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# The GEM 2¢

EVERY  
WEDNESDAY.

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# THE MOST SENSATIONAL STORY OF ST. JIM'S EVER WRITTEN—

Never before has St. Jim's had such a popular skipper as cheery, broad-shouldered Eric Kildare—admired and respected alike by masters and boys. The bare possibility of his job being filled by anyone else would have seemed laughably absurd. This week, however, the seemingly impossible happens, and gives rise to a situation without equal in the history of the school!

## CHAPTER 1. Kildare's Discovery!

"COMING for a stroll?"

George Darrell of the Sixth Form at St. Jim's put his head in at the door of Kildare's study and asked that question.

Eric Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was seated at the table, busy with pen and paper. There was a slightly worried frown on Kildare's handsome face.

But he grinned cheerfully enough as Darrell entered the study. The captain laid down his pen and glanced from his chum's face to the work before him, and then turned his head and stared thoughtfully out into the quad through the window. Outside, the sun was streaming down gloriously from a blue sky dotted with fleecy clouds, and there was quite a touch of summer in the air.

"You can't stay fugging indoors on an afternoon like this, old scout," urged Darrell, seating himself on a corner of the table.

Kildare looked doubtful.

"I've got to go through the minutes of the last prefects' meeting, you see—"

"Rot!" broke in Darrell. "They'll wait!"

"And there's the footer club business—"

Darrell groaned.

"Can't that wait?" he demanded indignantly.

"Hang it, even the captain of St. Jim's has a right to take Wednesday afternoon off, surely!"

Kildare smiled a trifle wryly.

"I suppose so. But I've got a good deal of work to get through, and I'd thought of getting some of it off this afternoon. If I was a fag I could do as I liked on half-holidays. But as it is—"

He shrugged.

"Look here," said Darrell firmly. "I tell you you're coming out this afternoon; so don't keep on arguing! You take your job as skipper a sight too seriously sometimes. I know all about your blessed duties and all that; but they can wait, for once! Come on—before I drag you out by the ear!"

Kildare laughed. He glanced from the papers before him to the sunshine outside the window.

Most of the juniors at St. Jim's both admired and envied Eric Kildare of the Sixth. To be captain of the school, high above the danger of a "whacking," or lines, with a fag to do one's bidding—an Olympian being, who had not to worry about call-over, or out-of-bounds rules—surely it was the finest thing in the world! So nearly every junior imagined. Few of them realised how tied down by his duties the captain was; how at times Kildare would have given a lot to find himself back in the Fourth or Shell, a care-free junior!

"Well?" murmured Darrell persuasively. "Coming?"

Kildare watched the white clouds sailing across the blue sky. Suddenly he jumped up.

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# VOTE TOM

By Martin Clifford

"Yes," he said briefly. "I'll come! I'll finish this job to-night."

"Good man!"

Two minutes later the captain of St. Jim's was striding down the School House steps into the sunlit quad.

The quad was crowded.

Seniors and juniors alike were hurrying about, intent upon their various plans for the half-holiday. A group of Shell fellows were heading for the playing fields in footer kit. Figgins & Co. of the New House was also going in the direction of the playing fields, the long-legged Figgins with a brand-new footer under his arm. Tom Merry, the captain of the Shell, with his two chums, Manners and Monty Lowther, were crossing towards the gates, off to Wayland on a shopping expedition. A group of masters stood chatting and laughing under the elms—almost like ordinary human beings, to the amazement of all the fags in view. Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth, and his two chums, Smith major and Lee, were hurrying off to the river. The three were wearing rowing shorts and vests, for a rowing eight from the School House was meeting a New House eight that afternoon.

Talbot of the Shell was strolling out of the gates in company with his girl chum, Marie Rivers, the pretty school nurse. The two were evidently off for a country walk. Wally D'Arcy & Co. of the Third were also going out of gates in a noisy group, intent on some important expedition of the fag fraternity. Levison of the Fourth, together with his two chums, Clive and Cardew, were wheeling cycles from the shed. They were just off to visit Spalding Hall, where Levison's sister Doris and Ethel Cleveland were at school.

It was a bright and busy scene, and Kildare felt a sudden touch of envy of all these fellows who could go off to enjoy themselves without a care in the world. It was a feeling which would have surprised most of the St. Jim's fellows who moved aside to make way for the popular captain as he strode towards the gates.

Old Taggles, the school porter, busy with a broom outside his



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—STARRING TOM MERRY & CO., THE CHUMS OF THE SHELL!

# FOR MERRY!

lodge, touched his cap respectfully to Kildare as the tall figure of the captain passed. Even Taggles had a strong liking for the stalwart skipper.

"Which as 'ow it's a wery nice afternoon, Mr. Kildare!" remarked Ephraim Taggles.

"You're right, Taggles!" nodded Kildare, smiling.

"And I mean to enjoy it!" he added, as if half to himself.

Taggles grinned, and Kildare and his chum vanished out into the road.

At Darrell's suggestion the two Sixth-Formers turned in the direction of Rylcombe Wood.

It was very pleasant in the secluded walks and glades of the wood under the freshly-budding branches. The sunlight filled the spaces between the big old trees with gold, and the summery touch in the air, noticeable even in the school quad, was even more in evidence here. Kildare and Darrell strolled along talking and laughing. Kildare's brow had cleared of its frown now; he was making the most of his half-holiday, just like the youngest fag, and had left his duties and responsibilities behind him.

But even in the quiet of Rylcombe Wood Kildare was not destined to shake himself free of his position as captain of St. Jim's that afternoon.

Suddenly he touched Darrell on the arm and halted, staring through the trees to the left.

A frown had come to Kildare's forehead—a deep frown.

Darrell, following the direction of his chum's gaze, started and gave a muttered exclamation.

Barely visible among some close-growing bushes a red-and-white-ringed cap could be seen—a St. Jim's cap. And from the same spot a drifting trail of thin smoke was rising through the still air.

"Some junior smoking!" muttered Darrell; and Kildare gave a grim nod.

Evidently the unknown fellow was still utterly unsuspecting of the presence of the two prefects in the vicinity of his hiding-place. Their footsteps had been noiseless on the dead leaves that carpeted the path.

Smoking was, of course, most strictly forbidden by the rules of the school. A severe caning was the least punishment it entailed. But there were one or two dingy characters at St. Jim's who seemed to think that indulgence in an occasional cheap cigarette was rather "doggish."

Usually these bright specimens took care that they were never discovered in this grave breach of rules. But the unknown fellow among the bushes, in seeking a spot well hidden from the path, had apparently not taken sufficient care to make sure that he really was quite invisible. His head was just a few inches too high for

safety. And the captain's eyes were very sharp.

"Come on!" said Kildare quietly. "The silly young fool's going to get his deserts!"

Silently the two Sixth-Formers approached the bushes among which the red-and-white cap was peeping up, with its owner blissfully unaware of the fact that no less a person than the captain of St. Jim's himself was on his track.

Kildare's face was angry. If there was one thing the captain detested, it was the silly blackguardism of such fellows as this hidden junior.

And then, when they were still a fair distance from the bushes, a twig broke noisily beneath Darrell's foot.

There was a sharp exclamation from the hidden junior. In a moment the cap had ducked out of sight.

"Come on!" snapped Kildare, and broke into a run.

It was too late!

As the two prefects came racing up to the group of bushes a doubled-up figure could be seen vanishing among the trees beyond. The fellow, whoever he was, had wasted not an instant in making good his escape.

Kildare started in pursuit. But he knew that it was useless to hope to catch that flying figure. The trees grew closely at that point, with large patches of undergrowth. With even a few yards start, any youngster could have escaped from pursuit.

"No good!" panted Darrell, slowing down. "He's gone!"

Kildare halted, too. His brow was dark.

Beyond the sight of the cap, and a distant glimpse of a shadowy, running figure, they had seen nothing of their quarry. There was not the faintest indication to show who it had been.

But then Kildare gave a quick exclamation. Something white lying under a bush had caught his eye. He hurried towards it, and picked it up. It was a paper-backed book—evidently a book which the vanished junior had been reading, and had accidentally let fall, as he raced away.

"Maybe this will help us!" said Kildare grimly.

He turned the pages, and as he came to the fly-leaf his eyes gleamed.

A name was written there—"A. Racke."

"So it was Racke!" said Kildare. "The silly young blackguard!"

He was not surprised. Aubrey Racke, the cad of the Shell, had a reputation for dingy habits, of which Kildare was well aware.

The captain thrust the book into his pocket, and the two Sixth-Formers returned to the path, continuing their stroll without further reference to the incident.

But when Kildare returned to St. Jim's there was going to be trouble for Racke of the Shell!

## CHAPTER 2.

### Rough on Racke!

"COME in!" Racke, busy with his prep that evening, glanced up impatiently as there was a knock on the door. The next moment the grinning face of Wally D'Arcy of the Third appeared.

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Racke reached out for a book. Crooke, his study-mate, picked up a ruler.

"Here, chuck it!" exclaimed Wally in alarm.

"I'm just going to," growled Racke, "unless you seat! Fags not wanted here!"

"Rats!" grunted Wally. "I say, Racke, you'd better stick some exercise-books in your bags! Kildare wants you!"

Wally D'Arcy was Kildare's fag.

A guilty look sprang into Racke's face, and Wally chuckled.

"What about?" muttered Racke uneasily.

"How should I know?" chuckled Wally. "I suppose you've got so many things on your giddy conscience you can't think which you're landed for?"

And, with another chuckle, Wally departed. Racke rose to his feet and glanced at Crooke, who whistled sympathetically. Racke seemed about to speak, but he did not; and, without a word, he crossed to the door and left the study, his face the picture of uneasy forebodings.

In the Sixth Form passage the cad of the Shell knocked nervously on the door of the captain's study, and in response to a word from within he entered, closing the door behind him.

"You—you want to see me?" Racke said, as coolly as he could manage.

Kildare was standing astride the hearthrug. He nodded, and his face was set in grim lines.

"I do!" he said tersely. He picked a book off the mantelpiece and tossed it on to the table. "That's yours, isn't it?"

Racke picked up the book, staring down at it as if puzzled.

"Y-yes," he admitted. "But——"

"It's got your name in it," said Kildare quietly; "but I thought I had better make sure."

He crossed to a cupboard and took out an ashplant.

"Now," said the captain sternly, "you know what I am going to lick you for, of course I had thought of reporting you to the Head, since this isn't the first time you've been caught smoking. But I'll let you off with a licking this time, Racke—and a warning! You've got to chuck your silly, dingy ways—see? Bend over."

Racke faced Kildare with clenched fists and twisted lips.

"I—I don't understand!" he muttered thickly. "Smoking? You've not caught me smoking——"

Kildare made an impatient gesture.

"Don't be a young fool!" he exclaimed sharply. "You can't get out of it! I pretty well caught you red-handed this afternoon in Rylcombe Wood. Although you managed to slip away, that book you dropped is proof enough that it was you. Bend over!"

But still the cad of the Shell stood his ground.

"There's been a mistake somewhere, Kildare!" exclaimed Racke blusteringly. "I tell you I wasn't——"

"Lies won't make it any better!" said Kildare contemptuously. "I'm going to give you a licking for smoking, and you can make up your mind to that. Will you bend over that chair?"

"No!" shouted Racke, jumping backwards. "I won't be licked! I deny that it was me! It's all a mistake——"

Kildare took a stride forward. His brows were black; his eyes gleamed angrily. He had no time to waste listening to Racke's denials—he had expected some bluster from the cad of the Shell, in any case.

"Hands off!" ground out Racke savagely. "I—I tell you I haven't been near——"

His words snapped off as the captain's hand grasped his collar and swung him round.

Racke struggled, but he was helpless in Kildare's powerful grip. The cad of the Shell's face was pale with alarm—he knew that a licking from Kildare was no light matter.

"Let me go!" yelled Racke. "It wasn't me—I don't understand why you— Oh!"

Grim-faced, the captain of St. Jim's brought his ashplant into play, and the first stinging cut elicited a sharp cry from Racke. Kildare was holding him over the chair with his powerful left arm, and the ashplant rose and fell in his right hand.

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"Oh! Yow! Yaroooooh!"

Racke howled, and wriggled, and kicked. But he could not escape.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Wow! Yarooooo! Grooooh! Leggo, you beast——"

Whack, whack, whack!

Kildare was laying it on strongly. He felt that Racke deserved a really sound thrashing for his offence, and he was not sparing the rod!

Racke struggled and roared, and the dust rose from his trousers. With his head thrust well down, Racke was almost purple in the face. And his howls fairly filled the study.

"Ow! Yoooooogh! Yooop! Oh crumbs! You rotter, I never did it! Whooop! Yaroooooh!"

Whack!

"Yarooooo!"

Racke struggled wildly as that final whack descended. Then, breathing hard, Kildare stepped back and tossed the ashplant into a corner.

Racke fairly danced on the carpet. His face was crimson as he glared at Kildare speechlessly.

"Now clear!" snapped the captain. "And let that be a lesson to you!"

Racke's mouth opened and shut, but he did not speak. It seemed as if no words would come. Then, turning blindly, the cad of the Shell rushed from the study, slamming the door behind him.

Kildare crossed to the table, and sat down, with a frown.

It had been no pleasure to him to administer that sound thrashing. But he considered it to have been his duty, and that Racke had richly deserved it. Kildare knew Racke's shady reputation only too well, though it had been a long time since the captain had had a chance of administering a corrective!

"I hope he'll take that lesson to heart!" muttered Kildare.

It always went against the grain with the good-natured captain of St. Jim's to have to thrash a junior, and the frown still lingered on Kildare's face as he picked up a pen and got to work on the minutes of the prefects' meeting.

For twenty minutes there was no sound in Kildare's study but for the rustle of papers and the intermittent scratching of a pen. Then there came a knock on the door. Kildare glanced up.

"Come in!"

The door opened, and Tom

Merry, the captain of the Shell, appeared.

"Hallo, kid? What can I do for you?" asked the captain, with a smile.

Something in Tom's face caused him to lay down his pen and stare at the captain of the Shell curiously.

"Nothing wrong, is there, Merry?"

Tom closed the door. There was a worried look on the junior's face as he eyed the captain of St. Jim's.

"It's about Racke," said Tom Merry quietly.

"Well?" Kildare frowned.

"I understand you've just licked him for smoking this afternoon in Rylcombe Wood?" Tom went on, looking thoroughly uncomfortable.

"That's so," nodded the captain. "But——"

"I thought I ought to come and tell you that I was in Wayland this afternoon," said Tom Merry. "I saw Racke going into the cinema there, at about half-past two. So he couldn't possibly have been in Rylcombe Wood!"

Kildare stared at Tom blankly. Then suddenly he rose to his feet, staring at the captain of the Shell with a very odd expression on his face.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Kildare. "You're sure?"

"Dead sure!" nodded Tom. "Racke was in Wayland this afternoon, all right."

There was dismay on the captain's face.

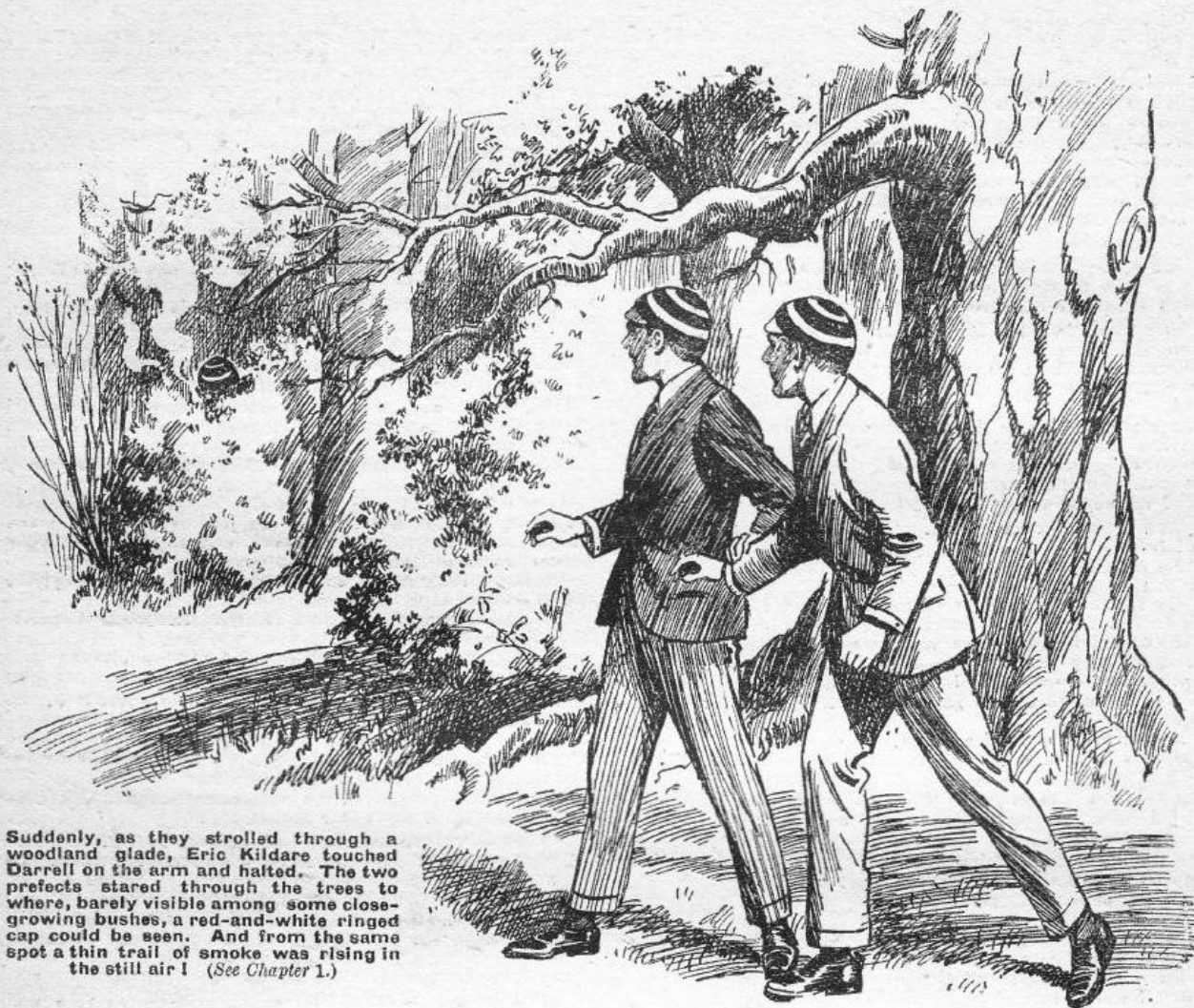
"Great Scott!" he repeated. "So I licked the wrong chap!"

