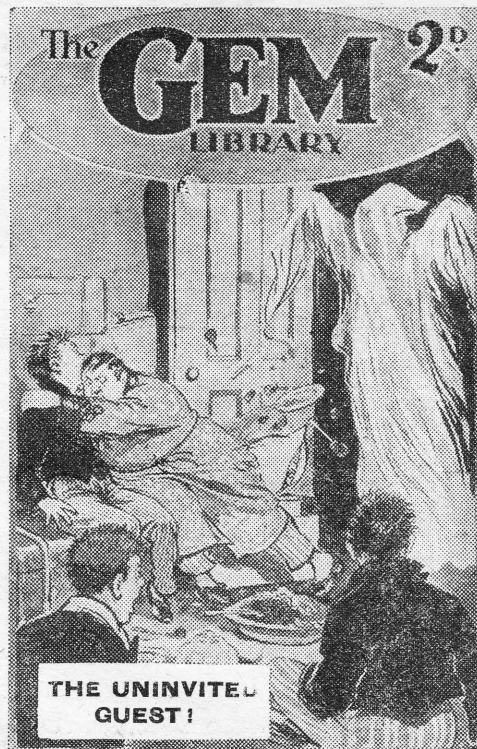
"Got you!" exclaimed a triumphant voice. "By Jove, it's young Merry himself!"

It was the voice of Darrell of the Sixth.

"Pax!" panted Tom anxiously. "I—"

"Pax, be blowed!" said Darrell sternly. "You young ass, you've got yourself in hot water, and no giddy error!" he added, in a more kindly tone. "Why did you do it?"

(Continued on page 27.)



"MY LORD TRIMBLE!"

Bow down, you chaps of the Shell and Fourth, for here comes Trimble—My Lord Trimble!

Plenty of dough!

Plenty of swank—that goes without saying!

Plenty of toadies.

What's more, My Lord Trimble actually has a man-servant to wait on him in his study.

Ye gods! How's it all happened?

Aha! You'll find that out for yourselves when you read next week's spiffing long, complete school story of the Cheery Chums of St. Jim's.

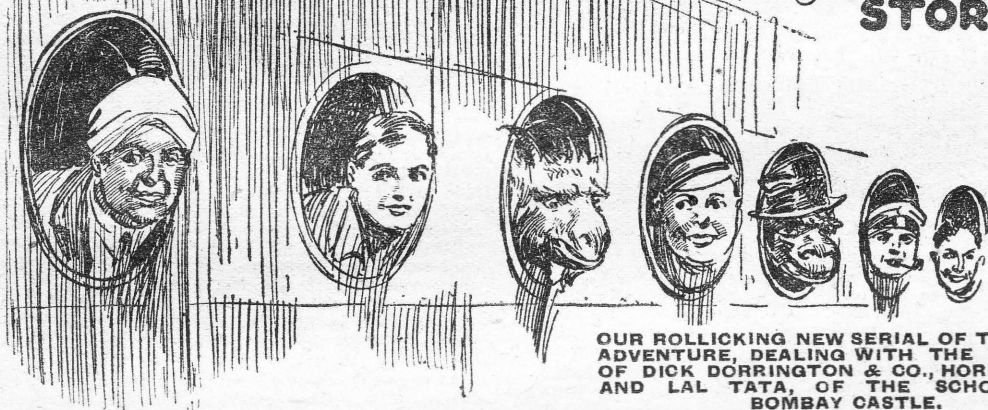
ORDER EARLY, BOYS!

ADVENTURES UNDER EASTERN SKIES!

Prisoners in the hands of a merciless Sultan—locked in a tiger's cage behind unscalable walls! That's a fearful situation if you like, a situation in which the Chums of the Bombay Castle find themselves this week!

CHUMS of the BOMBAY CASTLE

by DUNCAN STORM



OUR ROLLICKING NEW SERIAL OF THRILLING ADVENTURE, DEALING WITH THE EXPLOITS OF DICK DORRINGTON & CO., HORACE, GUS, AND LAL TATA, OF THE 'SCHOOL SHIP BOMBAY CASTLE.

A Strange Meeting!

THE young men who had been leaning against the walls seemed to come back to earth out of their dreams. They ran forward, uncoiling their silken ropes from their arms. Strangling was their line, not fighting with leopards and crocodiles, and they beat a hasty retreat when they saw the fight that was going on over the polished floor.

The leopard tried to spring on Gus' head and neck. His instinct told him that he could only make his claws tell if he got them under Gus' armour just about where the crocodile keeps his tonsils.

But Gus was too quick for him, and suddenly there was a howl from the infuriated leopard, and a howl that was one of grief rather than anger.

Old Gus had got him by the tail.

Panic seized the leopard. He dashed round the hall squealing and howling, whilst Gus skated behind him like a sledge, his stubby legs and claws sliding over the polished floor, leaving long scratches behind them.

There there was a crash of glass as the leopard leaped up the wall and shot out through a small dome of jewelled glassware.

Gus turned, with six inches of tail hanging from his jaws. The leopard bounded over the roofs of the palace into the night, and Gus came waddling towards Mr. Pugsley, grinning like a fox-terrier which has been chasing a cat.

Mr. Pugsley held him at arm's length with the sword he had taken from the nigger.

"You naughty boy!" said he indulgently. "Get back to your bag, Gus! You've 'ad your night out, and you've shown up some reptiles worse than you are!"

Gus hesitated a moment. He had half a mind to go for the courtier who was nursing his bruised hand and howling. But a prod from the sword told him that he had better get back into the old cricket-bag.

He flopped into it, and the boys fastened it.

The sultan, shamefaced, climbed on to his cushions and seated himself once more.

"Well, what about it?" asked Mr. Pugsley bluntly.

"You are opium smugglers!" said the sultan doggedly, as if he were repeating a lesson.

"That's a lie!" said Mr. Pugsley.

"And you are spying in my country!" said the sultan.

"That's another lie!" said Mr. Pugsley.

Then he turned to the trembling nigger who had come up behind him.

"All right, Fred," he added. "Take your sword. I'm not making any trouble for you."

"My sentence is that you all go to prison!" said the sultan.

"How long for?" asked Mr. Pugsley.

"For always!" said the sultan. "The laws of my country, which are in this big golden book, say that smugglers of opium shall be put in prison for life and their ships confiscated."

"Do you mean to say that you are going to keep these poor boys in quod till they grow whiskers?" demanded Mr. Pugsley. "All on a trumped-up charge and a bit of faking which wouldn't deceive a child? Why, when the croc had got that yellow-faced thief by the 'and he was dropping opium all over the floor! You saw it! Everyone saw it!"

"You go to my prison to-morrow!" said the sultan obstinately. "To-night you shall be shut in the leopard's cage in my elephant yard. My white elephant will trample you to death if you try to escape, Dar arid! Justice is done!"

"Call that justice?" demanded Mr. Pugsley. "'Arf a mo, cocky! Do you know that you are imprisoning free-born British subjects, and that there will be inquiries made pretty soon? How are you going to answer them?"

The sultan gave an ugly smile.

"You will have disappeared," said he, "like the Star of the East. Do not agitate yourself, Mister Sailor. These boys will not grow old in my prisons. My prisoners do not live too long!"

He made a sign, and the young men with the glazed eyes together with a strong force of native guards closed round the prisoners.

Mr. Pugsley looked round desperately. But resistance just now seemed useless.

"Pick up ole Gus boys," said he. "We'll all go to prison together."

He lifted his finger and shook it towards the sultan.

"Look 'ere, you banana-faced beggar!" said he. "I give you fair warning. You 'aven't finished yet with the boys o' the Bombay Castle. All right, Fred," he added to the fat native. "Keep that sword outa my ribs. We'll come along quiet."