He remembered now the mystified look that Racke had had on his face when he had been told he was to be licked for smoking in Rylcombe Wood. Till then, Racke's face had been merely guilty-looking. But Kildare realised now that that look of guilt had been for other undiscovered crimes! Racke, clearly, had come to the study wondering what he was "landed" for—only to find that he was landed with something which he had not really done! That book—

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THE FIRST of our**

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Suddenly, as they strolled through a woodland glade, Eric Kildare touched Darrell on the arm and halted. The two prefects stared through the trees to where, barely visible among some close-growing bushes, a red-and-white ringed cap could be seen. And from the same spot a thin trail of smoke was rising in the still air! (See Chapter 1.)

borrowed, as Kildare now realised, by another fellow—had been a false clue.

Racke's denials had been true enough, after all!

Kildare's face was a study.

"Well, I'm hanged!" he exclaimed, and stared thoughtfully at the carpet, biting his lip.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Well, I shouldn't worry about it!" he remarked cheerfully. "You licked Racke for something he hadn't done, but if you mark it off against something he's done and not been whacked for, you'll be all square!"

Kildare smiled faintly.

"That's scarcely the point," he said dryly. "Of course, I know the sort of fellow Racke is, well enough. But even Racke ought not to be licked for an offence of which he's innocent!"

He frowned. Clearly he was very worried to know that he had punished Racke unjustly; though not, perhaps, so worried as he would have been had the fellow in question been anyone other than Aubrey Racke! As Tom had remarked, Racke deserved a licking, anyway, for many undiscovered offences against the school rules—that fact was equally well known from the Sixth to the Second.

"Hard luck!" murmured Tom.

He realised that Kildare was in an awkward position. And though Racke, no doubt, thought that he was the injured party, it was with Kildare, not Racke, that Tom Merry sympathised.

Kildare shrugged his broad shoulders.

"This is rotten!" he exclaimed. "Look here, will you tell Racke I want to see him?"

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry left the captain's study, leaving Eric Kildare looking thoroughly uncomfortable.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Racke on the Warpath!

ON the stairs, Tom sighted Baggy Trimble of the Fourth. The junior captain hailed him.

"Seen Racke?"

The fat Fourth-Former sniggered.

"He, he, he! Yes!"

Baggy's fat face was pink with excitement. He scuttled up to Tom and caught hold of his sleeve.

"Racke's in the Common-room!" announced Baggy, chuckling. "You know Kildare licked him for something he didn't do? He, he, he! And Racke says he's going to make it hot for Kildare! Racke says he's going to show him up to the Head! He, he, he!"

"Rats!" growled Tom impatiently. "Racke wouldn't dare! He's got too many things on his conscience to want to see the Head!"

"But Racke says—"

"Gammon!"

"Oh, really, Merry—"

Tom Merry jerked his arm away from the fat Fourth-Former's clutching fingers, and went on down the stairs. He went straight to the Common-room.

A big crowd of fellows were gathered there, and the reason for this state of affairs was soon evident. As Tom Merry entered, he heard Aubrey Racke's furious voice:

"Yes, I'm coming to make it hot for Kildare, I tell you! The cad! I—"

Tom pushed his way through the swarm of grinning juniors.

"I say, Racke," he cut in, "Kildare wants to see you in his study."

There was an instant hush. All eyes turned to Racke.

Racke's face was red with the indignation that boiled within him. He was still feeling very sore. The idea of sitting down was not likely to appeal to him for a long while!

"Oh, he does, does he?" he roared. "Well, you can tell him from me to go and eat coke!"

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Tom Merry impatiently. "You'd better buzz along and see him, Racke!"

"I'm hanged if I will!" Racke was just about at bursting point now. "The beast licked me—never gave me a chance to explain—"

"I don't suppose he thought your explanations would be too jolly truthful!" remarked Kangaroo of the Shell blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Blake of the Fourth.

"It's all your own fault, deah boy!" put in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of St. Jim's, severely. He adjusted his eyeglass and surveyed the furious face of Aubrey Racke. "You see, Wacke, deah boy, you have got such a frightfully wotten reputation, that natuwallly Kildare thought you were the guilty party—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rot!" howled Racke. "Kildare jumped to the conclusion just because he found a book with my name in it that I was the chap reading it—"

"Of course," nodded Manners of the Shell. "You can't blame him!"

"I do blame him, anyway!" snarled Racke. "And if I find out who borrowed that book from my study, I'll scrag him!"

He glared round at his listeners. The juniors were all grinning broadly. Somehow, no one seemed to have any sympathy for the cad of the Shell, despite his misfortunes. The general opinion seemed to be that the licking would do Racke no harm—might do him good, in fact.

"Well?" said Tom Merry. "Aren't you going to see Kildare?"

"No, I'm not!"

Tom shrugged.

"He wants to apologise, I suppose. And it's not every prefect who would take that trouble, Racke. You ought to do the decent thing, and go and see him at once. After all, you know jolly well that there have been dozens of times when you've deserved a licking, and not got it! So you can't grumble when you get some back payment, even by mistake!"

"Rather not!" agreed a dozen voices.

But this lack of sympathy seemed only to incense Racke further.

"I tell you, I'm going to make Kildare sit up for this!" he said, with clenched teeth. "I've a good mind to go to the Head—"

"Rats!" drawled Cardew, the dandy of the Fourth. "You wouldn't have the jolly old nerve, dear man!"

"Of course he wouldn't!"

"Wathah not!"

There was a chorus of chuckles. No one took Racke's threat seriously for a moment. The cad of the Shell clenched his fists. His face had gone livid.

"I tell you I'm going to the Head—now!"

There was no doubting his sincerity now—though whether he would find the necessary courage at the last moment was not so sure. Tom Merry gripped him roughly by the shoulder.

"Don't talk like a fool, Racke! You've been licked, and you can't be unflicked! Kildare will be decent enough about it, you'll find—"

"I'm not going to let him get away with it, though," snarled Racke. "I'm off to the Head!"

"My hat!" breathed Talbot of the Shell. "He means it!"

"Get out of my way!"

Racke turned in a blind rage and pushed his way towards the door of the Common-room.

Whether his original threat had been only bluster, or whether he had really meant it, did not much matter. Now, spurred on by the derisive disbelief of the other juniors, Aubrey Racke was bitterly determined to go to Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's, and complain to him of the captain's error.

That Dr. Holmes would take a serious view of the case, Tom Merry realised. Kildare would be put in a very false position, too. For Dr. Holmes, naturally, not realising the sort of reputation Racke possessed, would not understand that Kildare had been more or less justified in acting on circumstantial evidence alone. With any other fellow, Kildare would not have been so hasty; but the Head was not likely to appreciate that fact.

As Racke pushed his way blindly towards the door, Tom Merry jumped in front of him, barring his path.

"Stand aside, hang you!" shouted Racke.

"Rats!" answered Tom grimly. "Racke, you don't want to make a fool of yourself! If Kildare liked, I dare say he could tell the Head a thing or two about you."

A shade of uncertainty passed across Racke's face for a moment. Then the bitter resolve returned.

"Stand aside, I say!"

The next moment he had stepped swiftly past the captain of the Shell, wrenched open the door, and disappeared.

"Great pip!" cried Herries. "Do you think he'll really go to the Head, you chaps?"

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No one answered. The juniors were looking at one another very uncertainly. They all liked Kildare, and the thought of his getting into trouble with Dr. Holmes dismayed them.

"The Head won't undahstand that Wacke deserved a lickin', anyway," muttered Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Oh deah! Can't we stop Wacke? We don't want Kildare to get into twouble."

"Rather not!"

But it was too late to stop Racke now. In fact, it was really very doubtful if they could have stopped him in any case. Racke was in a furious temper, and he had clearly made up his mind to go to Dr. Holmes.

There was rather an anxious frown on Tom Merry's face.

"This is rotten!" he exclaimed.

"P'raps Racke'll funk it even now," said Monty Lowther.

"Let's go and see!"

And, led by Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners—the Terrible Three, as they were known at St. Jim's—the crowd of excited juniors swarmed from the Common-room.

Their doubts were soon put at rest. They reached the end of the passage in which Dr. Holmes' study was situated, just in time to see the hurrying figure of Aubrey Racke vanish within. The door closed behind the cad of the Shell, and the juniors looked at one another.

What was going to happen now?

Talking in excited whispers, the juniors waited eagerly. The minutes crawled by, however, and Racke did not reappear from the Head's dreaded sanctum. But at last there was a step on the stairs, and the grinning face of Toby, the School House page, came into view.

"Hallo, Tobias!" drawled Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Whither away?"

"The 'Ead rang for me!" explained Toby cheerfully, and hurried along the passage to the door of the study, and vanished within. A few moments later, however, he appeared again, to be bombarded with questions.

"What's up?" inquired a dozen juniors.

"The 'Ead 'as sent me to fetch Mr. Kildare," Toby informed them importantly. "Master Racke's in there," he added, jerking a thumb in the direction of the study. "Talk about a face! 'E looks fair murderous!"

"How's the Head looking?" asked Tom Merry.

"Werry grave!" returned Toby solemnly, shaking his head. "Oh, werry grave!"

And he vanished up the stairs.

"Whew!" whistled Monty Lowther softly.

Before long, the tall figure of the captain of St. Jim's came into sight. Kildare seemed scarcely to notice the crowd of silent juniors. He strode down the passage, and vanished into the Head's study without glancing to right or left.

Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth, one of Racke's cronies, sniggered.

"Kildare's going to get a wiggling!"

"He, he, he! Yes!" grinned Baggy Trimble.

"Oh, shut up, you fat clam!" growled Manners.

"Oh, really, Manners—"

"I pwopose we all give Wacke a feahful waggin' aftahwards!" suggested Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Hear, hear!"

And from the unanimity of the juniors' agreement with the swell of St. Jim's suggestion, it was quite clear that Racke, even though he regarded himself as a martyr, had no sympathy from the Shell and the Fourth!

Racke had been wrongly licked, they admitted. But their sympathies were almost entirely with the captain of St. Jim's.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Before the Head!

THE RE was a deep frown on the face of Dr. Holmes as Eric Kildare stepped into the study and closed the door.

He was seated at his desk, his fingers tapping restlessly on the papers in front of him. There was a worried frown on the Head's kind old face, and he looked rather pale and tired. Dr. Holmes had been working very hard of late, and his health had suffered temporarily. It was this fact, perhaps, that had caused him to become rather irritable recently—a state of affairs most unusual in the naturally genial old Head.

"Ah, Kildare!"

Dr. Holmes looked up quickly as the captain entered.

Kildare glanced from the Head's frowning countenance to the dark and bitter face of Aubrey Racke, standing by the bookcase. There was a scarcely veiled gleam of malicious delight in the eyes of the cad of the Shell. Racke was gloating over the fact that he had been the cause of having Kildare "on the carpet" before Dr. Holmes.

"You sent for me, sir?"

"Yes."

As a rule, the greatest cordiality existed between the Head

and Eric Kildare. None knew better than Dr. Holmes what a splendid and popular captain Kildare was. It was seldom indeed that the Head had the slightest fault to find with the stalwart skipper.

But there was no cordiality in his tone now. His voice was tired and a trifle irritable.

"Kildare, this junior—Racke—has come to me with a complaint. It seems that you punished him this evening most severely for an offence of which he was innocent. Is that correct?"

"Quite correct, I am afraid, sir," answered the captain quietly.

The Head drummed his fingers, and his frown deepened. "It is a grave matter, Kildare, as I suppose you realise."

"I am aware of that, sir."

"I understand that you rather jumped to conclusions, and punished Racke on insufficient evidence."

"Yes," Kildare nodded. His voice was quiet.

He knew from Kildare's look that the captain merely despised him for having come with his story to the Head. No decent fellow would have tried to get Kildare into trouble for what had been a mistake. Racke knew that at the bottom of his heart.

He shifted uncomfortably, and said nothing. "I hope you are not bearing malice, Racke," said the Head sharply.

"Oh, no, sir!" said Racke hastily.

"You may go now." Racke went.

The Head turned again to Kildare as the door closed. "Really, Kildare, this is a most serious matter!" he exclaimed. "I am surprised to know that you would punish a boy on slight evidence in this way."

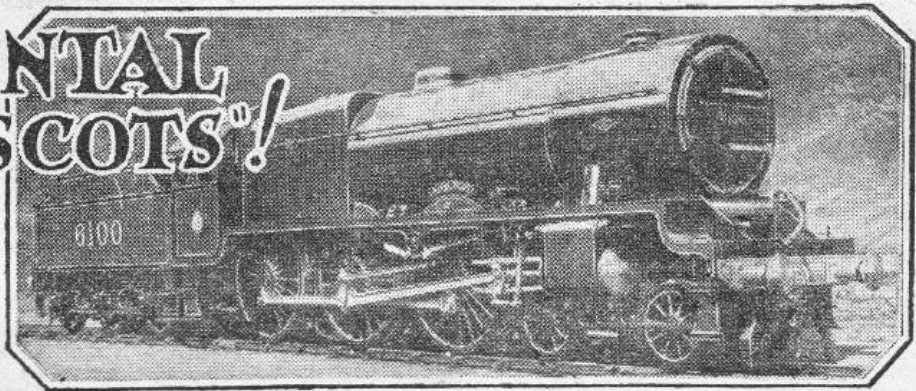
Kildare reddened.

"The evidence was not exactly slight, sir. I had every reason to believe—"

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# REGIMENTAL "ROYAL SCOTS"!

Express engines of the famous "Royal Scot" class, on the L.M.S. Railway, are named after famous Regiments of the British Army. Here our contributor tells you why locomotive No. 6100 bears the nickname of "Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard!"



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The Royal Scots regiment is by far the oldest in the Army, tracing its descent in a fairly unbroken line as far back as 1625.

Since 1633 it has born the nickname of "Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard." How this came about makes an interesting story.

Many years ago, while the Royal Scots Regiment was in the service of the French, a dispute arose between them and a regiment of Picardy. The Frenchmen considered that their corps was much older than the British. The latter did not agree.

The argument became so heated that one Picardy officer went so far as to assert that his regiment was on duty the night following the Crucifixion of Christ.

"Had the duty been ours," retorted the Scots colonel, "we should not have slept at our post!"

Like the "Royal Scot" locomotive, "Pontius Pilate's Bodyguard" is famous for its exploits. The regiment served with distinction during the Marlborough Wars, and at Blenheim took part in that memor-

able charge of Lord Cutts, forcing its way up to the palisades under terrific fire without discharging a single gun.

For this astonishing feat alone it well deserves the regimental motto of "Nemo me impune lacessit." (No one provokes me with impunity.)

The crest of the Royal Scots Regiment, and also of the express locomotive, No. 6100.



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"In that case, I think you should apologise to Racke very deeply!" continued the Head rather sharply.

Kildare coloured.

"I had intended to do so, sir. In fact, I had already sent for Racke, in order to apologise. But instead of coming to me, he chose to come to you."

There was a faint ring of contempt in Kildare's voice, which caused Racke to shift his feet uneasily. But the Head frowned.

"Racke did perfectly right to come to me!" he exclaimed, with asperity. "A miscarriage of justice such as this is no light matter, and it is proper that I should be informed. You will kindly apologise to Racke at once."

"Certainly!"

Kildare turned to the cad of the Shell. Racke's eyes were gleaming with triumph. But if he expected Kildare to be confused and awkward he was disappointed. The captain was quite cool.

"I am sorry for what happened, Racke—very sorry!" he said steadily.

Racke's face took on a sneering grin. But he was not enjoying himself, though he tried to hold himself jauntily.

"Nonsense!" The Head was in an irritable mood, without a doubt. "The whole affair is disgraceful! You had no right to behave in this careless way. You should realise that in your responsible position you must take every care to ensure justice, not jump to conclusions!"

Kildare's eyes gleamed. He was becoming nettled. The Head was speaking rather more warmly than he actually intended, and Kildare felt that it was unfair for him to be placed entirely in the wrong. After all, though Racke had undoubtedly been the victim of a miscarriage of justice, Racke's reputation was such that there was really very little harm done! A shady customer had received a whacking, that was what it amounted to—it was not as though some perfectly "straight" fellow, such as Tom Merry or his chums, had been wrongly flogged. Kildare knew in his heart that Racke deserved many lickings that had never been administered.

But it was utterly impossible for Kildare to explain that to the Head.

"I am sorry it happened, sir," said the captain stiffly. "It was not surprising, however, I must point out, that I should

conclude that Racke was the offender. The book I found—"

"Racke told me about the book!" interjected Dr. Holmes coldly. "I should not myself have regarded that as sufficient evidence to administer a severe punishment to a junior."

Kildare was silent. It was easy enough for the Head to talk now, after the event, Kildare told himself. But as things had actually happened, the captain had made a mistake which anyone might have made.

"I hope this will be a lesson to you, Kildare, to exercise the very greatest care in future," went on the Head sternly. "This must not happen again, you understand!"

Kildare was a good-tempered fellow if ever there was one, but the Head's stinging words had brought the blood hotly to his cheeks again.

"It shall not happen again, sir," said the captain grimly. "I think that perhaps it would be best, in the circumstances, if I resigned my position as captain of the school!"

The two stood with eyes fixed on one another in silence for some moments. The Head had given an exclamation. Kildare's words had been so utterly unexpected that Dr. Holmes was quite taken aback for the moment.

Only then did the Head realise that he had been speaking with unintentional irritability and warmth.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "Do I really understand you to say that you wish to resign the captaincy, Kildare?"

"Exactly, sir!"

The Head's face showed something very like dismay for the fraction of an instant. Then his eyes gleamed, and his lips shut into a firm line. He nodded.

"Very well, Kildare. Just as you wish. I accept your resignation."

Kildare, with set face, turned to the door and strode out, leaving the Head alone.

It was seldom indeed that the good-natured skipper and the kind old Head were at loggerheads!

But this time they had fallen out with a vengeance.

## CHAPTER 5.

### The Decision of the Sixth!

**N**EXT day St. Jim's was buzzing with the news. Kildare had resigned!

The school had seldom been so excited by anything as it was by that simple announcement.

St. Jim's without Kildare as captain seemed almost an impossibility! At first, in fact, some of the fellows were frankly incredulous—until they had seen for themselves the notice of Kildare's resignation pinned on the board. Then they had to believe.

That this was a result of the affair of Racke's flogging and subsequent visit to the Head, everybody knew. And those fellows who liked Kildare—which included nearly all the Shell and Fourth—frog-marched Aubrey Racke round the quad two or three times, just to show what they thought of him.

From the Sixth to the Second, in studies and in Common-rooms, in the quad and in the close and in the playing-fields, in the School House and in the New House, everyone was talking of Kildare and the now vacant captaincy.