And he followed his companions as a door was flung open, and they marched out into the night to a wide courtyard surrounded by the low roofs of the palace, where a leopard six inches short in the tail was howling to the stars.

"Yes, you keep on 'owling, my boy!" said Mr. Pugsley. "We'll 'ave the young guv'nor 'owling to the same tune afore long!"

"Well, 'ere we are! All nice an' comfortable, as the monkey said when 'e fell into the bag o' Barceloneys!" said Mr. Pugsley.

The sultan's men had led them across the high-walled courtyard at the back of the palace, and, opening the doors

of a great cage, had bundled them into it, and had snapped shut the gate on them.

Then the natives had marched off, one of the big niggers, carrying a jewelled lantern, heading the procession.

The iron door in the wall of the palace clanged to, and the prisoners were left.

"What is this?" asked Mr. Lal Tata miserably.

"From the ruff of it," replied Mr. Pugsley, who was evidently intent on looking on the bright side of things, "I should say it was the sultan's tiger-cage. But 'e ain't got no tigers jus' now; and I should say the lepper's been makin' 'is kip 'ere!"

"It is an awesome place!" said Mr. Lal Tata, as he kicked against some bones on the ground. "I feel like an Early Christian martyr in the Colosseum at Rome!"

"Well, 'ere you are, sir," said Mr. Pugsley, indicating a large trunk of a tree which was laid in the cage. "Bring your stern sheets to an anchor 'ere and make yourself at 'ome!"

A dismal howl sounded from the roof of the palace.

"Goodness!" said Mr. Lal Tata, shivering. "What is that dolesome noise?"

"That's the ole leopard complainin' because Gus has chewed six inches off 'is tail!" said Mr. Pugsley, lighting his pipe. "Per'aps it's just as well that they did shut us in the cage. What'll keep leppers in will keep leppers out."

"Lummy! There he is!" exclaimed Conkey Ikestein.

Against the stars the lads saw a black shape leaping over the tiles of the low buildings surrounding the palace. It was the leopard all right, and it was evidently in no very happy mood.

"You've pasted 'im oright, Gus!" said Mr. Pugsley, gently kicking the huge cricket-bag in which Gus lay once more dormant. "That there lepper won't go foxing inside ericket-bags no more!"

"But why haven't they locked the cage?" demanded Mr. Lal Tata, peering out through the bars, looking rather like an elderly monkey at the Zoo waiting for a bit of bath-bun.

"Why," exclaimed Dick, "didn't you hear the sultan say that he was going to turn an elephant loose in the courtyard, and that it would trample us to death if we tried to stir out of the cage? Anyway, there's nowhere to bunk to. Look at the height of those walls—and the spikes on top!"

"I don't see any elephant," said Skeleton, looking out through the bars. "Perhaps he was only bragging to keep us scared!"

"Don't know so much about that!" said Mr. Pugsley, shaking his head. "Most of these little rajahs keep an elephant; and you never know what dirty tricks they'll teach them. There's more goes on be'ind the walls of these palaces than gets into the papers, I give you my word! We'll stay where-we-are-o for a bit and see how things develop."

Mr. Lal Tata sat down on the tree-trunk, with his head in his hands.

"The whole matter is inexplicable to me," said he. "Why should this young sultan bring false accusations against us of being opium smugglers, and so imprison us? How dare he!"

"Why," said Mr. Pugsley, "there's more under that kiddo's hat than hair! He's in some deep game!"

"But what game?" asked Mr. Lal Tata. "Surely it is very dangerous even for a small independent sultan to arrest a boat-load of friendly boys, flying the British flag. It is a casus belli."

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Pugsley. "But one thing is plain to me. Our young friend knows more than he was going to let on about the disappearance of Claude Fairbrother and the Star of the East."

Conkey Ikestein put his oar into the conversation.

"But I don't see why the sultan should want to pinch a crowd of movie actors! There's no motive!"

"Why not?" asked Mr. Pugsley.

"'Cause they haven't got any money!" said Conkey.

"What about Mary Pickford and Doug and Charlie Chaplin?"

"They aren't all Mary Pickfords," said Conkey. "For one Mary Pickford or one Doug Fairbanks, there's thousands and thousands of movie actors who haven't got a bean. They just drift up into the Sink for a job, and drift down to Starvation Corner, at the corner of Leicester Square; and they are all Romeo, stoneybrokieo to the wide-o! I know, because a friend of mine, Izzy Cohen, tried his hand as a movie actor."

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"Never seen 'im on the posters," said Mr. Pugsley.

"No," replied Conkey, shaking his head. "Izzy wasn't stupid. He saw there was no money in it, so he started selling hot dogs at the races, and made a fortune out of it. Take my word for it, Mr. Pugsley," added Conkey, "the sultan would not pinch a movie crowd. They are not worth robbing. Worse than that, they'd touch him for half-crowns till he was broke!"

Mr. Pugsley was unconvinced.

"Well," he said, "why did this young pirate start when he heard that we'd come into his thieves' kitchen to get information about the Star of the East? Why had he got his mark buoys in the fairway all out of their places, and a chain across the mouth of 'is 'arbour like a boom defence? He's up to something. And why was 'e so quick to bring a false charge against us?"

"There is nothing out of way in false charges," put in Mr. Lal Tata. "In India it is not infrequent when a charge of murder is brought against a certain party that the prosecution provides, not only all the witnesses, but the corpse as well."

"That's what I say," said Mr. Pugsley. "We was condemned before we came into court. The sultan wants us out of the way whilst 'e's doing 'is dirty work up at the cross-roads; and I suppose this cage is his detention-cells. If this is the Town 'All police station, I wonder what his quod will be like? I'd sooner be down in ole Wandsworth Gaol myself!" added Mr. Pugsley. "I wonder when 'e's going to bring on 'is elephant? Maybe there ain't any elephant at all."

"Shall I get out of the cage and have a look round?" suggested Dick Dorrington.

"I'll come, too!" said Jim Handyman readily.

"You'll stay where you are, Master Dick. And you, young Jim!" ordered Mr. Pugsley. "Wait 'arf a mo'! Don't be in such an 'urry to look for trouble. Look! 'Ere's your elephant!"

"Hrrumph!"

There was a deep grunt at the far end of the great courtyard, and a curtain of bougainvillea creeper parted, as a huge, shadowy shape shuffled into the courtyard, almost invisible in the shadows cast by the rising moon.

"That's the elephant," said Mr. Pugsley. "We'll stay where we are till we see what sort of an elephant 'e is! Anyone got a bun?"

Skeleton slipped his hand into his pocket, and rather reluctantly produced a couple of buns, which he had swiped from the tea-table before leaving the ship.

"I've got a couple of stodgers," said he. "I was saving them for my supper."

"Well, you keep 'em. You can have 'em if the elephant don't want 'em," said Mr. Pugsley. "If 'e's a rogue 'e won't eat buns. If 'e eats buns 'e's been civilised, and 'e's not as black as 'e's painted."

The elephant seemed to be aware of a strange presence and a strange scent in the courtyard. Short-sighted, like all these huge beasts, he depended a good deal on his scent; and, having lifted his trunk, he threw his ears forward inquiringly. Then he moved forward across the courtyard. "Coo lummy!" exclaimed Mr. Pugsley. "A white elephant!"

The elephant had moved forward into the moonlight. He was a huge beast with a single tusk—the other having been broken short—capped with a silver-gilt lotus design.

They could see the silver gilt glittering in the moonlight as he moved his head restlessly and inquiringly.

"White elephant, hey?" said Mr. Pugsley.