Once the first excitement of the news was over general attention was inclined to turn from Kildare and his drastic action to the question of the next captain.

Who would step into Kildare's shoes as captain of St. Jim's?

It was a fascinating problem!

Speculation ran freely. Various Sixth-Formers were mentioned and discussed. But the general opinion was that either Darrell, Kildare's chum, or Monteith, the captain of the New House, would become skipper.

In the School House Darrell was, of course, favoured. But Figgins & Co. and the rest of the New House would hear of no one but Monteith as a possible successor to Kildare. In fact, Figgins & Co. felt so warmly about it that Kerruish, of the School House, who had the temerity to laugh the idea to scorn to a group of New House juniors, was collared and ducked in the fountain without any argument. Half an hour later, however, an avenging band of School House fellows collared Fatty Wynn of the New House and immersed him in the fountain—"to see if he'll float!" as Monty Lowther put it. Scores were therefore even between the respective supporters of Darrell and Monteith.

"Monteith doesn't stand an earthly," declared Tom Merry, in Study No. 10 of the Shell passage at tea-time that afternoon. "If he puts up for the captaincy, as I suppose he will, only the New House will vote for him. And the School House is bigger than the New House. Darrell will get in, if you ask me!"

"Sure to," nodded Manners.

There was a knock on the door. Blake appeared, with Herries and Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The four

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chums of the Fourth had looked in to discuss the exciting situation, as well as to invite themselves to tea—Study No. 6 being temporarily out of funds.

Blake & Co. agreed with Tom Merry & Co. that Darrell was a certainty.

"But it's wotten, poor old Kildare wesignin', don't you know, deah boys!" declared Arthur Augustus, shaking his noble head. "Uttahy wotten! He was a wippin' skippah!"

"Hear, hear!" agreed Tom Merry, and Manners, and Blake together.

"The best ever!" said Monty Lowther, with an air of complete finality.

"Rather!" nodded Herries and Digby.

"I dare say Darrell will make a good skipper," said Tom, frowning. "But—well, it won't be the same as having old Kildare back!"

"No, bai Jove!"

But their eager interest over the question of the next captain kept tea from being the gloomy meal it might otherwise have been, had the chums of the Fourth and Shell thought only of Kildare's resignation.

Half-way through tea, Talbot looked into the study.

"Hallo, hallo!" sang out Tom cheerily. "Come on in, old hoss! There's a couple of sardines left!"

Reginald Talbot sat down at the table, with a grin, and accepted the proffered sardines with alacrity.

"I see there's a notice up on the Sixth Form board," he remarked, as he dropped sugar into his tea. "They've got a giddy meeting on to-night. About the captaincy, I s'pose."

"Must be," nodded Blake, scraping out the marmalade-pot with a big spoon. "Herries, you greedy bounder, you've wolfed all the marmalade!"

"Plenty more in the cupboard!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Pass it out, somebody! My hat, it would be jolly interesting to know what the Sixth have to say about it! I suppose they'll decide the candidates for the election among themselves. I wonder if Kildare will attend the meeting?"

Speculation regarding the Sixth Form meeting was as far as Tom Merry & Co. went. But there was one junior, at least, whose curiosity took him further!

Baggy Trimble, with his usual overwhelming desire to poke his fat little nose into other people's business, had his own methods of gaining first-hand information. The Sixth Form meeting was arranged to start at six-thirty. By six-fifteen Baggy was sneaking cautiously into the empty Form-room where the meeting was to take place. A large cupboard behind the master's desk struck him at once as being the ideal spot for his little plan.

A minute after his entry into the Form-room Baggy had installed himself in the dark interior of the big cupboard. It was rather a tight squeeze, but Trimble was prepared to put up with a little discomfort just then.

That there would be trouble if he were found, Baggy knew very well. But so strong was his inborn curiosity about matters which were no concern of his—often simply because they were not his concern!—that Baggy was prepared to take the risk of being discovered. In any case, he knew that the chance that someone might open the cupboard door during the meeting was a very slight one.

Some minutes before the half-hour, the Sixth-Formers began to arrive.

Baggy Trimble, curled up in the darkness, heard the footsteps of the arriving seniors, and their voices, quite clearly. A faint chink of light under the door was his only illumination, and he had no chance of seeing out. He could only listen to what went on. That, however, was hardly a handicap, for listening was one of Baggy's little specialities.

Monteith was one of the first to arrive accompanied by two other New House Sixth-Formers. Then Baggy heard the harsh voice of Gerald Knox, and he gave a gasp.

Knox was the most unpopular prefect at St. Jim's. Many a time and oft had Baggy made painful acquaintance with Knox's ashplant, and the mere thought of being found in his hiding-place by that sour individual sent a shiver down the fat Fourth-Former's spine.

Half-past six chimed from the school clock across the quad.

Baggy Trimble, all ears, settled down in his hiding-place to listen eagerly to the debates of the mighty men of the Sixth!

He heard the voice of Darrell asking for silence, and all conversation in the big Form-room stopped immediately.

Evidently Darrell was the chairman to-night.

It was soon clear to Trimble that the junior school had been quite right in thinking that the Sixth-Formers were meeting to discuss the question of the vacant captaincy.

And as Baggy listened to the Sixth-Formers, with one ear glued to the door, his eyes widened, and began to sparkle with excitement.

"My aunt!" breathed Baggy, in the darkness of the cupboard. "Whew! Great pip!"

For the Sixth were discussing an amazing resolution!



Hotly indignant at what they considered unreasonable censure upon Kildare on the part of the Head, the Sixth-Formers were apparently roused to a high pitch of excitement. The way in which Knox was shouted down when he attempted to make some unpopular suggestions—what they were, Baggy could not quite catch—showed that the atmosphere of the meeting was electric.

In the opinion of the Sixth the discipline of the school could not be maintained if prefects could not punish juniors on reasonable evidence.

When Darrell put the resolution to the meeting that "this meeting considers that Kildare has been badly treated, and did right in resigning," there was not a dissentient voice. Even Knox said nothing. Baggy noticed, when Darrell asked if anyone opposed the motion, although it was well known that Knox and Kildare were anything but friends.

But it was the second motion put by Darrell that caused Baggy's eyes to widen with excitement.

Darrell's voice, very cool and steady in contrast to the general tone of the other speakers, came to his ears from somewhere near the cupboard:

"I propose, then, that the Sixth, being one and all in strong sympathy with Kildare in this matter, shall all decline to stand for election to the vacant captaincy!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was a roar of approval. Then the voice of Mon-teith cut through it:

"I have pleasure in seconding that resolution!"

There was a murmur of satisfactory and excited talk, and some cheers. Darrell gave a grim laugh.

"The motion seems to be carried unanimously, gentlemen!" he announced, and there was further cheering.

"My only hat!" gasped Baggy Trimble, quivering with excitement. "They—they refuse to stand for the captaincy! Oh, great pip! He, he, he! What will the Head say?"

He fairly squirmed with delight.

But the next moment the fat Fourth-Former gave a stifled gasp, as he felt the door move. His wriggles had pushed it open an inch or more. Baggy made a grab to close it again, lost his balance, and toppled from the top of the high box on which he had been curled.

"Yaroooooop!"

He clutched frantically at an easel and blackboard that leant against the back of the cupboard, and dragged them with him. There was a crash, and the door shot open, and Baggy Trimble and the blackboard, inextricably mixed up, shot out of the cupboard.

The next moment, with another yell, Baggy found himself sprawling on the floor with the blackboard half on top of him, at the very feet of the tall figure of Darrell of the Sixth.

CHAPTER 6.  
Exciting for St. Jim's!

"YOW! Oh! Grooooooofffff!"

With all the wind utterly knocked out of him, Baggy Trimble sprawled wildly on the floor, pinned down by the blackboard.

"Great Scott!"

There were excited gasps and exclamations from all over the room. Sixth-Formers on all sides were staring at Baggy as though he had been an apparition.

His violent and unexpected entry had produced a sudden deathly silence. Only the struggles of the fat junior, amid the wreckage of the blackboard and easel on the floor, broke the silence of the Sixth Form room.



"Kildare," said Dr. Holmes sharply, "you will kindly apologise to Racke at once." "Certainly," The captain of St. Jim's turned to Aubrey Racke, whose eyes were gleaming with triumph. "I am sorry for what happened, Racke—very sorry!" he said steadily. (See Chapter 4.)

"Ow!" groaned Baggy. "Oh, lor'!"

"Trimble!" ejaculated Darrell, staring down at him in almost incredulous amazement.

"Wow!" panted Trimble. "I—I say, dragimoff! Pull this blessed blackboard off me, somebody! Ow! I'm hurt!"

Darrell's face set grimly. He realised now that Trimble had been eavesdropping. He stooped and lifted the blackboard, leaning it against the wall.

"Get up!" he commanded.

"Ow!" groaned Trimble. "I—I can't! My neck's broken—I mean, my back's broken! And both arms! Oh! Ow! Grooooooh!"

"Stop that row!" snapped Darrell angrily. "And get up!"

"But I'm in agony!" groaned Trimble, rolling his eyes. "Send for a doctor somebody!"

"A vet would be more use," grinned Knox.

"Oh, really, Knox—"

"Half a jiff!" cut in North. "The kid may be really hurt! That blackboard's heavy, you know."

He hurried up and stooped over Baggy, who gave another heart-rending groan.

"Rats!" grinned Knox. "The little sweep's shamming! He's trying to escape a licking for eavesdropping."

"Oh, really, Knox!" Baggy gave a nerve-racking moan. "I've broken a leg, I think, and a couple of ribs or so—"

"Well, here's something to mend 'em again!" exclaimed Knox.

He strode swiftly towards Baggy's prone figure, and raised a boot as if to bestow a hearty kick on Baggy's fat anatomy.

With a squeal Baggy leapt to his feet and scuttled behind North for protection. Knox gave a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! I said he wasn't hurt much!"

"My hat, you're right!" North gripped Baggy by the shoulder and shook him. "You fat little rotter, you were listening in that cupboard—eh?"

"Nunno!" squeaked Baggy, in alarm. Perspiration was standing out on his fat face. "I—I wasn't listening. I never heard a word. I never heard you say that none of you would put up for the captain's election."

"Great Scott!"

"I didn't hear about that," said Baggy breathlessly. "And if I had, I shouldn't have told anybody. But I didn't know about it, of course—"

He broke off as North shook him again.

"Well, even if the kid has heard, it doesn't much matter," said Darrell, with a shrug. "It wouldn't be a secret long, in any case. But he deserves a good licking. Lay him across that desk, North!"

North, with Knox's aid, obliged. Baggy howled and

wriggled as he found himself hoisted face-down across one of the desks; and then the dust rose as Darrell's hand, gripping an ebony ruler, rose and fell.

"Yooooop! Wow! Ow!"

Baggy's howls fairly echoed round the Sixth Form room. Even the angry Sixth-Formers grinned.

"Now, clear!" commanded Darrell sternly.

It was a sadder, if not a wiser Baggy, that limped from the Sixth Form room.

"Yah! Beasts!" said Baggy Trimble; but he said it under his breath. "Ow! I've a good mind to complain to the Head!"

He glared at the now shut door of the Sixth Form room, and shook a fat fist. Then he waddled painfully away along the passage, and headed for the Fourth Form passage. As he turned into it the immaculate figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy hove into sight.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass, and surveyed Trimble in great surprise. "Weally, Twimble, you appear to be wathah dustay and dishevelled. You look a perfect twamp, Twimble. Not been havin' a scwap with a dustman, I pwesume?"

"No," snorted Trimble. "It was that beast Darrell!"

"Dawwell?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, in great surprise. "Howevah—"

"Oh, never mind that!" interrupted Trimble. "Listen!" His face had lit up with excitement. In a moment he was fairly bursting with the news he had to spread. "The Sixth have all agreed not to put up for the captaincy. And Kildare's resigned, of course. He, he, he! Won't the Head be in a stew?"

"Gweat Scott!"

The swell of St. Jim's stared at Trimble incredulously.

"None of 'em will take on Kildare's job," chortled Baggy. "None of 'em!"

"But how the dickens do you know?" demanded D'Arcy.

"Ahem! I—er—I happened to get shut in a cupboard in the Sixth Form room, you see," said Baggy hastily. "I couldn't help hearing what was said at the meeting. It's true enough. Isn't it a go? The Head'll be frightfully mad."

Arthur Augustus surveyed Trimble icily through his eyeglass.

"So you were eavesdroppin' at the Sixth Form meetin'?"

"Oh, rats!" growled Trimble.

"And that's why Dawwell trowned you, you fat fwog!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

With a glare Baggy Trimble rolled on. He had no wish to listen further to the strong disapproval of the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus watched him vanish into Study No. 2. There was a strange look on the face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"But if what Twimble says is true—" he muttered, with a gleam of excitement in his eyes. "Bai Jove, what an extraordinary situation! St. Jim's will be without a skippah altogether. Gweat Scott!"

And Arthur Augustus turned and hurried back towards Study No. 6 to spread the amazing news.

By bed-time all St. Jim's knew of the Sixth Form resolution. No Sixth-Former would put up for election to the vacant captaincy. None of them would consent to step into Kildare's shoes as captain of St. Jim's. So they had told Dr. Holmes!

And Kildare was standing firmly by his resignation.

"My giddy aunt!" exclaimed Clive of the Fourth, as he went up to the Fourth Form dormitory that night. "It looks like a blessed feud between the Head and the prefects."

Ralph Reckness Cardew, the dandy of the Fourth, grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

"Looks like it, dear man," he drawled. "Quite an amusin' situation—what? I bet dear old Kildare never dreamt of the fun he was startin' when he handed in his resignation to the Head yesterday. But he can't go back on it now."

"But there must be a skipper," put in Levison. "The Sixth'll have to climb down."

"I fancy they won't," grinned Cardew. "They're too keen to back up Kildare. Old Knox might like to collar the captaincy, perhaps, but he'd be afraid to go against the rest of the Sixth. They could make things too jolly hot for him if he tried to be a jolly old blackleg."

"Then what the dickens is going to happen?" exclaimed Clive.

"Haven't the faintest," chuckled Cardew. "But it's looking to me as if St. Jim's will be without a captain for quite a long time. We shall be able to do pretty well as we like. Won't the fags be pleased?"

Without doubt, discipline at St. Jim's was likely to go to pieces. Without a captain to direct them and encourage them, the prefects could not be expected to carry out their duties anything like so efficiently. And the masters could

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not keep order in the same way that the prefects could. There were too few of them, for one thing.

What would the Head do?

That was the question that buzzed in the dormitories of both School House and New House that night. Could the Head force the prefects to abandon their position?

The general opinion was that he could not, that the Sixth, standing solidly together, as they were, were unconquerable.

As Tom Merry remarked as he climbed into bed:

"It looks like deadlock!"

## CHAPTER 7.

### Captain Wanted!

NEXT morning St. Jim's was humming with a fresh excitement.

Dr. Holmes had posted a notice ordering the whole school to gather in Big Hall after last lesson that morning. Everyone wondered what the Head had to say. That it was something to do with the captaincy, everyone was agreed.

Quite a crowd of juniors risked being late in their own Form-rooms for second lesson in order to watch the Sixth going into their room. Dr. Holmes was taking them in Greek, and there was a breathless hush from the watching youngsters as the Head's dignified figure appeared, and rustled into the Sixth Form room with frowning brow.

"Looks waxy, doesn't he?" grinned Croke, hurrying off to the Snell Form room.

"He's got something up his sleeve, if you ask me!" declared Hammond.

The rest of the morning seemed to crawl by. But at last the time came for the school to repair to Big Hall. There, in a breathless hush, Dr. Holmes strode on to the dais, and his stern glance roamed over the rows of silent seniors and juniors.

No one stirred. Even the inky-fingered fags of the Second and Third were awed into silence.

The Head was still looking decidedly "waxy," as Croke had put it. His brows were frowning, his lips tight. There was a gleam in his eyes that was almost warlike.

He cleared his throat ominously.

"Now for squalls!" breathed Digby softly.

"Boys," said the Head, his deep voice carrying to the far corners of Big Hall, "no doubt you are well aware that Kildare has resigned his position as captain of St. Jim's."

There was a faint rustle of excited interest among the listening fellows. All eyes were riveted on the Head.

"Since Kildare's sudden resignation," went on the Head in level tones, "the remainder of the Sixth Form have come to a decision that none of them wishes to become captain in Kildare's place."

He glanced sharply to where Darrell stood near the dais, listening with a face free of any expression.

"Darrell!"

"Sir!"

"I am right in imagining that the Sixth still stand by their decision?"

"Yes, sir," answered Darrell quietly.

He sat down. Not a whisper of sound could have been heard in Big Hall.

The Head nodded grimly, and his eyes ran over the faces of the assembled Sixth-Formers.

"I understand that Darrell is acting as spokesman for the Sixth," he went on icily. "If, however, any Sixth Form boy is not in total agreement with the decision of his Form fellows, and is willing to assume the position of captain of St. Jim's, whether he is now a prefect or not, I shall be glad if he will stand up!"

The eyes of the rest of the school turned from the Head in a moment. Attention was riveted upon the ranks of the Sixth-Formers.

With stony faces, the Sixth remained motionless. Then there was a sudden stir from one-end of the front row.

"Knox!" breathed Tom Merry in Manners' ear.

Knox had seemed to be about to rise. His face was set in a queer way, rather pale. He glanced uncertainly, with a half-defiant look, along the row of Sixth-Formers.

Clearly it was in his mind to rise. The eyes of the Head and of the whole school were on him. They saw him lick his dry lips. Then he sat down again.

An audible murmur ran through Big Hall.

Knox had funk'd it! Dearly though he would have liked to claim the captaincy, he had not the nerve to defy the rest of the Sixth.

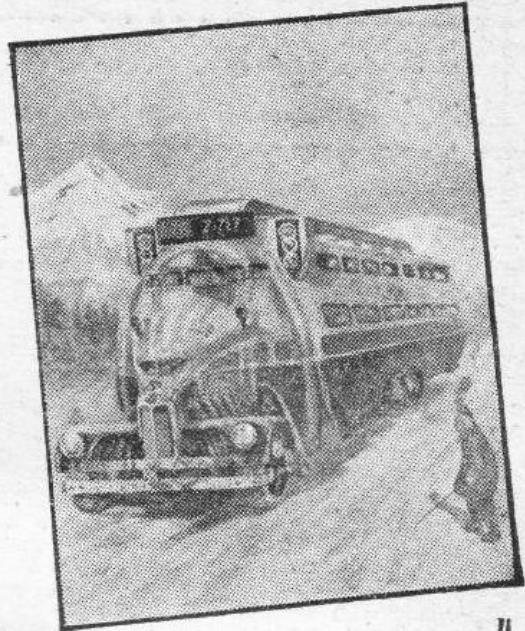
For half a minute more the Head waited. Then he removed his spectacles and wiped them. He reset them on his nose and surveyed the listening school grimly.

"Very well," he said. "You have all seen and heard

(Continued on page 12.)

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You will be able to climb into your seat, at one of the huge parking-places covering several acres of ground and roofed over like a big railway station to-day, tuck your ticket safely into a pocket, settle down in the luxuriously padded armchair allotted to you, and then prepare to pass the time pleasantly until your stopping-place—Paris, Cologne, Rome, or any other town on the map of Europe—is reached.

No, the motor-coach will not have to swim the Channel, for the Tunnel will be in full swing, and our all-metal, stream-lined giant will make short work of that stretch. If your journey is a long one you will want to eat and drink and sleep. All these amenities will be "on the premises"!

Your ticket will include a bed—a berth on the top deck, partitioned off from all the other beds, and folding away snugly when the early-morning tea has been drunk and passengers are washing, shaving, and generally refreshing themselves in the private dressing room. Hot meals will come from the coach's kitchen—complete with electric oven and other labour-saving devices that occupy the minimum of precious space.

### THE MARVELLOUS MOVABLE ENGINE!

Meanwhile, your coach will be tearing along a wide, specially constructed road on which only swift-moving motor traffic is allowed. Supplies of all sorts will be replenished only at long intervals, and, so that there shall be only very short halts at certain stages of the journey, the detachable motor will be removed in a twinkling and another pushed into its place!

That cuts out long stops necessitated by an overhaul of the engine, for at that future date people will simply not tolerate a minute longer than is absolutely necessary being spent on a trip to wherever it is they want to go.

That removable engine is not waiting to be invented. It

*Next week's article deals with "A Desert Liner!" another dream of the future which is the subject of the THIRD Free Gift Picture Card*

is even now in regular use, on the motor-coach stages in America where the full run takes six days and nights! The enormous coaches fitted with this wonderful engine are costing now £4,000 apiece. That sum will rise into five figures when our coach of the future is an ordinary and accustomed part of our everyday life.

### SPEED'S THE THING!

For the coach-to-be will make the present long-distance ones look as feeble and insignificant as the stage-coach of our grandfathers appears by the side of an express train! You will get only a blurred impression, certainly, of the country through which you rush, as you glimpse it through the curved side windows—those windows being curved because the body of the coach is rounded.

That unusual shape, together with the air-cutting "nose," will reduce air-resistance to the very lowest factor. Of course, the weight of the entire vehicle will run into very many tons, but the body will be made of the specially light metal called duralumin, purposely to make it as light as possible on its eight wheels. If you want to get a better view of the scenery than that afforded by the rounded side-windows, there will be the observation compartment at the rear whence you can look out at the scenery as it recedes swiftly from you.

All the windows will open, but you won't want to push out your head and get it almost knocked off by the windrush that tears past the streamlined sides. Ventilation will be maintained electrically, so no one need make himself unpopular by wanting a window opened a crack when everyone else is hating a draught! The interior will also be electrically lighted and warmed.

When the flashing scenery palls, you will be able to turn your attention to the television screen on which the news or amusements of the day (or night) are being depicted. A wireless loud-speaker will keep you informed orally of everything that is afoot, and there will be never a road-bump to distract your attention.



## "Vote for Tom Merry!"

(Continued from page 10.)

that the Sixth decline to provide a captain for St. Jim's. But the school shall have a captain, none the less!"

"What the thump—" muttered Blake.

"Since none of the Sixth will accept the post," went on Dr. Holmes in his most biting tones, "I have no choice but to offer the position of captain to any boy who, after due nomination for election, is selected by his schoolfellows. The election will take place on Friday next—a week to-day. By that time, any boy who cares to send in his name to me as a candidate—any boy at all—may do so."

There was a breathless hush, followed almost instantly by an excited murmur that swelled from the rows of seniors and juniors.

The Head raised his hand sternly.

"Silence!" he commanded. The murmur died away. "I repeat, the vacant post is now open to any boy who cares to be nominated for election."

The stony faces of the Sixth had taken on startled expressions.

They had never dreamed of this amazing counter-move on the part of the Head. It left them gasping.

That anyone but a Sixth-Former could possibly be captain of St. Jim's had not occurred to anyone. It was a staggering announcement on the Head's part.

"Great Aunt Jemima!" gasped Herries.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

There was a strange look on the face of Grundy of the Shell.

George Alfred Grundy was a great man—in the opinion of George Alfred Grundy! No one else thought so; in fact, everyone else thought that Grundy was the biggest duffer at St. Jim's. But the burly George Alfred thought otherwise.

The Head's startling announcement had left most of the fellows staggered. But to Grundy it had come as the big chance he had long been waiting for—a chance of really showing St. Jim's what he was made of.

Grundy turned to Talbot with an excited face.

"Me!" he breathed in a voice that quivered with eagerness. "I'm the chap! I'm going to put up for it! I mean to be captain of St. Jim's. I tell you—"

"Silence!" rapped out the Head again, and Grundy broke off. "That is all I have to say, boys! Dismiss!"

And, with wondering faces, the St. Jim's fellows streamed out from Big Hall.

Hammond had prophesied that the Head had something up his sleeve against the Sixth!

St. Jim's knew now what it was!

### CHAPTER 8. Grundy Gets Busy!

"NO!"

"But, look here, Tom—"

"No!"

"But—"

"No!" answered Tom Merry, very decidedly, for the third time. And then he added, as a grand finale: "Rats!"

Monty Lowther and Harry Manners and the four chums of Study No. 6 looked at Tom Merry, and then they looked at one another. Their faces were glum.

Tom's refusal seemed very flat indeed.

"But, Tom Mewwy, deah boy, now that the captaincy of St. Jim's is open to all, I considah that you ought to put up for it!" urged Arthur Augustus warmly.

"Of course he ought!" growled Herries.

Tom shook his head.

"No!" he said quietly. "I'm not going to be such an ass as to put up for the captaincy! If you idiots had got a single ounce of sense amongst you—"

"Bai Jove! Weally, I—"

"An ounce of sense amongst you," repeated Tom firmly, "you'd realise it would be absolute rot for a junior to put up for the captaincy of St. Jim's! Even after what the Head has said, he obviously means a senior to be skipper. Lefevre of the Fifth, or somebody like that."

"But Grundy's putting up, and he's a junior!" put in Monty Lowther argumentatively.

Tom smiled.

"Oh, Grundy!" he said lightly.

"But think how ripping it would be if you were skipper of St. Jim's!" urged Manners.

Tom shook his head again, rather impatiently.

"It's idiotic even to dream of such a thing!" he declared. "Obviously, a senior will get elected. I shouldn't stand an earthly."

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The seven juniors were standing by the fire in the Common-room after tea that evening. They were alone there. It had been Manners' idea in the first place that Tom should take advantage of the Head's proposition by putting up for the vacant captaincy, and his other chums had welcomed the idea eagerly. But Tom would have none of it.

"I shouldn't stand an earthly of getting elected," he repeated, "and I'm not going to be ass enough to try!"

With which final refusal the captain of the Shell strode towards the door and left the Common-room. After a moment or two Monty Lowther and Manners followed him, leaving Blake & Co. alone together.

"He's an obstinate ass!" growled Blake.

"Heah, heah! I considah—"

"Ring off, Gussy!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Come on!" said Herries. "We'd better start prep."

And the four chums of the Fourth left the Common-room, looking very thoughtful.

It was a great disappointment to them that Tom refused so flatly to put up for the captaincy of St. Jim's. They did not agree in the least with Tom that a senior was obviously the only fellow to make a good captain. They considered that Tom would make a rattling good skipper. "And it would be a ripping smack in the eye for the Sixth!" as Herries had remarked, with a grin.

But if Blake & Co. were disappointed, Manners and Lowther were still more so. Their faces were set in very frowning lines as they left the Common-room and turned in the direction of Hall.

A large crowd of fellows round the notice-board drew their attention. Talbot of the Shell, catching sight of them, turned an excited, grinning face to them.

"It's about the captaincy!" he exclaimed, nodding towards a notice on the board. "Three chaps have sent their names in already for election! Lefevre and Cutts and Grundy!"

"Cutts!" gasped Manners. "Great pip!"

Cutts, the "blade" of the Fifth, was scarcely likely to be a popular nomination with Tom Merry & Co. But there were a large number of fellows—Racke & Co., and fellows of their kidney—who would probably support Gerald Cutts. He would make a skipper after their own heart!

"But he won't stand much chance," said Kerruish, one of the group, with a grin. "Lefevre is a cert, if you ask me!"

Manners nodded.

Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth, was a good sportsman, and popular. Although he was not in the Sixth, he would probably make just as good a skipper as some of the members of that lofty Form.

But it was the third name that caused the greatest interest—a great deal of mirth, too! George Alfred Grundy, as captain of St. Jim's, was something that the fellows could not quite picture.

"So he's really sent his name in!" chuckled Monty. "Oh, my hat! What a scream!"

And, still grinning over Grundy's amazing cheek, the two chums turned away from the eager crowd round the board and went upstairs to the Shell passage, intent on starting their prep.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's up?"

The exclamation broke from Manners, as the two turned into the Shell passage from the stairs.

A large crowd of juniors was gathered outside the door of Study No. 3. And, judging by the chuckles, something was amusing them.

Study No. 3 was Grundy's study. And it did not take Lowther and Manners long to see the cause of the other fellows' mirth.

Grundy was wasting no time in canvassing for votes. And he had hit upon a novel means of soliciting support. He had brought the door of his study into use as a hoarding, and chalked on it in large letters was the slogan:

"VOTE FOR GRUNDY AS CAPTAIN OF ST. JIM'S!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great Scotland Yard! Grundy—"

"I don't think!"

The crowd did not seem impressed with Grundy's slogan. "The ass isn't at home!" grinned Kangaroo, in answer to a question from Monty Lowther. "Out canvassing, I expect."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a chuckle, Monty Lowther took a stump of chalk from his pocket and stepped up to the door. He wrote the word "DON'T" in large letters above Grundy's message to the school, so that the words now read:

"DON'T VOTE FOR GRUNDY AS CAPTAIN OF ST. JIM'S!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's more like it!" chortled Bernard Glyn.

There was a step on the stairs, and the rugged figure of Grundy himself appeared, heading for his study.

There was a very pleased smile on Grundy's face. The large crowd of fellows round his door reading his notice delighted him.

"Hallo, you chaps!" boomed Grundy. "Reading the slogan, eh? Good! Who wants a Fifth-Former as skipper? I'm the chap you want—"

He broke off abruptly, and his face went crimson.

He had reached his door, and Monty Lowther's little alteration to the notice on the door had met his eyes. He gaped at it, with breathless fury, then swung round on the crowd of chuckling juniors.

"Who put that there?" he bellowed.

"Little me!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Why, I'll—I'll smash you!"

Brandishing his fists, George Alfred Grundy rushed at Monty Lowther. But the other fellows closed up; and Grundy, seeing that public opinion was against him, halted, breathing hard.

"You silly chumps!" he snorted. "Trying to be funny about a serious matter—that's what it is!"

He turned, and with his handkerchief he carefully wiped off the offending addition to his glaring advertisement. Then, with a final glare at Monty Lowther, he vanished into his study and banged the door shut.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grinning, Monty Lowther stepped forward again and with his stump of chalk inscribed the word "DON'T" in large letters on top of the door.

He had scarcely finished before the door was flung open with a crash, and Grundy glared out.

The candidate for the captaincy had heard suspicious sounds on the door and had come to investigate. When he saw that the offending word had been replaced he went almost purple in the face.

"Who did that?" he roared.

"The King of Siam!" Gore informed him gravely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly cuckoos!" howled Grundy. "I'll wallop the lot of you if you dare do it again!"

With his handkerchief he savagely expunged the large "DON'T" from the top of the door, and, with a threatening glare that was calculated to frighten off anyone from repeating the offence, he retired once more into his study and slammed the door.

Softly chuckling, and careful to make no sound, Monty Lowther stepped up to the door, reached up with his chalk, and inscribed a still larger "DON'T" on the top panels.

Then, chuckling, the juniors dispersed to their studies to begin their prep. When Grundy opened his door again, he was not likely to chuckle, however.

The Shell passage was not empty for long.

The figure of Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, appeared at the end of it five minutes later, striding, with rustling gown, towards the stairs.

Opposite Study No. 3, however, the Form master stopped, with a sudden exclamation. A deep frown appeared on Mr. Linton's face.

"Bless my soul!"

He stared at the big, sprawling letters of Grundy's election slogan with a very wrathful expression. Even the obviously unintended amendment—unintended by Grundy!—at the top failed to bring a smile to his face.

To Mr. Linton a study door was the last place that should be utilised for such a purpose.

Lying on a ledge near him was a duster, left by one of the charwomen who were employed to keep the passage clean. With an angry exclamation, Mr. Linton snatched it up, and, grim-faced, reached out and began to wipe out the chalked words on the door.

But he did not finish the task.

Grundy, within, heard the sounds, and he gave a furious snort. That this was some junior—probably Monty Lowther back again—he had not the slightest doubt.

"By James!" snorted Grundy. "I'll show 'em!"

He jumped up from his chair and snatched up a large cushion.

(Continued on next page.)

**Q. What is Satsuma ware?**  
A. A type of fine Japanese pottery, Arthur Beale, so-named after a province in Japan.

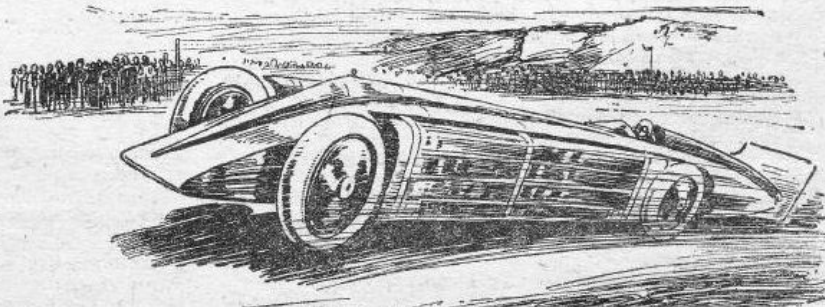
**Q. Who was Mumbo Jumbo?**  
A. A reader who signs himself "Meditative Maurice" has read the term in a book that his uncle sent him for a birthday present entitled: "Political Economy and Reform of the Franchise." He wants me to tell him if the gentleman in question—Mumbo Jumbo—was an Indian in the last British parliament and, if so, whether he was Conservative, Liberal or Labour. Although I have not read your book, Maurice, I should judge that the writer used the term in the usual modern sense. At one time Mumbo Jumbo meant a grotesque idol worshipped by certain savage tribes; nowadays the name is used to refer to any object of senseless veneration. For instance, one might say that the insistence that monkey-nuts should not be sold after 8 p.m. is the Mumbo Jumbo of one of the political parties. I note that you say you are not particularly interested in the book your uncle gave you, and will I recommend some reading more instructive and amus-

ing. Certainly, Maurice! Why not regularly order "The Magnet" as well as the GEM?

**Q. What is the Golden Arrow?**  
A. Bless my heart, "Young Egbert," where have you been living during the past few weeks? The Golden Arrow, of which you say you heard some mention, was the £18,000 racing motor-car of 1,000 horse power with which Major Segrave achieved the amazing speed of 231.362

seconds if it wasn't for the water in between, and can move 197,458 times faster than our present office-boy coming back from lunch! Phew!

**Q. What is a potlatch?**  
A. This, E. E. W., used to be the tribal feast given by a candidate for chiefship among the North American Indians. Nowadays the term is often heard in the United States and Canada used by white people to describe a jollification of any kind.



The Golden Arrow, Major Segrave's wonder car in which he created a new world's land speed record of over 231 miles per hour. This car cost £18,000 to build.

Then he stole across to the door on tiptoe. It was essential to take the miscreant in the passage by surprise, Grundy told himself. He reached out for the handle.

With a great crash he flung the door open and brought the cushion down with a bang on the head of the figure outside.

"Take that!" roared Grundy.

The cushion burst, and feathers flew in all directions. It was as if a small snowstorm had suddenly broken in the Shell passage. There was a muffled howl.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped George Alfred Grundy.

For through the flying feathers the face of Mr. Linton appeared to his horrified gaze, glaring and speechless, with his mortar-board battered and bent and tilted at a disreputable angle over one eye.

Choking and spluttering, and picking feathers from his mouth, Mr. Linton stared at Grundy as though he would have liked to eat him.

"How—how—how dare you!" hooted Mr. Linton, fairly dancing with fury. "How dare you, I say? I—I—"

Grundy, wishing that the ground would open and swallow him, found his voice with difficulty.

"I—I never thought it was you, sir!" he gasped. "I thought it was some other ass—I mean, some ass who was mucking about with my notice, sir! I thought it was one of the chaps—"

"You are a hooligan, sir!" panted Mr. Linton, beside himself with rage. "A hooligan, I say!"

Doors were opening all along the passage, and grinning faces were watching the scene. Grundy stared at Mr. Linton miserably.

"Come with me to my study, Grundy!" barked Mr. Linton.

And, with feathers still clinging to his ears and shoulders, the Form master stalked away up the passage, followed by the unhappy candidate for the captaincy of St. Jim's.

Grundy's first move in his electioneering campaign had ended disastrously! Which fact was testified by the curious swishing sounds that emerged through the closed door of Mr. Linton's study a few minutes later.

When Grundy appeared again, to be greeted by a chorus of chuckles from a waiting group of Shell fellows, he was looking red, and his eyes were watering; but the grim expression on his face seemed to show that Grundy was by no means disheartened.

Grundy's electioneering campaign would undoubtedly continue on the original lines that could occur only to George Alfred Grundy!

## CHAPTER 9. The Deputation!

**T**RAMP, tramp, tramp!

Tom Merry turned his head, listening. A number of feet were tramping along the Shell passage.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom, glancing at Manners and Lowther. "Listen! Sounds like a blessed regiment—"

The three chums were in their study, making toast for tea. They had been playing footer that afternoon, and were hungry.

The next moment, however, their toast-making was interrupted.

There was a bang on the door of Study No. 10. It was a powerful bang, and sent the door whirling open with a crash.

"My hat!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

A sea of faces was staring, grinning, into the study. Then, with tramping feet, the visitors came into the study in a body, led by Blake of the Fourth and Talbot of the Shell. Those that found no room in the study stayed outside.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Tom. "What the merry dickens—"

Manners and Lowther were grinning. To them, apparently, the visit was no surprise. In fact, when Tom glanced at them he found that his two chums had joined the crowd.