"A sacred elephant!" said Mr. Lal Tata. "I have heard rumours of this elephant. It is supposed to be a reincarnation of Bhudda. The inhabitants are not allowed to see it. When it passes through the street they must hide themselves in their houses."

The elephant could hear their voices, and he stood in the centre of the great deserted courtyard marking time restlessly.

The boys peered out eagerly through the bars of their cage. The white elephant was not a dazzling white as they had expected, but had a sort of mouldy bloom upon him.

Mr. Pugsley started up from his perch in the cage.

"Well, I never!" said he. "Can't be two tusks like that in the world!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Dick.

"Why," said Mr. Pugsley, "if I'm not very much mis-

INTRODUCTION.

Captain Handyman, skipper of the famous school-ship, Bombay Castle, receives a wireless message to the effect that a shipload of cinema artistes have mysteriously disappeared somewhere within the vicinity of the pirate-infested Archipelagoes of Pahang. In consequence of this, Dick Dorrington & Co., of the Glory Hole Gang, together with their master, Mr. Lal Tata, circumnavigate the Island of Pahang in search of the missing party. Added to the "D.S.B.'s" crew are the school's pets—Horace the goat, Gus the crocodile, and Cecil the ape. On nearing Bungaloo Island the "D.S.B." is captured by pirates and the crew together with a cricket bag containing Gus, the crocodile, are taken under escort to the palace of the Sultan of Bungaloo, who is zealously guarded by a huge leopard. Here the party is accused of smuggling, and searched by two fakirs who mysteriously bring to light from the boys' pockets sufficient dope to poison a whole city. A rude awakening awaits the courtiers, however, when they unstrap the cricket bag, for Gus rolls out and makes a leap at the leopard.

(Now read on.)

But Mr. Pugsley lifted his hand.

"Stop that, old ship!" said he. "Don't make a noise, or you'll give us away to that banana-faced kiddo in the palace who wishes to do us a bit o' no good."

The elephant dropped his trunk, and at a sign, followed Mr. Pugsley toward the cage, as tame as Mary's little lamb.

"Come out, boys!" said Mr. Pugsley. "Ole Jack wants to shake 'ands with you."

Mr. Lal Tata opened his eyes.

"You're not killed?" he gasped.

"Killed!" replied Mr. Pugsley scornfully. "I've met an ole friend, and a friend in need. Belongs to my Union, Jack does, and 'e'll get us out of this scrape."

"How?" asked Mr. Lal Tata, creeping timidly out of the cage and approaching the gigantic beast which was shaking hands in turn with all the boys.

"Think that any walls are going to keep this chap in if 'e wants to get out? Why 'e'd shove a mansion down if 'e set 'is mind to it, and 'e won't make much bones of a back garden wall," said Mr. Pugsley. "Annibal the Great—im that crossed the Alps—used elephants instead of tanks. Wait till I'm on this chap's back. But I'll want an elephant anks, or 'e won't understand me. Get on to that loose bar in the parrot-cage there, boys, and tear it out."

Arty Dove marched over to the cage, and took one of the loose bars in his tremendous grip. He gave it a few wrenches and freed it from the plaster, top and bottom. Then he handed Mr. Pugsley the bar.

"Lummy, Arty boy!" said Mr. Pugsley, in admiration. "You wouldn't make arf a dentist! Now, listen to me! I'll 'ave a look round these walls. Some of 'em is brick and some of 'em is coral blocks, and some of 'em has been plastered up with coral mud. I'm goin' to look for a muddy patch, and get ole Jack 'ere to cool 'is 'ead up against it, and you'll see that wall go down like the walls of Jericho. Then you form up close be'ind 'im, and we sweep down to the 'arbour."

"Then what?" asked Conkey Ikestein, who always liked a programme.

"Then we shall 'ave to decide our futuré conduc' by events," said Mr. Pugsley. "But if my theories are right, nobody'd dare shoot at the sacred elephant, and 'e'll hold the fort for us while we get our packet clear of the chains. Then:

"Good-bye to Sue and Jane,
We are off to sea again!
Jack ahoy! Jack's the boy!"

The elephant listened intently to the conversation. He seemed to understand what was going on. Mr. Pugsley gave him a jab in the stomach with the iron bar, and he lifted his hind leg and crooked his tail invitingly.

"There you are!" said Mr. Pugsley, pointing to his friend with the iron rod. "That's 'is back staircase!"

He jumped on the leg like a bus-step and caught hold of the elephant's tail as a sort of banister, and in a few seconds was crawling over the mighty body, dropping on to John Henry's back, his legs behind his ears.

"Now we are all O.K.!" said he. "But what's that?" Outside the compound there sounded an angry snarl, followed by a defiant bleating.

"There's that blessed lepper again," said Mr. Pugsley, "wandering about like a Manx cat lookin' for 'is tail! And I'll lay a crown that 'e's trying to noble 'Orace!"

"Maw!" Horace's defiant bleat sounded again. Then came a dull thud, and the next moment they saw the leopard flying high in the air. He came shooting over the wall, spitting and snarling, with his claws and tail outspread, and descended on the dry, parched earth of the compound like a shooting star.

The boys caught the flash of the glowing eyes in the gloom, and bunched hurriedly together behind the elephant. But the leopard was in no fighting mood. He had had one scrap. Gathering himself up, he slunk off with his shortened tail between his legs, and the boys saw him sneak into the cage they had just vacated.

"That's ole Horace, waiting for us by the garden gate!" said Mr. Pugsley. "And where 'Orace is, Cecil won't be far off!"

This was true!

There was a scrambling on the other side of the wall and a battered topper came into view, followed by the ungainly figure of Cecil, the ape, as he mounted the high wall to see what had become of the leopard.

Cecil showed plainly against the moon as he sat atop of the wall, looking down on his friends. Then he kissed his paw and dropped, light as a feather, into the compound.

In his left paw he held a length of lead piping, and he

was plainly looking for the leopard which had been hunting Horace.

But Mr. Pugsley called to him in a low tone.

"Come 'ere, Cecil! None o' your monkey tricks! Leave that ole tomcat alone and fall in with the boys!"

Cecil hesitated and obeyed, and the leopard lay very quiet in the cage, for there is nothing more feared than the man of the woods when he is out on the war-path.

The boys were glad to see old Cecil again. His Eton jacket was torn to ribands, which showed that he and Horace had been travelling through the thick undergrowth of the woods behind the palace.

Where Cecil had got his length of lead piping they could not tell; apparently it had been torn out of some fountain, for it was still wet with water.

"Now, boys," whispered Mr. Pugsley, "we are altogether. Keep together, and don't make any noise; just keep close behind John 'Eney!"

He gave the elephant a jab behind the ear, and John Henry seemed to understand perfectly what was required of him.

He marched straight up to the wall and rested his head against it as if he were thinking and cooling his brain.

Then he backed away with a grunt.

"That's solid masonry," said Mr. Pugsley, as his mount skirted along the wall. "'E's got too much sense to give 'issel an 'eadache against that!"

The elephant stopped again and tapped the wall lightly with his single tusk.

He gave another little grunt, as much as to say "No good!" Then he swung right away from the wall and made straight towards the palace wall.

"Lummy!" exclaimed Mr. Pugsley. "'E's going to shove the palace down! No matter; follow up close, boys. We must leave it to 'im. 'E knows best!"

There was no hesitation in the movements of the lumbering beast. John Henry knew what he was up to. For all its apparent solidity the palace was but of tissue paper compared to the walls of the compound, which were the old fortifications of the pirates of Bungaloo.

The elephant marched straight up to the palace wall and pressed his head against its whitewash.

The wall bulged inwards and cracked loudly, whilst Mr. Pugsley hastily slipped back from the elephant's back and descended by way of its tail to the ground.