"We want a word with you!" grinned Blake.

"Oh!" gasped Tom, in bewilderment.

"Yaas, bai Jovel! Now, you fellows, pway leave the talkin' to me—"

"Rats! Shut up, Gussy!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"We've come to talk about—" began Talbot.

"It's like this," explained Kangaroo. "We all—"

"We're a deputation," explained Dick Julian of the Fourth. "And—"

"Pway leave the talkin' to me, Julian! As a fellow of tact and judgment—"

"Dry up, Gussy! You see, Tom Merry, we want—"

Tom Merry grinned.

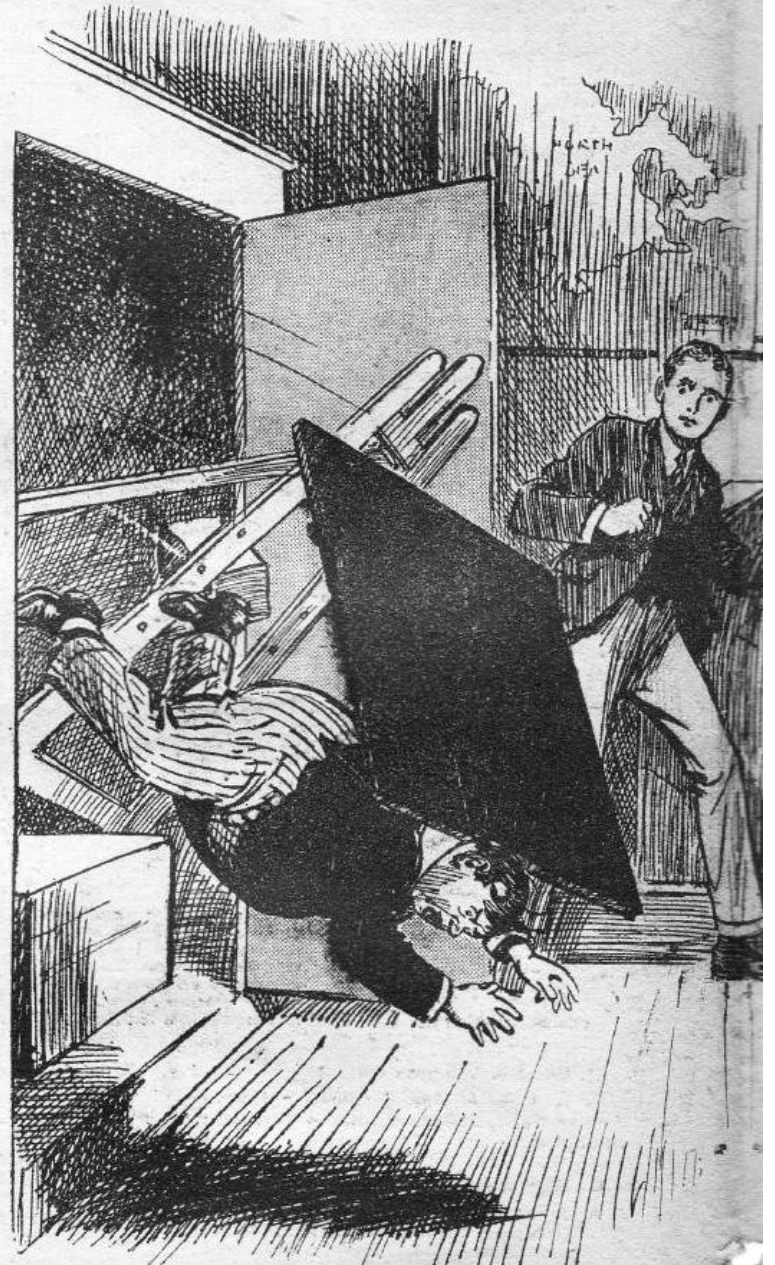
"One at a time, you asses!" he suggested. "Then perhaps I'll know what it's all about!"

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"Hear, hear!" agreed Blake heartily. "You see—"  
"Pway be quiet, Blake, and let me explain to Tom Mewwy—"

"Order!"

"The fact is," roared Blake, glaring at D'Arcy, "we're a House deputation, and we've come to ask you to put up for the captaincy of St. Jim's. The Head's said any chap can put up, and, although you're a junior, under the circs there's no giddy reason why a junior shouldn't be skipper. And so we're asking you to send in your name to the Head!"



As he shot out of the cupboard in the Sixth Form-room, Baggy Trimble hit him. The next moment, with a terrific yell, Baggy found himself sprawling Darrell of the Sixth. "Yaro!"

"Hear, hear!" agreed the whole deputation.

"Oh!"

Tom Merry stared at the deputation with a slight frown gathering on his face.

"Well?" demanded Clifton Dane eagerly.

"What about it?" yelled Mulvaney minor. "Sure, an' Tommy darlint, we want ye for the captain—"

"Hear, hear!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I don't want to put up for the captaincy!" he said shortly. "For two reasons. First, it would be ridiculous for a junior to try for it; and, secondly, I'm backing up Kildare! Like the Sixth, I jolly well don't feel like trying to bag his place, under the circs!"

"Rats!"

"Look here—" began Lowther warmly.

"You can't refuse a House deputation!" snorted Manners.

"And anyway," granted Tom, "I shouldn't stand an earthly chance of getting elected! You asses might vote for me, but no one else would!"

"Then," put in Talbot quickly, "if you're certain you wouldn't get elected, you needn't mind being nominated!"

"Well, that's so," said Tom. "But—"

"Weally, deah boy, we mean to insist that you put up!"

"Rather!" chimed in a dozen voices.

"But, look here," began Tom, in an exasperated voice, "it's jolly nice of you chaps, but—"

"Oh, collar the ass!" growled Blake.

Tom gave a gasp.

"Hands off, you bounders—"

But the next moment the deputation, led by Blake and Manners and Lowther and Talbot, had swept upon the captain of the Shell. Struggling and gasping, Tom was collared and swung into the air.

"Will you put up for the captaincy?" roared Blake.

"No!"

"Then bump him!"

There was a thud as Tom smote his own carpet anything but gently. He gave a gasp.

"You silly asses—"

Bump Bump!

"Ow! Leggo, you burbling lunatics—"

"There's only Cutts and Grundy for the others," grinned Levison. "They won't get in!"

"Neither shall I!" responded Tom, grinning, too. "And now clear out, for goodness' sake, and leave a chap to get his tea!"

Cheerily the deputation tramped out, and slammed the door, leaving Tom alone with his two chums. Manners and Monty Lowther were grinning broadly, evidently very pleased with themselves. Tom glared at them, then grinned, too.

"You bounders!" he exclaimed. "You'll find you've wasted your time, though, when you see me at the bottom of the poll, barring Grundy!"

"Rats!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"We'll see!" grinned Manners.

With which expression of opinion, the Terrible Three began their interrupted tea.

CHAPTER 10.

Grundy's Great Stunt!

BY the following Wednesday, with only two more days before the election, St. Jim's was in a ferment.

Nearly everyone expected that Lefevre of the Fifth would carry the election; but there were those who prophesied a sweeping victory for Cutts, and those who professed to believe that Tom Merry would win. Only one fellow seemed to favour the chances of George Alfred Grundy. That fellow, needless to say, was the great George Alfred himself!

The Sixth, true to their policy of utter aloofness, appeared coldly indifferent to the whole affair. But the general opinion was that the Sixth were smarting a little. The rest of St. Jim's, whether their sympathies were with Kildare or with Dr. Holmes, one and all agreed that the Head, by his counter-move, had beaten the Sixth, and made them look more than a trifle small. The Sixth consoled themselves with the open conviction that no one but a Sixth-Former could make a successful captain—a contention which had yet to be finally proved.

Canvassing for the various candidates was keen.

Grundy was very energetic during those days. He spent all his spare moments going round buttonholing fellows and pointing out what a splendid skipper he would make for the school—in fact, the only possible skipper! From respect for Grundy's big fists, a good many fellows listened very politely to what he had to say; but it was very doubtful whether many of them would vote for him. Grundy, however, was full of confidence, and made no secret of the fact.

A meeting was held one evening in the lecture-room on behalf of Lefevre, at which his representatives, in the form of Lee and Smith major, argued that Philip Lefevre was the best captain St. Jim's could find, now that the Sixth had withdrawn. The meeting was crowded to overflowing, and Tom Merry, who attended, as he listened to the cheers for Lefevre felt more confident than ever that the tall captain of the Fifth would carry the day without much difficulty.

Tom himself utterly refused to do any canvassing. But his friends in the Shell and Fourth were very energetic on his behalf, he knew. He scarcely felt obliged to them, however. Tom Merry felt thoroughly impatient with the whole business. His nomination had been forced upon him, and was a hopeless one in his opinion.

It was on the Wednesday afternoon that Tom, busy in his study with some lines for Mr. Linton, heard a sudden sound in the quad that caused him to glance up from his task.

Someone seemed to be ringing a bell. It was not one of the school bells, and Tom rose to his feet and crossed to the window to see what was happening.

"By Jove!"

A strangely-clad figure was standing in the middle of the quad, swinging a bell. Tom was amazed to recognise the town-crier of Wayland, in his scarlet coat and three-cornered hat.

And then the deep, resounding voice of the crier boomed across the quad, for all St. Jim's to hear:

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!"

From all sides fellows were hurrying across towards the red-coated figure of the town-crier.

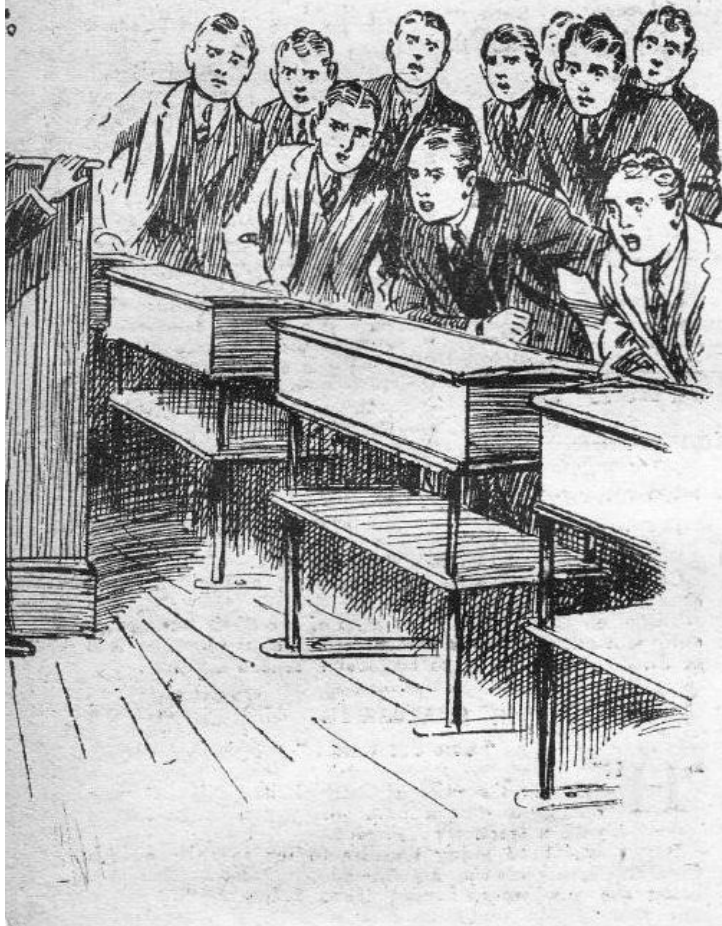
What the Wayland crier was doing in the quad at St. Jim's was a mystery to Tom Merry. A mystery, too, to the interested group that was surrounding the man, grinning and chaffing him as he again swung his bell.

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!"

Tom flung up the window and leaned out, watching the gathering crowd listening with astonishment to hear what the quaintly-garbed visitor had to say.

Neither he nor the crowd was kept long in ignorance.

The crier ceased to swing his bell, and ceased to bellow



latched frantically at an easel and blackboard, and dragged them with on-the floor with the blackboard half on top of him, at the very feet of hoop!" (See Chapter 5.)

"Putting up for the captaincy?" grinned Talbot.

"No!" roared Tom breathlessly.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Now what about it?" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"Oh! Ow! All right, you prize fatheads!"

"Huwah!"

Dishevelled and crimson in the face, Tom Merry was released. He glared at the deputation, and the deputation grinned back cheerily.

"You've promised, you know!" chuckled Manners.

"I know," groaned Tom. "You asses—"

"And we'll all vote for you, deah boy!"

A faint grin appeared on Tom's face. It was a very rueful grin.

"Ow!" he exclaimed. "I'm black and blue, you asses! I'll send my name in, though. But there's one good thing—I shan't stand an earthly against Lefevre and the others!"

"Oyez!" He glanced round, with his red face fairly shining from his vocal efforts, and took a deep breath to start off on his real business.

"Hark ye!" thundered the crier, in the quaint language employed by criers—a relic of the old days. "One person and one person only is fitted for the onerous post of captain of St. Jim's! That person is, as all should agree, George Alfred Grundy!"

"M-m-m-my hat!" stuttered Tom Merry.

He almost fell from the window in his amazement.

The faces of the fellows in the quad were a picture.

They had often heard the Wayland crier before—usually employed to advertise rewards for lost articles, or to give publicity to local affairs. They knew that he was open to be hired by anyone who had something to tell the neighbourhood, but they had never dreamed that a St. Jim's fellow would employ the scarlet-coated crier, let alone use him as a "stunt" for canvassing in a school election!

Only Grundy would have thought of it!

"George Alfred Grundy!" roared the crier again, in stentorian tones. "Will all who hear me kindly vote for George Alfred Grundy to be captain of St. Jim's!"

"Great pip!" gasped Tom faintly.

In the quad the fat crier stood stolidly bawling at the top of his voice the merits of George Alfred Grundy, and the St. Jim's fellows crowding round him listened open-mouthed with amazement.

Grundy's stunt had certainly caught the attention of the whole school that afternoon!

Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers, fags and seniors, even some of the Sixth, were listening to the crier with almost dazed attention.

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Vote for George Alfred Grundy, and have the best captain St. Jim's has ever known!" bawled Grundy's advertising agent in rich tones that penetrated to every corner of the quad.

Monty Lowther, standing in the crowd with Manners, watched the crier's large mouth opening and shutting as if he were watching a freak at a circus. Monty still felt rather dazed. Grundy's amazing wheeze had left him breathless.

"My hat!" breathed Manners. "Grundy's certainly got ideas!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes!" chuckled Fatty Wynn of the New House, standing near.

"This chap must have leather lungs!" grinned Dick Redfern admiringly.

Their first amazement over, the big crowd surrounding the stolid crier were roaring with laughter. Then suddenly Monty Lowther gripped Manners' arm.

"Look!"

With frowning brow, the tall figure of Dr. Holmes was striding across the quad towards the scarlet-coated figure in the cocked hat.

The Head was looking amazed; but he was also looking angry, and his ire was rapidly displacing his amazement. He came hurrying up with rustling gown, and the fellows fell back before him as he strode through the crowd towards the figure in the centre.

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! George Alfred Grundy is the best person for the captaincy! Oyez! Oyez!"

This time the Wayland crier did not reach his third "Oyez!"

The Head's gowned figure loomed up before him, black-browed and breathing very hard.

"Silence!" thundered the Head.

The town-crier broke off, and stared at the Head in an uncertain way.

"How dare you come here, to make that objectionable and unseemly noise, sir!" stormed Dr. Holmes angrily. "Leave these premises immediately!"

The crier looked uncomfortable. He shuffled his big feet nervously, and coughed.

"Well, sir, I've been paid to cry here about Mr. Grundy, and if I don't I break my contract."

"Go!" commanded the Head, calming down a trifle and speaking with cold austerity. "Depart at once! Leave these premises!"

"Mr. Grundy paid me to cry here, sir, and he said particularly that I wasn't to take any notice if any old jossers tried to make me go," said the town-crier obstinately.

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"Old j-jossers?" echoed the Head faintly.

"Yes, sir—his very words," nodded the crier. "Some old jossers may barge up and try to put the kybosh on the stunt," said Mr. Grundy, "but don't you worry."

"The—the kybosh?" stuttered the Head.

"His very words," agreed the town-crier.

"Go!" said the Head faintly. He glanced round as if for moral support. "Knox! See this—this person off the school premises at once!"

"Very good, sir!" grinned Knox.

"Boys, disperse!" exclaimed the Head, and turned and went away rather dazedly towards his house. He glanced back. "And—er—Knox! Find Grundy and send him to me—at once!"

"Right you are, sir!"

The Head vanished, and the grinning crowd broke up. Knox took the town-crier by the arm and led him towards the gates. He went reluctantly.

"Poor old Grundy!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Oh, what a scream!"

"Gwunday is in for a fearful wow!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sagely. "The Head was fidgetfully waxy!"

"Go hon!" grinned Figgins of the New House.

"I expect he'll get a record licking!" grinned Mellish, the sneak of the Fourth.

But Grundy did not get a licking. On reflection, the Head could not quite see anything to "lick" Grundy for.

But he gave him five hundred lines for what Dr. Holmes described to the great George Alfred as "an unseemly method of seeking to influence voting"—and George Alfred left the Head's study looking anything but happy.

Grundy's great schemes for his election campaign seemed one and all doomed to failure! But Grundy was not disheartened.

He was still quite sure that only one of the four candidates stood a chance of winning the election, as he told Talbot, whom he met on the stairs after his interview with the Head.

"Lefevre?" grinned Talbot.

"No, ass!" answered Grundy in his polite way.

"Tom Merry?"

"No," roared Grundy. "He doesn't stand an earthly!"

"Cutts, then?" exclaimed Talbot gravely.

Grundy did not answer. He snorted, and glared, and stamped away.

Talbot chuckled. The great man of the Shell was apparently still quite confident that the name of the next captain of St. Jim's was going to be George Alfred Grundy!

## CHAPTER 11.

### "Vote For Cutts!"

"H!"

It was the voice of Cutts of the Fifth that rang out in a sudden hail. Baggy Trimble turned with a start.

Baggy had been going upstairs to try to raise a loan from Tompkins of the Fourth—Clarence York Tompkins being the meekest and most timid fellow at St. Jim's, and more likely to be induced to part with solid cash to Baggy than anyone else.

On hearing himself hailed, and seeing that it was Cutts of the Fifth who had hailed him, Baggy halted, but looked very doubtful. Cutts had by no means a pleasant reputation, and Baggy had more than once received a kick or a cuff from the "blade" of the Fifth.