Old John Henry seemed to have found something stiff in the wall of this stucco palace.

He grunted and gave a heave, and something inside the wall went bang, almost like the report of a gun.

"There goes the drawing-room into the parlour!" gasped Mr. Pugsley, hanging on to John Henry's tail and giving him a prod behind to wake him up.

John Henry heaved forward again, and there was a rumbling, a crash, and a yell.

In a cloud of dust the elephant tumbled through a hole that would have admitted a motor-coach, and the boys gave a shout of delight as they tumbled through the break in the wall after him.

For there, sitting up in a magnificent bed with his eyes popping out of his head, was their old friend the Sultan of Bungaloo.

John Henry had burst right into the royal bed-room.

The Sultan of Bungaloo, like most Orientals, kept early hours. Having put his prisoners in the leopard's cage, he had retired to his royal couch and, half asleep, had been thinking out a few plans for giving them a bad time on the morrow when the wall had burst apart, revealing the huge head and single tusk of his sacred peroxidized elephant.

For a moment he was paralysed, then he shot out of bed, snatching up a dagger from his bedside and throwing it at the queesting trunk of John Henry.

The elephant caught a nick of the dagger-point on its trunk and gave an angry snort.

The sultan, descending from his bed, managed to catch his foot in the silken quilt, and descended to the dais on which the State bed was placed on his ear.

"Help, help!" he yelled, picking himself up and dashing to the door of the chamber.

But when old John had pushed his head through the outside wall of the palace, he had managed to shift some of the beams. This had created what architects call "settlement." So the door was jammed and would not come open.

But the guard of strangers and attendants on the sultan had heard the disturbance, and came dashing through the corridors of the palace to his assistance.

(It's a rude awakening for the sultan, isn't it, chums? But it's nothing more than he deserves! Look out for heaps more thrills in next week's exciting long instalment. You can only make sure of securing next week's GEM by ordering your copy well in advance!)

"THE CONSCRIPT FAGS!"

(Continued from page 22.)

"Pax, really!" exclaimed Tom. "I've just been to the Head's study—I'll explain that later—and he's ill! I found him in the dark, in a chair. He must have just switched off the light to go to bed, when he collapsed. He's had some kind of a faint. I've phoned for the doctor, but Railton—"

From the look on Tom's face Darrell realised that the junior was speaking the truth—that it was not a ruse to escape. He let go his hold.

"Get Mr. Railton quickly!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to the Head's study!"

Darrell sped away down the stairs, and Tom ran on towards Mr. Railton's room.

For the moment, at any rate, the feud between the Sixth and the conscript fags was definitely "off."

In the passage outside the Head's room, Tom Merry waited anxiously.

At last the door opened and Mr. Railton came out. Tom had a glimpse of the kindly-faced doctor in conversation with Marie Rivers, the school nurse, who had been awakened and brought to the scene by the medical man's order.

"What's the news, sir?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Dr. Holmes has recovered consciousness now," Mr. Railton returned quietly. He let a hand fall on Tom's shoulder, and looked down at the junior's anxious face with an odd expression. "In some ways, this bad behaviour of yours has been for the good. Had you not wished to take that letter to the Head he would not have been found, and medical assistance might have been delayed, with grave results." He smiled. "We all have to thank you!"

Tom did not answer.

"On one point the medical man is particular," went on Mr. Railton. "Dr. Holmes must have complete rest—no worry or anxiety of any kind. He has been working hard lately, and it is probable that the worry in connection with the rebellion of the juniors has been partly responsible for this. You understand?"

"I—I'm sorry, sir!" muttered Tom, dropping his eyes.

"It would help the headmaster's recovery a great deal, I fancy, if that worry were over," continued the Housemaster.

"You—you mean that for the Head's sake, if no other reason, we must surrender to the Sixth, sir?" Tom said slowly.

"Exactly!"

"Very well, sir. I know the chaps will do that, for the sake of the Head."

"Splendid!" Mr. Railton patted Tom's shoulder with approval. "It would be better, perhaps, if you went up to the Shell passage and told them yourself. I will rely upon you all to disperse to your various dormitories without delay."

"You can rely on us, sir!"

Tom turned away, and Mr. Railton again entered the room.

As he mounted the stairs with slow steps Tom heard someone coming down, and saw that it was Kildare. The captain halted.

"Merry! I've got something to say to you!"

"That's all right!" muttered Tom, half defiantly. "The mutiny's off, if that's what you mean. The Head mustn't be worried now he's ill, so we're going to surrender. I know the chaps will agree."

Kildare smiled.

"I was going to tell you that I'm sorry," he said. "I have just had proof that your accusations about bullying were true, and that I consider, under the circumstances, you were within your rights to strike."

Tom stared at him dumbly.

"Knox was one of the seniors on guard to-night, in case any of you youngsters tried to leave your retreat," went on Kildare, with a grim look creeping into his eyes. "Apparently Blake of the Fourth had got anxious when you did not return to the Shell passage. Of course, he did not know that the reason was that you had discovered the Head's illness. He ventured out to look for you. Knox caught him."

"Well?" cried Tom, bewildered.

"It seems that Blake drenched Knox with ink from a squirt, in that—er—scrap in the Shell passage. Consequently, Knox started twisting Blake's arms in a cruel, caddish way, and I caught him at it. That shows that you were no doubt right in accusing some of the seniors of bullying. No doubt you had Knox in mind particularly, although you would not sneak about him."

Tom did not speak.

"So I'm going to ask Mr. Railton not to punish any of you kids for this affair," continued the captain. "I feel sure he'll grant that request. So don't worry, kid! And in future, too, I think it will be best if none of you fag for the Sixth."

He held out his hand, and Tom gripped it. With a friendly grin Eric Kildare strode on down the stairs.

A few minutes later the captain heard the sound of distant cheering, and smiled slightly. The sound came from the Shell passage, and he believed that the cheers were the result of the news that there would be no more fagging of the Shell and Fourth during the temporary isolation of the Third.


But he was wrong! The cheers were for Kildare—and they were given lustily and long by the fellows who had been Conscript Fags!

THE END.

(Now look out for next week's long story of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "My Lord Trimble!" It's a peach of a yarn, chums, and one you'll thoroughly enjoy from beginning to end.)

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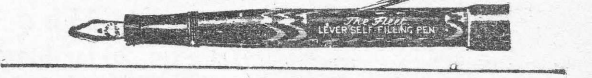
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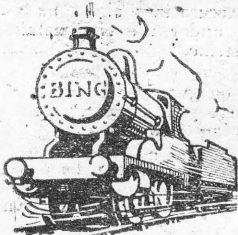
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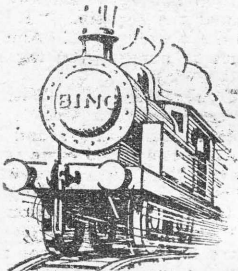
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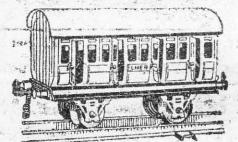
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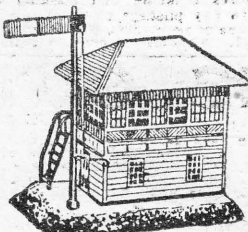
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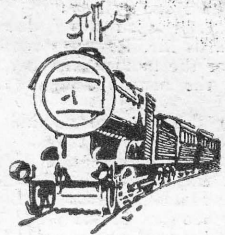
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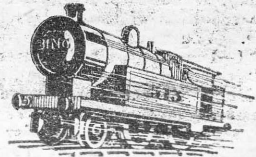
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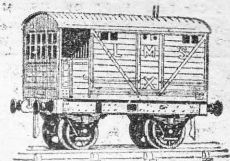
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