"Yes, Cutts?" squeaked Baggy.

"Trimble, old chap! I want a word with you!"

Baggy almost jumped out of his skin to hear himself addressed as "old chap" by the Fifth-Former.

But Cutts was apparently out to be friendly. He came up with a would-be pleasant smile on his rather pasty face, and nodded in a very amiable way.

"I've been looking for you, Trimble, old chap!"

"Ye-e-es?" Baggy was still doubtful.

"I want you to come to a little spread I'm giving to some—er—pals of mine this evening in the large box-room," went on Cutts. "Will you come?"

Baggy's eyes danced greedily.

"Rather, Cutts, old man!" he replied, with alacrity.

Cutts seemed to win a trifle. Possibly Baggy's "old

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man" jarred him; but, if so, he covered his feelings. He coughed.

"Ahem! Yes, I want all my pals to come to this feed," continued the blade of the Fifth. "By the way—not that it has anything to do with it—who are you thinking of voting for on Friday, old man?"

He slipped a friendly arm into Baggy's. Baggy smirked. "I was going to vote for you, Cutts, old man!" said Baggy loftily. "In my opinion, you're just the chap we want!"

"Good!" grinned Cutts. "Do you know, I think you're right. But then, of course, you've got brains."

"I suppose I have," nodded Baggy fatuously. "I say, what time's the feed?" he added quickly.

"First thing after call-over. Don't forget!"

And, with a nod, Cutts strolled away, leaving Baggy grinning with delighted anticipation.

Cutts was a wealthy fellow, and when he gave a feed it was on a lavish scale, Baggy knew!

Even Baggy was not so utterly obtuse as not to realise that he was merely being asked in order to induce him to vote for the blade of the Fifth. But that didn't trouble Baggy. He would have voted for anybody who cared to stand him a feed!

He could scarcely wait for call-over, and was restless with impatience during that proceeding. It seemed to Baggy that he had never heard the names read out so slowly. But at last call-over was done, and Baggy scuttled away as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

The box-room in which Cutts' feast was to be held was quite a large room above the Fourth Form dormitory.

Quick though he had been, Baggy was not the first to arrive. Racke and Crooke were already there, and so was Prye of the Fifth, and Mellish and Scrope. Reggie Manners and a swarm of other fags came scampering in as Baggy arrived, rather to the disgust of the elder fellows. But it was Cutts' feed, and he could presumably ask whom he liked! And everyone knew it was votes that Cutts was after—and Third Form votes were as good as any other.

A squad of New House fellows, to the number of over a dozen, were not long in arriving, headed by Chowle and Clampe. Gore and Lennox and several other Shell fellows came in, some of them looking a trifle sheepish, as though they were not too proud of themselves for having sold their votes to Cutts in return for a feed, however magnificent! Then Cutts himself arrived, with St. Leger and Gilmore, and Poynings of the New House. The four of them were carrying a couple of huge hampers between them, and there was a murmur of satisfaction from the waiting crowd.

The feed had arrived!

"Everybody here?" grinned Cutts hospitably, glancing round.

The box-room was crowded to capacity. There was scarcely an inch of floor space left round the table of boxes that had been arranged in the centre. Cutts chuckled with satisfaction. If all these fellows voted for him, he would certainly stand quite a good chance of winning the election.

"Now for the grub!" grinned St. Leger. "Lend a hand, some of you kids!"

Aided by Gore and Racke and one or two others, the black sheep of the Fifth began to hand out the good things from the hampers, and willing hands placed them on the improvised table.

Baggy's mouth fairly watered at sight of the lavish spread that Cutts had laid in.

Rabbit pies and cold chickens, hams, and tins of sardines, cold eggs by the dozen, and pickles, and jellies, and pastries and cakes—all these and many other delicacies came to light from the depths of the two great hampers.

"Now then, you chaps, fall to!" said Cutts graciously, when the last meringue had been placed upon the table, and knives and forks had been produced from the bottom of one of the hampers. "Tuck in and enjoy yourselves! And don't forget on Friday that I'm the chap you all want for captain of St. Jim's!" He banged a fist on the table. "Vote for Cutts!"

"Hear, hear!" cried St. Leger.

"Hear, hear!" grinned Racke.

"Hear, hear!" squeaked the fags. "Vote for Cutts!"

Cutts grinned, and with a wave of his hand, urged his supporters on to do themselves—and the feed—full justice.

Not that they needed much urging!

The good things began to vanish at a truly amazing rate. But there was more than sufficient to go round—even with Baggy Trimble doing the work of ten!

Cutts must have spent pounds on supplying such a feed—he was not wasting chances, and he had set his heart upon winning the election. He had spent money like

water, and even that big crowd, seniors and juniors, could not between them polish off all the good things at their disposal.

"This is great!" mumbled Baggy, stuffing himself with ham and eggs and pickles, between Scrope and Mellish.

And both Mellish and Scrope agreed with Baggy that it was!

The rattle of knives and forks and spoons, accompanied by the busy champing of jaws, was about the only sound to be heard in the big room for a long time. Even the big swarm of fags—for nearly all the Third had turned up in a body—were silent for once, as they scoffed cold chicken and meringues and rabbit-pie at full speed.

"Wade in, you chaps!" Cutts would remark encouragingly every now and then. "Scoff it up—it's meant to be eaten!"

"Pass those pies to young Manners!" said Cutts. And: "More sardines for you, Lennox? I say, somebody, pass the ham to Trimble—he's run short!"

With Gerald Cutts looking after his guests so well, who could have doubted that the blade of the Fifth was the very man to be captain of St. Jim's?

His guests, certainly, did not doubt it! Cutts was the man for them!

CHAPTER 12.  
After the Feast!

"GROOOOOOH!"  
Baggy Trimble groaned. The fat Fourth-Former was alone in his study, sprawled in a deep chair, with his hands clasped over his ample waistcoat.

His face was a peculiar tinge of mauve, shading to green. After the feast comes the reckoning!

"Ow!" gasped Baggy. "Yoooop!"

The bell had gone, telling Baggy that he ought to go to his dormitory. But he was incapable of stirring.

"Grooooo! Oh! Grooooo!"

The perspiration was standing out on Baggy's brow. His eyes were rolling, and his breath was coming short and fast.

A ghastly pain racked him—a pain that lurked somewhere beneath his waistcoat, and shot from side to side in a truly appalling manner.

No one seeing the tuck that Baggy had consumed in the box-room half an hour before would have been surprised to see him now. But Baggy never expected trouble from his greedy habits—if anything went wrong with him it was always because the grub had been "wiffy," in Baggy's opinion.

"That grub was wiffy!" he told himself now. "Ow! Grooooo! That beast Cutts must have given us stale grub—got it cheap, I expect! The rotter! Catch me voting for him—yaroooooop!"

He squirmed and wriggled in his chair as a violent spasm contorted him.

"Oh, lor!"

The door of the study suddenly opened, and the face of Kildare of the Sixth looked in.

Kildare, though he had resigned the captaincy, was still a prefect. He had been seeing the Fourth to bed, and had noticed Baggy Trimble's absence. So he had come in search of him.

"Trimble!" rapped Kildare angrily.

Then he stepped quickly into the study as he saw the colour of the fat Fourth-Former's face. It was clear to Kildare that Trimble was ill.

"Oh!" groaned Trimble. "Grooooo!"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Kildare. "What on earth's the matter?"

"I'm ill!" gasped Trimble.

Kildare bent over the fat figure sprawled in the chair, a look of alarm on his face.

(Continued on next page.)



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"What's the matter—are you in pain?" he asked.

"Ow! Yes!"

"Where do you feel the pain, young 'un?"

"Here!" panted Trimble, tapping his protruding waist-coat dolefully.

Kildare frowned, with rather less sympathy. He knew Baggy's ways, and guessed now that the fat junior had been "tucking in," not wisely, but too well!

"I suppose you've been stuffing, eh?" he said quietly.

"Ye-e-e-es," admitted Baggy. "Cutts gave a feed—and the grub must have been wiffy!" He squirmed in the chair as another violent spasm of pain shot across the region of his middle. "Yoooooop!"

"Cutts!" exclaimed Kildare in great surprise.

Why a Fifth-Former should have invited Baggy to a feed utterly passed Kildare's comprehension. It seemed so highly unlikely that, being well aware of Trimble's disregard for the truth, he wondered for a moment or two if the whole story was the product of Baggy's fertile imagination.

He frowned. Kildare knew Baggy, and it had occurred to the ex-captain that the truth was far more likely to be that the fat Fourth-Former had raided Cutts' study during the absence of the blade of the Fifth.

"Is that true?" he asked sternly.

"Yes!" groaned Baggy. "Ow! Of course it's true——"

"You mean to say Cutts invited you to a feed?" cried Kildare incredulously.

"Yes!" snorted Baggy. "The beast! The grub was wiffy—must have been—grooooh!"

"But why did Cutts ask you to a feed?" demanded Kildare, still vaguely suspicious.

Trimble glanced at him sharply for a moment. Then he groaned and wriggled.

"Just friendliness, you know," muttered Baggy. He was not too ill to realise that he must not give away the fact that Cutts' feed was simply an electioneering "stunt"—even Baggy knew that Cutts' methods smacked rather too much of bribery and corruption to be told to a prefect.

"Just friendliness," repeated Baggy. The pain was less violent now, and he sat up a little in the chair and blinked at Kildare owlishly. "Cutts and I are very pally, you know—awfully pally!"

"Rats!" said Kildare impatiently. "You're sure you've not been raiding Cutts' grub, Trimble? That's much more likely than that Cutts stood you a feed!"

"Oh, really, Kildare——"

"Let's have the truth!" said the Sixth-Former grimly.

"That is the truth!" growled Baggy. "Cutts stood a feed to some chaps, and he asked me! Why shouldn't he?" he added in an injured tone. "I'm a popular sort of chap! I tell you, Cutts asked me for the pleasure of my company;

not because he wanted me to vote for him or anything like that——"

"Great Scott!"

Kildare jumped. His brow went black.

"You mean to say Cutts has been bribing fellows to vote for him by standing them a feed?" he exclaimed sternly.

"No!" gasped Baggy Trimble in alarm. "Haven't I just said it wasn't to get votes?"

"Who else was there?" demanded Kildare.

"Racke," said Baggy cautiously. "He was there. And—a lot of other chaps. I—I mean, not many other chaps. Just a few pals! The Third weren't there, or anything like that!"

"The Third?" echoed Kildare.

"No!" hooted Baggy desperately. "I've just told you the Third weren't there! Or if they were, it wasn't because Cutts wanted them to vote for him, or anything like that——"

He broke off with a squeal as Kildare gripped him by a fat shoulder.

"So that's the game, is it?" rapped out the prefect. "You've sold your vote to Cutts for a feed, have you? Well, you won't get any sympathy from me for being ill! Get upstairs to bed!"

"Oh, really, Kildare! I think you ought to believe me about Cutts!" squeaked Baggy in great alarm. "I wouldn't tell a lie, you know—it's against my principles, you know, to do such a thing. We Trimbles are the soul of honour——"

"Get upstairs!" broke in Kildare sternly.

Baggy, who was feeling a good deal better now, scuttled from the study like a frightened rabbit and vanished unhappily up the stairs.

It was not for Cutts' sake that Baggy did not wish Kildare to know the truth, though how the Sixth-Former had guessed it he could not imagine. Baggy had an uneasy feeling that he, having partaken of that gorgeous spread, might find himself in trouble as a party to the crime, or something equally unpleasant! He knew that Cutts' vote-bribing methods were entirely "out of order," and that Kildare would take a serious view of the matter. And Kildare was still a prefect!

Kildare followed Trimble's vanishing figure slowly from the study, and closed the door. For nearly a minute he stood with a dark frown on his handsome face. Then he turned and strode in the direction of the Fifth-Form passage.

The Fifth-Formers did not go to bed till a little later than the Shell and Fourth, and Cutts would undoubtedly be in his study.

And Eric Kildare had a good deal to say to the blade of the Fifth! Cutts, like Baggy Trimble, was likely to find that after the feast comes the reckoning.

## CHAPTER 13.

### Out Of It!

"GOOD!" said Gerald Cutts.

He was lounging in an easy-chair in his study in the Fifth Form passage, with a pad of paper on his knees, and a pencil in his hand. He glanced at the elegant figure of St. Leger, the dandy and slacker with whom he shared the study.

"Just been reckoning up the fellows I can rely on for votes," grinned Cutts, "and the doubtfuls! It's a big list!"

"Oh rippin'!" nodded St. Leger.

"I stand a hot chance of winning this election!" exclaimed Cutts, with great satisfaction. "If it was a straight fight with Lefevre I don't think I should, but with young Merry putting up—like his cheek!—a lot of the juniors are sure to vote for him, and that'll cut the ground from under Lefevre's feet, of course."

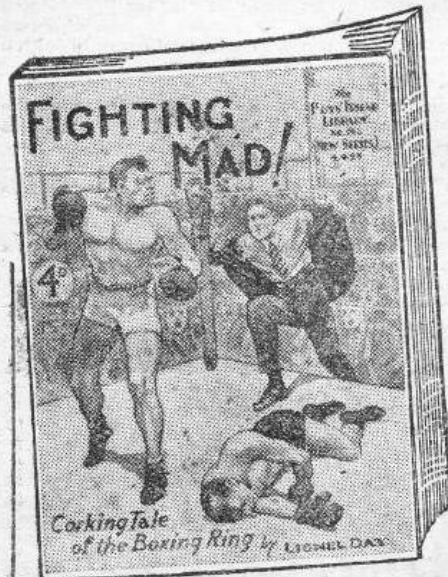
"Oh, rippin'!" drawled St. Leger again.

"The New House is the uncertain quantity in this election," went on Cutts, with a thoughtful frown. "There's no knowing quite how the New House cat will jump, so to speak! But I've got a good number of supporters over there." He ran his eye down the list. "I reckon I can rely on well over twenty New House votes!"

"Gad!" exclaimed St. Leger, with a grin. "Rippin'!"

"The Third is going to vote for me solid, pretty well!" chuckled Cutts. "As you know, I've been dishing out bobs to the kids for nearly a week now!"

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"Pretty expensive, this canvassin'!" ventured St. Leger.

"Oh, rather!" chuckled Cutts. "I've spent quids on netting votes! And I'm willing to spend twice as much before I've finished."

"You're goin' it!" grinned St. Leger. An uneasy frown replaced his smile the next moment, however. "Pretty risky, though, this bribery an' corruption—"

"Oh, rats!" broke in Cutts impatiently. "Who's to find out? I— Oh, come in!"

He broke off sharply as a knock sounded on the door. In answer to his shout, the door swung open, and the tall figure of Kildare appeared.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Cutts, staring.

It was not often that Eric Kildare of the Sixth visited the blade of the Fifth, and Cutts stared at the ex-captain with some astonishment. Kildare closed the door, and crossed towards the centre of the study.

"I've got a bone to pick with you, Cutts," said Kildare quietly.

St. Leger shot his chum an uneasy glance. Cutts lifted his eyebrows coolly enough.

"Really?"

"About the election," nodded Kildare, eyeing Cutts steadily.

"The—the election?" echoed the Fifth-Former, taken aback for the moment. Rather a guilty look flashed into his eyes for a moment, though an instant later he was eyeing Kildare with cool insolence. "I didn't think you were so very interested in this election!"

"Is that so?" said Kildare, with a curl of the lip.

"Well, I may be mistaken, Kildare," said Cutts, with bitterness in his voice. "But I don't think I am. And what's more, other people seem to be of the same opinion as myself."

Kildare shrugged. St. Leger grinned.

"It has come to my knowledge that you've been using pretty dirty methods to win votes, Cutts," said Kildare grimly.

Cutts did not speak for a few moments. His face did not betray by so much as the flicker of an eyelid any startled alarm that he may have felt.

"Who told you that yarn?" he inquired, with a slight shrug.

"Never mind that—is it true?" snapped Kildare angrily.

"No!" answered Cutts, quite cool.

"You deny that you stood a feed to a number of fellows in order to get their votes?" exclaimed Kildare, with curling lip. "The Third Form, for example?"

Cutts hesitated. He had an iron nerve, and was quite prepared to brazen things out if he could. But he did not know how much Kildare knew! It would be dangerous to deny facts of which the Sixth-Former had positive proof.

"I did give a spread to some fellows," he admitted, with another shrug. "A few fags were there—I wanted them to wait on my guests, and I gave them some grub for themselves in return. But it had nothing whatever to do with the election."

Kildare glanced from Cutts to St. Leger. Cutts' face told him nothing; but the guilty look on the face of the dandy of the Fifth told Kildare all he wanted to know. St. Leger had not the same iron nerve that Gerald Cutts possessed.

Kildare had felt pretty sure, from what Trimble had blurted out, that Cutts had been up to shady methods of vote-catching. From St. Leger's look, his suspicions became a certainty.



George Alfred Grundy flung the door of his study open and brought a cushion down with a bang on the head of the figure outside. There was a muffled howl as the cushion burst, and to the Shell fellow's horrified gaze the face of Mr. Linton appeared through the flying feathers. "Oh crumbs!" gasped Grundy. (See Chapter 8.)

"Cutts," snapped the ex-captain, and his voice was grim, "you are lying!"

Cutts whitened a trifle. He would have given a good deal to know how much Kildare actually knew.

"Thanks!" he said sneeringly. "You are very polite! You seem to have lost your manners since you were kicked out of the captaincy!"

But the taunt missed its mark. Kildare smiled slightly—a smile that angered Cutts almost beyond endurance.

"I resigned the captaincy, Cutts!"

"So you say!" jeered Cutts venomously. "But everyone knows that the Head made it pretty clear you'd got to resign, or be slung out! Get out of here, hang you! You seem to forget you're not the captain now!"

"I am still a prefect," said Kildare coolly. "And in that capacity I've got a duty to the school still. You've been using foul methods instead of fair—"

"Prove it!" broke in Cutts.

"There is sufficient proof!" said Kildare contemptuously. "Will you come with me to the Head to-morrow, and bring the Third Form?"

Cutts licked his dry lips. He did not speak.

"Because that's one alternative," went on Kildare sternly. "The other is to withdraw your nomination for the election on Friday."

"Withdraw?" panted Cutts.

"Yes!" cried Kildare. "I ought to show you up to the Head! But I'll let you off that, if you withdraw from the election."

"Oh, gad!" breathed St. Leger, in utter dismay.

Cutts' fists were clenched. His eyes were blazing from a white face, and his lips were set in a thin line. He looked as though he would throw himself at Kildare.

The blade of the Fifth knew that he was caught!

He dared not go before the Head to answer Kildare's charges, for he did not know how much the ex-captain knew. And the alternative was to stand down from the election for the captaincy, which he had set his heart upon.

"Well?" asked Kildare quietly. "Is it to be the Head?"

"No," said Cutts thickly, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Then you withdraw your nomination to-morrow?"

Cutts nodded, his face the picture of baffled fury. There was a venomous, bitter gleam in his eyes as Kildare turned and left the study.

He had imagined that his unscrupulous methods were utterly safe from detection. He still could not imagine how Kildare had learnt the truth—and he would never know.

But he realised now that he had overstepped the mark.

Thanks to his own shady ways, Cutts of the Fifth had missed his big chance of becoming captain of St. Jim's.

#### CHAPTER 14. The Election!

"SILENCE!"

The stern voice of Dr. Holmes rang through Big Hall, and the murmur of excited talk died away, till one could have heard a pin drop.

It was the fateful Friday. Lessons were over, and the whole school was gathered in Big Hall for the election of the captain of St. Jim's who was to take the place of Eric Kildare.

The sensational news of Gerald Cutts' withdrawal from the captaincy election that had swept through St. Jim's the previous day had been received with almost incredulous amazement. Its confirmation by a notice on the school board, however, had left no room for doubt.

The reason for Cutts' action was a complete mystery to practically all the school, especially as his keenness to be voted into the vacant captaincy was well known.

But there it was, and, after the outbreak of surmise and conjecture had died down, the subject for discussion became the chances of Lefevre or Tom Merry of obtaining the votes released by the black sheep of the Fifth's withdrawal. Strange to say, no one seemed to consider the chances of George Alfred Grundy for one moment.

Now, with the great election about to take place, there was an atmosphere of tension in the air.

The natural excitement of such an event was more than doubled on this occasion. The extraordinary nature of the election, in which a Fifth-Former and two juniors were the candidates from which St. Jim's had to choose its captain, caused a thrill that was felt by all.

Never before had anyone but a Sixth-Former filled the honoured post of school captain; but in a few minutes some fellow who was not a member of that lordly Form would be elected as skipper, with power above even the Sixth!

There were some queer looks on the faces of the silent Sixth-Formers. No one knew exactly what they thought about it!

"They look pretty sick, if you ask me!" grinned Blake to Herries and Digby. "They won't like it!"

"It's their own fault, anyway!" muttered Herries. "They asked for trouble—and the Head got the best of 'em!"

"Ssssh!" whispered Digby warningly.

The Head was speaking.

"As you all know, you are here to vote for the captain of the school!" Dr. Holmes' voice was quiet and clear. "There are three candidates—Lefevre of the Fifth, and Merry and Grundy of the Shell."

He glanced round the rows of silent faces.

"Voting will be by the showing of hands," went on the Head. "I will deal with the candidates in alphabetical order."

"Grundy's first!" grinned Talbot softly to Manners.

"Those who wish Grundy to be captain of the school, raise their hands."

One hand was raised.

It was the hand of George Alfred Grundy.

There was a low ripple of chuckling round Big Hall, silenced almost instantly by the Head's stern frown. Grundy glared round, as if he could scarcely believe his eyes.

Then two more hands went up, rather reluctantly.

Wilkins and Gunn, Grundy's two study-mates, had put up their hands sheepishly. It was clear to the rest of the juniors that Wilkins and Gunn had no particular wish to vote for the great George Alfred, but no doubt they thought it safest. Otherwise, for certain, there would have been trouble in Study No. 3 of the Shell afterwards, with Grundy's big fists playing an important part!

Mr. Railton and Mr. Ratcliff were on the platform with the Head, to assist in the counting. They had no work to do as yet! Mr. Railton was trying to conceal a smile as he turned to the Head.

"Three votes, sir!"

And then there was a sudden explosive sound from Grundy.

"I don't think the chaps know it's me they're supposed to be voting for, sir!" boomed Grundy. "They can't! Perhaps they think you said Tom Merry—"

"I trust I speak distinctly!" said the Head coldly. "However, lest there should be any mistake, I will repeat—those who wish to vote for Grundy, hold up their hands!"

Grundy glanced round hopefully. The next instant, however, that hopeful expression vanished, and Grundy's rugged face slowly assumed a beautiful scarlet hue.

Except for Wilkins and Gunn, no one had stirred.

"Oh, crumbs!" muttered Grundy, in dismay.

He resumed his place almost dazedly. Even the great George Alfred realised now that his confidence in the result of the election had been utterly wrong—the next captain of St. Jim's was not to be named Grundy, after all!

"Those voting for Lefevre, raise their hands!"

Immediately a forest of hands was raised.

"Oh, crumbs!" muttered Manners.

In utter silence, the count took place. It took a long time. But at last Mr. Railton and Mr. Ratcliff had both completed the task, and written down their respective results. The two Housemasters then compared their totals, and evidently had both arrived at the same number for, after a word to the Head, Dr. Holmes motioned Lefevre's supporters to lower their hands.

"Oh, deah!" murmured Arthur Augustus in dismay. "I am afraid Lefevre has vegistahed a lot of votes!"

"Rats!" answered Blake hopefully. "They looked a lot, because they were standing up. You wait till our turn comes."

"Now," said the Head, "those voting for Merry—"

Blake's hand shot up, as did those of the rest of the Fourth to a man. The Shell, too, were raising their arms, with only one exception—Tom Merry himself. Even Grundy, resigned now to the fact that he was out of it, was on his feet with the rest.

Tom glanced round, with a startled look on his face.

He was amazed at the number of voters!

Even such fellows as Racke and Crooke and Mellish and Baggy Trimble—all the black sheep—were supporting him! He glimpsed Cutts of the Fifth, and St. Leger, with their arms raised. And the New House seemed to be backing him up almost solidly, with the exception of the New House Fifth.

The fags were on their feet, too. Wally D'Arcy and Reggie Manners and Curly Gibson, and all the rest of the inky-fingered fraternity, were stretching their grubby hands high!

Without doubt, Cutts' withdrawal from the election had brought votes galore to Tom Merry—not to Lefevre, as he had expected.

With whirling thoughts, Tom waited while the two Housemasters began the count.

Until a few minutes ago, Tom had been confident that Lefevre would carry the day. But now—

He was staggered!

Even Cutts was voting for him! Tom understood why. Cutts, and all the other black sheep of St. Jim's, felt that under a junior school captain, things would be thoroughly slack, and they could do as they liked! So they preferred Tom to Philip Lefevre, since their own candidate was out of the election.

The Sixth were staring with something like horror at the forest of hands. The Sixth-Formers, true to their policy of aloofness, had not voted at all. But some of them were, no doubt, beginning to wish they had voted for Lefevre. The possibility of a junior being elected to the post had seemed too far-fetched to be possible—but the forest of raised hands showed them that it was not so impossible after all! And at the very idea of a fellow in the Shell being captain of the school filled them with utter dismay.

In a breathless hush, the count went on.

Tom's heart was beating fast.

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Could it possibly be that he was going to be elected captain of St. Jim's?

It seemed too amazing to be true. And yet he felt sure that he had more supporters voting for him than had Philip Lefevre.

He—a junior—captain of St. Jim's! It was absurd, surely, to think it remotely likely. And yet—

The two House-masters were conferring together. Mr. Railton turned to the Head and spoke to him.

There was a queer look on the face of Dr. Holmes as he stepped forward to address the assembled school.

Clearly, the result of the voting had staggered the old Head considerably! Dr. Holmes, like most other people, had assumed that it was bound to be a victory for Lefevre of the Fifth.

Dr. Holmes raised his hand.

"The result of the election," he said, and he glanced grimly at the silent Sixth as he spoke, "is that Merry is elected captain of St. Jim's by a majority of thirty-one votes."

For a moment there was dead silence. Then someone started a cheer, and it swept through the ranks of the juniors of both Houses till it echoed deafeningly to the old roof of Big Hall.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" The Sixth and the Fifth alone failed to join that rousing, triumphant cheer. They sat stonily in their seats, but on the face of Cutts, at any rate, there was a grin.

Tom Merry, sitting dazedly in the centre of the cheering juniors, felt as though he were in a dream. He could scarcely believe it yet—but he knew it was true!

He was to step into Kildare's shoes! He was captain of St. Jim's!



"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" roared the town-crier, in stentorian tones. "Will all who hear me kindly vote for George Alfred Grundy to be captain of St. Jim's!" In the quad the fat crier stood bawling at the top of his voice, and the St. Jim's fellows crowding round him listened open-mouthed with astonishment. (See Chapter 10.)

## CHAPTER 15. The New Captain!

"COME IN!" Dr. Holmes, standing in his study with a thoughtful frown on his face, glanced up as there was a tap on the door. It opened, and Tom Merry entered.

"You wanted to see me, sir?" said Tom quietly.

"Ah! Come in, Merry!"

Tom closed the door. The old Head smiled, and held out his hand, and shook Tom's warmly.

"I expect you are feeling rather—er—strange about your new position in the school," went on the Head. "It is, of course, extremely—er—unusual for a junior boy to become captain, as you have done!" He coughed. "I may say that I had no idea that such a thing would happen!"

Tom smiled slightly. He had guessed that Dr. Holmes had not bargained for a junior becoming captain of St. Jim's as a consequence of his throwing open the vacant post to all.

"I confess," repeated Dr. Holmes quietly, "that I had imagined a Fifth-Former would become captain, owing to the Sixth Form attitude regarding—" He broke off. "However, you have been elected!" he added hastily. "I trust that you realise the extreme responsibility of your position?"

"Yes, sir."

Tom had not sought the captaincy; but now that it had been conferred upon him by the wishes of the majority of his schoolfellows, he was prepared to carry his task through to the best of his ability. It was his duty now to accept the responsibility to the full.

"Mr. Railton, and your Form master, both speak well of your abilities," continued the Head, with an approving smile, "and I feel sure that you will do your very best to carry out the duties of captain in a conscientious way, Merry. You will no doubt find many difficulties, which you must try to overcome. Remember that I am always ready to give any help or advice that you may wish for."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom gratefully.

Like the Head, Tom realised only too well that there was no easy task ahead of him.

"As you are aware, your position includes the captaincy of school games," Dr. Holmes went on. "I know that you are a keen sportsman, and have long held the position of junior games captain of the school. But I should advise you to seek the co-operation of Kildare in senior games matters."

"I will, sir," nodded Tom.

"I have already spoken to Kildare and other representative Sixth-Formers." A slight frown gathered for a moment on the Head's face. "To be frank with you, I realise that you are no doubt well aware that there has been some—ah—difference between myself and the Sixth! But the Sixth have pledged their support to you in a most generous manner, I must admit. I feel sure that your prefects will support you loyally."

Tom's face lit up. This was good news indeed! He had been wondering what attitude the Sixth would adopt, and had by no means been looking forward to his first meeting with them.

"And now," said the Head, "there is the question of your study. As captain of the school, it is best for you, in the interests of discipline, to have a study in the Sixth Form passage, although you will, of course, continue to work with Mr. Linton in the Shell. There is an empty study at the end of the Sixth Form passage, which I wish you to take over. I want you to move into it at once."

"Very good, sir."

The Head laid a hand on Tom's shoulder, and smiled.

"Let me again impress upon you that a great responsibility now rests on you, Merry, in spite of the fact that you are only a junior boy. You have now, however, all the authority of a prefect, and are in charge of the school discipline. The other prefects will have to refer difficult matters to you, and abide by your decisions. I know you will do your very best."

"I can promise that, sir."

"Splendid! Well, now you had better go and remove your belongings to your new study."

Again the Head gripped Tom's hand warmly, and the new captain of St. Jim's left the study.

A tall figure was waiting at the end of the passage. It was Kildare.

"Hallo, young 'un!" Kildare smiled and held out his hand. "Shake! And congratters!"

Tom grinned, and took the old captain's hand in a firm grasp. Kildare laughed rather oddly.

"I s'pose you feel a bit queer about this?"

"That's just what the Head said!" smiled Tom Merry.

"I won't pretend it hasn't been a bit of a shock for the Sixth," went on Kildare frankly. "You know all the reasons of this happening, of course, and I won't question the rights and wrongs of their attitude—though it was none of my wish that they should all decline to stand for the captaincy. But I think that you will find that most of us will stand by you, and help you all we can."

"Thanks awfully!"

Tom noticed that Kildare did not speak of all the Sixth standing by him. He wondered if Knox was in Kildare's mind.

new captain was marched to the end of the passage, and back again. Even then they would not let him go. They carried him down the stairs and along the Fourth Form passage, and round the Common-room, and out into the quad, and even through the New House—with the New House fellows as enthusiastic as anyone.

"For he's a jolly good fellow."

"And so say all of us!"

"Three cheers for the skipper! Hip, pip!"

And three more cheers were given in no half-hearted fashion.

The noise of that triumphal procession was deafening.

There was only one person who did not join in the celebration. The tall figure of Knox, of the Sixth, met the procession in the quad, and his face took on a sour look. He would, under normal circumstances, have tried to break up the procession of excited juniors, and have scattered lines broadcast for the noise they were making. But Tom Merry was captain of St. Jim's, with powers above Knox, and so the tyrant of the Sixth could only scowl and turn away.

It was that glimpse of Knox's face in the shadows that warned Tom that there would probably be a troublous time ahead of him! He had realised that fact in a vague way, but the look on Knox's face made his supposition something of a certainty.

There were other fellows, too. Racke & Co. were acclaiming him now as noisily as anyone—and Tom knew why they were so delighted at his victory in the election. The black sheep imagined no doubt that they had an easy time ahead of them, with a junior in the seat of power! They believed that in future they would be able to do as they liked.

## "HURRAH!"

That's the stuff to give 'em, chums! And another! Great! Well, there seems no earthly need to ask my army of readers just what they think of the FREE GIFT they found in their copies of the good old GEM to-day!

It goes without saying that they're all as pleased as Punch with No. 1 of our grand series of picture cards depicting Mechanical Marvels of the Future, which shows an amazing Mid-Atlantic Aerodrome. And in case any of my readers entertain any misgivings that, after our FREE GIFT scheme's great kick-off, the cards to follow will not be up to the high standard of No. 1, let me drive it into them, here and now, that every one of the series will be every whit as good as its predecessors.

"A TRANS-CONTINENTAL COACH" is the subject of next week's spanking FREE PICTURE CARD, and I haven't the slightest doubt that when it is in your hands there'll be three more rousing cheers.

A last warning word. Many a time and oft it has been rammed home on you Gemites that the only way to avoid being greeted by that polite "Sold out!" when you roll round to your newsagent's on Wednesday morning, is to place a standing order. But just now, when every reader is determined at all costs to secure the complete set of our magnificent FREE GIFTS, this precaution is ten times more necessary.

Don't leave it too late! Order next Wednesday's GEM to-day!

## "CAPTAIN TOM MERRY!"

Captain of the School! Head Prefect! Head of Games! These are the roles that Tom Merry—head of the poll in the sensational captaincy election—will fill in next week's grand story of St. Jim's, entitled:

## "CAPTAIN TOM MERRY!"

Once again—order next Wednesday's GEM TO-DAY.

"Come to me if you want any help at any time, remember!"

"I will!" said Tom, and there was a grateful gleam in his eyes. It was clear that Kildare, at any rate, felt not the slightest antagonism towards the junior who had so strangely superseded him.

Kildare nodded, and turned away up the stairs. Tom Merry moved off in the direction of the Shell passage.

He still felt as he had felt in Big Hall when the result had been announced! He was rather like a fellow in a dream.

Captain of St. Jim's! A prefect, with a study in the Sixth Form passage! It was so utterly amazing that it left him in a kind of bewildered daze.

"Here he is!"

Tom had turned into the Shell passage, to find a crowd of fellows swarming there. Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers, and Figgins & Co., of the New House, were there, evidently waiting for him. Before Tom knew what was happening, he had been seized and swung shoulder-high.

"Hurrah!"

An echoing cheer thundered along the Shell passage, as the new captain of St. Jim's was marched in triumphal procession from one end to the other. Fellows were yelling themselves hoarse with excitement. Everyone was cheering him. Then someone started "For he's a jolly good fellow!" and the song was taken up with a will.

High above the swaying shoulders of his fellow juniors, the  
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Tom's face set grimly at that thought.

It was through none of his own seeking that he had been made captain of the school. But now, since he had been elected, he meant to carry out the captain's task fairly and firmly, as Kildare had done—there would be no favouritism to juniors. If such fellows as Racke & Co. imagined for a moment that Tom would shut his eyes to their misdoings, or would not dare to exert his authority as captain of St. Jim's, they would soon find out that they were vastly mistaken!

Despite these grim thoughts, Tom was laughing breathlessly as his supporters, still refusing to put him down, carried him high across the quad back to the School House.

Even Tom could not but feel a thrill that the captaincy was his!

"Huwah for Tom Mewwy!" shouted Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, beaming through his eyeglass as, supporting one of Tom's ankles, the swell of St. Jim's helped bear Tom up the School House steps.

"Hurrah for the giddy conquering hero!" bawled Racke.

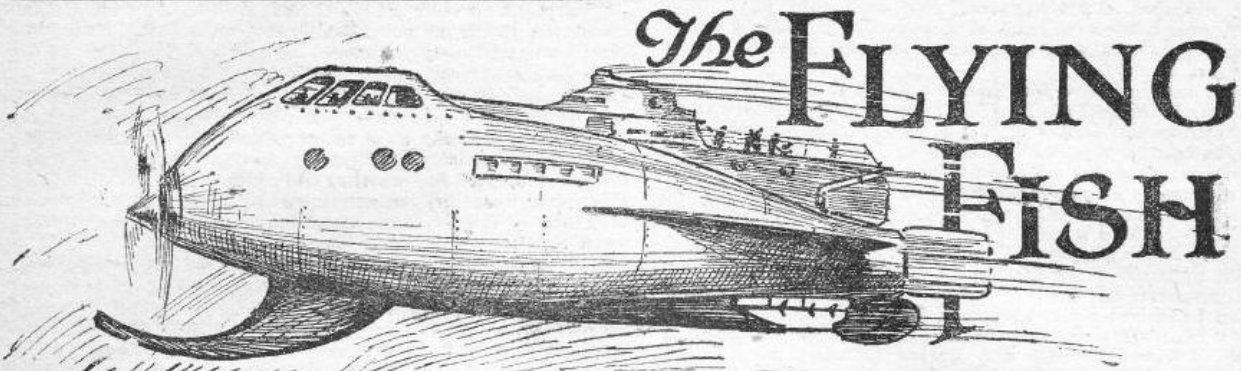
"Oh, rather!" drawled Cardew of the Fourth, with a grin. "Hurrah for Thomas!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" yelled Monty Lowther.

"Hurrah!" chanted a dozen others breathlessly.

Dr. Holmes went to the window of his study and stared out in surprise, to see what the noise was all about. But he smiled and resumed his seat when he saw the figure of Tom Merry vanishing into the School House on the shoulders of the great crowd.

THE END.



To follow in the footsteps of his famous father. To carve his own name on the roll of honour beside those of men who have done great and marvellous things. To fight the battle of life from the bottom rung of the ladder—these are the resolutions of young Rodney Blake. But Fate, in weird and sinister form, steps in, and with one stroke shatters all this glorious future.

#### CHAPTER 1.

##### The Strange Submarine.

"THAT be terrible queer, Master Rodney!" said Dan Lea under his breath, in his slow, Devon way, with its soft burr. "Never before have I seen anything bigger than a fish-boat come into Littleworth Cove. And here be one of they submarines."

In the uncertain light of a watery western sunset it was difficult for anyone to see very clearly. The two lads on the cliffs overhanging the small and narrow rocky inlet known as Littleworth Cove, on their way towards the inlying village of Tidewell, might never have noticed this unusual happening in the gloaming, but for Dan's sharp hearing, which had detected the distant carrying sound of voices where ordinarily silence was only broken by the screech of the seagulls.

A stalwart Devon lad was Dan Lea, son of a sea-race, simple and clean as the winds that played around his home. His companion, of slimmer build, but with the appearance of fine fettle, had an intellectual young face. Rodney Blake was bordering on eighteen. Sixth Forms and prefecture, and grand old Wyechurch School, were all of the past. He was looking the future in the face, a little wonderingly, but full of eagerness.

Rodney's father, the well-known Adrian Blake, had lived one of the most adventurous lives under the sun. He was special correspondent for the biggest of the London "dailies." It was because, in the service of his paper, he was out of England at this time, that Rodney was spending his holidays at Tidewell with Dr. Fraser, who had known him since he was a child. Quiet and pleasant weeks they had been, before, in a few days' time, Rodney was to follow in his father's footsteps, and join the staff of the "Sun," with his feet on the bottom rung of the ladder to fame.

Those quiet weeks at Tidewell had forged an extraordinarily strong bond of friendship between Rodney and the Devon lad who, at this moment, was pointing down to the cove waters, misted and swirling. The two lads were wide as the pole in ways, yet there was something between them which had risen far above class and education. Dan was unschooled, and had none of the ready wit of Rodney. He had, indeed, a curious, almost doglike worship of Rodney. But there were things about which the latter quickly realised—soundness, steadfastness, and a great heart—which had made him Rodney's constant companion.

They had been talking with regret over the parting which faced them after the week-end, hoping that it would not mean a definite breaking of their friendship, when Dan noticed the submarine. Rodney, deep in thought, and a little ahead of the other, did not at first quite take in what Dan was saying. When he did so, it was only half-heartedly for the moment. He turned from the path and looked down, as Dan was doing, at the cove. Almost filling it, a grey mass showed vaguely, like some great sea monster come up from the deeps to breathe apace.

"Submarine it is, Dan!" he said, a trifle more interested as he studied the long deck, with its queer, dumpy fittings, and the half-dozen human figures moving to and fro. Through the misted air he could see blue reefer coats, white duck trousers, a yachting cap or two, sailors with reddish knitted headgear.

"Like enough she may belong to the base at Devonport," said Dan; "but what for she can come here to Littleworth Cove to hang up, I can't see. 'Tain't rough weather. Maybe something have gone wrong in her inside."

"Might as well walk down and get a nearer view," suggested Rodney, frowning down at the grey shape. "Some-

how, she doesn't look quite like any old submarines I've seen at Devonport. It may be the light, but there's something different about her cut. She isn't showing a flag, either, and those aren't naval uniforms you can see down there—not British ones, anyhow. Not spruce enough. Let's dip down the path."

A few minutes later they had reached a bend in the rocky path which enabled them to see more clearly. Apart from two or three barefooted sailors at work, mooring the craft by a hawser to a peakish boulder just below the two lads, three men stood forward, studying the shore. They were talking rapidly in undertones and with gestures. One—the tallest and smartest—had a monocle gleaming in his right eye. Another had a red face and a beard, a stumpy fellow. The third was a dapper little man, with an olive complexion and an upturned black moustache.

"Foreigners—decidedly!" was Rodney's comment, after he had watched for a moment and kept his ears keenly alert. "That bearded chap was talking Russian just then, I'd swear. I know, because dad started to teach me a while back. A horrible, jaw-breaking lingo, Dan."

"If they be foreign," muttered Dan, "what can they be wanting in here?"

"Trouble of some sort. Engines gone wrong—"

At that moment the dapper little man in the group forward pointed to the two boys, and said something to his companions. The man with the monocle moved still further forward, and waved to them, his voice—pleasant and amiable—having a foreign lilt:

"Hallo, young fellows! Half a minute, if you please! We want to speak to you!"

"Right you are! We're coming down!" called back Rodney, and the two lads dodged farther downwards between the rocks, till they stood on a small rocky plateau quite near to the vessel's prow.

"Anything the matter?" asked Rodney of the monocled man.

"Where are we, please?" inquired the other. "Near to what part of England?"

Rodney told them, and the monocled man turned to his companions, talking softly in his foreign tongue, before swinging round again.

"This Tidewell? Is it far off?"

"Ten minutes' walk."

"Is there such a person as a doctor—a physician—there—"

"Rather!" nodded Rodney eagerly, and with immediate interest. "Dr. Fraser. I live with him. Do you want him fetched?"

"Wait!" Again the monocled man and his companions jabbered in their strange tongue, evidently undecided and divided in their opinions. Eventually the monocled man seemed to have his way. He called up to Rodney.

"Stay there, please, young gentleman. I shall join you in a moment."

By this time the light had been growing less and less in the sky, the shape of the submarine becoming more indistinct, the figures on its decks moving like ghosts through the night mist. Out of this, before the two lads could exchange a word, there loomed the figure of the monocled man, vaulting neatly on to the plateau from the prow of the boat.

"They will fix up something for us so that we can get on board again easier," he laughed. "A nice convenient little harbour, this."

"I shouldn't have thought a ship of the size of yours could have made it," said Rodney. "It's not a British ship, is it?"

"No, my young friend, it is not," smiled the other. "But you, of course, are very British, I can see. You don't like the idea of a foreign boat coming in your harbour."

"Why should I mind?" laughed Rodney; and the other clapped him playfully on the shoulder.

"Anyhow, we are here!" he chuckled gaily. "And now we go to find this doctor of yours. He will be at home, I suppose?"

"I can't promise that," replied Rodney, suddenly remembering that Dr. Fraser had said something at lunch about going to Barchester in his car during the afternoon. "Still,

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he must be back very soon, if he is away. Is it a serious case, sir?"

"Very. A matter of life and death. A poor fellow whose life hangs, as you English say, on a hair. And you? May I ask what is your name?"

Rodney told him, and explained that he was living with Dr. Fraser, having just finished his last term at school. To his surprise the other had also, when a boy, been to an English school, a good one, too, one against which during the summer Wyechurch had achieved a glorious cricket victory. So, as the three walked from the Cove inland, and reached the winding Devon lane in the direction of Tidewell village, a pleasant conversation made the walk seem short.

Dan, whom Rodney had introduced to the other, took no part in the talk. He listened, and now and again looked back over his shoulder to the cliffs below which the submarine lay. In his slow, but steadfast Devon way he was still puzzling over it. Rodney, meantime, had been a little startled and embarrassed to discover who, and what their new acquaintance was.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you," said the stranger, "that I am Russian. Not a Bolshevik—no! I am Prince Alexis Karagenski. Not that there is much good in being a Russian prince nowadays, as perhaps you know. We have to work hard for a living in these hard times, when commerce is everything. Mine is being earned on the vessel we have left behind."

"I begin to see," exclaimed Rodney. "That's a submarine for carrying cargo."

"Very valuable cargo," said the other, with a laugh as Rodney, pointing through the dusk to the left, showed the Russian how a gate led up a garden-path to the house where Dr. Fraser lived.

The doctor's old housekeeper, Mrs. Munt, had lit the oil-lamps in the sitting-room, when Rodney led the way in through the front door. Fortunately, the doctor had just returned from Barchester, and was then entering the house



RODNEY BLAKE. Here are two new chums for you. Both are youngsters, full of spirit and pluck, and adventure loving.



DAN LEA, a stalwart son of Devon, who plays a big part in this stirring new serial, with his pal.

by the back way after housing his car in the garage behind. He came forward, peering through the darkness towards Rodney.

"Visitors!" he laughed, surprised; and then as the Russian stepped forward into the hall which led to the open sitting-room door, Dr. Fraser uttered an exclamation of greater surprise than ever.

"Good lord!" he said. "It must be a very small world, or I'm mistaken. Isn't it Karagenski, who was at Holm-hurst with me?"

"Certainly it is!" replied the other, holding out a hand. "I was mentioning to my young friend who brought me here that I had been to that school in my younger days. And the Dr. Fraser to whom he was bringing me is actually yourself? As you say, it is a very small world, my old friend."

### A Matter of Life and Death.

"AND what on earth has brought you here, of all places in the world?" asked the doctor, leading the way into the sitting-room.

"A matter of life and death, Fraser," replied the other seriously, taking the seat the doctor had drawn up for him.

Rodney, having fulfilled his promise in bringing the Russian to the doctor, did not wait to hear more. As a matter of fact, Dan Lea, standing out in the hall, had plucked him by the sleeve, suggesting that they should pass out into the garden again. Dan was evidently troubled in mind.

"I can't help thinking, Master Rodney, that there be something terrible queer about that submarine away down there," he said, with a stubborn shake of his head. "Never before have I seen one come into Littleworth Cove."

"Likely not, Dan," laughed Rodney. "And you probably never will again, either. It's just they've come in because



they wanted a doctor, and have a sick man aboard. What's wrong with it?"

"And a Russian prince—he said he was—as well?" insisted Dan doubtfully.

"And an old school friend of the doctor, didn't you hear?" added Rodney. "There can't be anything wrong with him if the doctor knows him, Dan. As for the submarine, you heard him say it was carrying valuable cargo. I suppose he and the others are in business of some sort, and have bought up an old submarine to carry the stuff. Not half a bad idea, if it's profitable."

"Well," said the other, less doubtful but still puzzled, "I'd best be going home now to supper. Seems a queer business, but I suppose you know best. Townfolk looks at things different from what I would. Anyway, I'll be going home, and on the way, maybe, I'll look in at Tom Liddell's place. Being coastguardsman, it's only right he should know there's such a queer craft hereabouts, Master Rodney."

"Old Tom Liddell won't worry much, Dan," laughed Rodney. "Look in and tell him there's a quart of beer waiting for him at the George and Dragon, and you wouldn't see his heels for dust. See you after supper."

Dan drifted away into the night, which was beginning to be tinged by a faint moon. And Rodney turned indoors, and went back into the lighted sitting-room, eager to hear what this Russian prince had to say. He and the doctor were evidently still discussing the case for which the latter had been called.

"It sounds pretty bad," he was saying. "It strikes me as a case where the poor fellow ought to be left behind. Why not have him landed, and let me take him to Barchester Hospital in my car?"

"As I told you, my dear Fraser," the other replied, "we cannot leave him there. I only want you to do the best you can for him, and make him comfortable for the time being. The great thing is that he must not be allowed to die. And that is why I am so anxious for you to come on board at once without any delay."

"I'll get my bag, and be with you in a few minutes," the doctor said, as Rodney came into the room. "Here, Rod! Talk to the prince while I slip into the surgery and fetch my instruments. But don't come to blows over the rival merits of Wyechurch and Holmhurst, as you try to do with me."

Laughingly the doctor passed out of the door, big and genial, simple and kind-hearted.

"He is your guardian?" asked the Russian, studying the lad appraisingly through his monocle. "Your father, I suppose, is dead."

"Oh, no!" laughed Rodney, and pointed to a framed photograph on the mantelshelf. "That's my dad—Adrian Blake. He's very much alive. But where he is I don't quite know at the minute. He's away on some stunt—something secret—for the 'London Sun.'"

"Really?"

Rodney, looking proudly at the lean, intellectual face pictured by the camera, did not notice the slight start of surprise, nor the sudden flicker of amazement in the eyes of the other, whose monocle had suddenly dropped on its silken cord.

"And that is your father?" inquired the Russian interestedly. "And you—don't you know what stunt it is your father is on?"

"No. He wouldn't tell me. He wouldn't tell anybody—even Dr. Fraser. It was something, I think, pretty serious. He said once when I asked him just the same as you said, sir, about the man who's sick on your ship—he said it was a matter of life or death."

"Let's hope it won't be the last!" murmured the Russian dryly, refixing his monocle into his eye. "And you—are you hoping to be a newspaper man, too?"

"I'm beginning next week," replied Rodney.

"Splendid! I wish you luck! You fancy an adventurous life?"

"Most fellows do. But, of course, life isn't all adventure. One has to do something worth while. I think, for instance, sir, your stunt with that submarine—"

"My stunt?"

"You said you were using it for carrying valuable cargo as a way of earning a living—"

"Oh, yes!"

"It's the kind of thing the papers would like to get hold of. It would be a topping news stunt, I was thinking, sir. I suppose you wouldn't allow me to interview you and do a story for the 'Sun' about it? If I could, it might do me a good turn, starting there next week—"

"I'm afraid I couldn't—" began the other, slightly embarrassed.

At that moment the doctor reappeared in the doorway, a small black bag in his hand.

"Ready?" he asked of the Russian.

The latter pointed towards Rodney.

"Perhaps our young friend might care to come aboard and look over the ship?" he suggested.

The doctor shook his head.

"I'm expecting a telephone call from a patient of mine at Barchester," he said. "I'm afraid, Rodney, you'll have to stop here till I come back, in case a ring comes through. I don't suppose I'll be very long, sonny. You don't mind, do you?"

"Not a bit, doc!" replied Rodney cheerfully enough; though actually, as the Russian and the doctor left the house and passed out into the night, he would have given a good deal to look over that strange craft.

Instead, while he helped himself healthily to some of the cold supper which Mrs. Munt had left on the table, he turned to the next best thing, to his mind—a copy of the "Sun" which had come down from London by the late post. He turned over its pages with a sense of pride. A few more days now and he would be even more proud of that paper than to-night; for he would belong to it, and it to him, as a real journalist always thinks.

Then, while he idly turned over the pages and scanned the headlines with his father's natural instinct for journalistic value, he read something which made him sit up and take sudden and serious notice—two headings, one above the other, as follows:

#### "MYSTERIOUS SUBMARINE VISITOR.

#### IS IT USED FOR SMUGGLING?"

The letterpress below referred to a mysterious submarine which had in the last week been sighted off several parts of the west coast of England. It was believed to belong to a big smuggling organisation bringing silks and other contraband goods from the Continent.

"A long grey shape of considerable length," one eye-witness in a fishing-boat had described it, after encountering it off the coast of Cornwall.

"So that's what the game may be!" gasped Rodney, rising from the table in excitement and beginning to put two and two together. "The Russian said they carried very valuable cargo; and he said it in a very funny way, with his tongue in his cheek. Contraband stuff, of course! No wonder he didn't fancy my doing a newspaper stunt about it! And yet it seems queer! A Russian prince mixed up with smuggling! And the doc knew him at school as well! Still, it strikes me as fishy. Dan didn't like the look of things, either. I must find Dan."

Just then, while Rodney was chafing over the fact that he could not do this till the telephone call came through from Barchester, the tinkling bell of the instrument in the surgery came as a relief.

It was the Barchester call. Dr. Fraser was wanted over there as soon as he could to meet a specialist, then on his way down from London.

What could be more convenient? Here was a ready-made excuse for Rodney to visit the mystery submarine and get aboard to pass on this urgent message to the doctor. But first to find Dan.

So out he went into the night and the quiet of sleepy, unsuspecting Tidewell. It was cloudy overhead, with the moon struggling occasionally to peep through the grey banks of darkness. The village was silent as the grave, except for the occasional bark of a dog, or the hoot of an owl in



Prince Alexis Karagenski, the mysterious commander of the "Flying Fish," with whom Dan Lea and Rodney Blake become involved in a series of strange and breathless adventures.

the trees clumped thickly alongside the road Rodney was taking to reach Dan's cottage.

But he had scarcely gone a couple of hundred yards that way when, to Rodney's right, in the direction of the Littleworth cliffs, an arresting sound broke the stillness sharply. The sudden, surprised cry of a man in pain brought Rodney's feet to a sudden halt, his ears alert, his eyes searching the darkness in the direction of the sound.

For a brief instant silence followed, broken faintly and distantly by a groan. Then, as the boy began to race across the open moorland towards the cliffs away from the road and the village, he heard an easily recognised voice call out in angry protest. The moon, suddenly emerging from a bank of clouds, shone brightly for a brief while. And what it showed caused Rodney to redouble his speed.

It was the big figure of Dan, facing three of the blue-clad sailors from the submarine, his fists flogging them like flails, but their greater odds beating him always backwards.

Rodney sent out a yell:

"Stick it, Dan! I'm coming!"

### Carried Into the Unknown!

**W**HEN Rodney reached the spot, and was throwing himself into the scrimmage in support of his friend, the moonlight and his quick eyes had shown him in a trice something making very clear how desperate the situation really was. On the ground near to Dan lay the still and apparently lifeless figure of old Tom Liddell, the coast-guardman.

With a gasp Rodney went straight for the nearest of the three sailors, in whose right hand the gleam of an up-raised knife in the act of being plunged downwards towards Dan called for prompt action. Rodney, as much by luck as by judgment in his breathless haste and need for quick decision, caught the man's armpit an upward blow, sending the fellow staggering back. And then, just at the wrong moment, the moon slipped back behind the clouds.

A violent and indiscriminate struggle in the dark followed, Rodney tackling his man and punishing him for all he was worth, satisfied in the knowledge that, at least, the knife had fallen to the hard ground with a metallic tinkle, and was no longer a source of danger. He could hear Dan fighting hard to his left, and seeming to be holding his own, for the sailors were shouting angry words in their Russian gutturals, and one of them sent out a long, shrill whistle into the night.

It had scarcely died away, and Dan had just landed his opponent a fortunate undercut below the jaw, when footsteps crunched the ground hurriedly near at hand, and the gleam of an electric torch, sweeping to and fro, blinded both Dan and Rodney. A number of blue-clad sailors from the submarine surrounded them. The glare of the torch was focused on their faces. Behind it a voice spoke sharply in Russian.

Struggling vainly, the two lads were seized and overcome by numbers. Resistance, of course, was quite in vain. Behind the glare of the torch a voice assured them of that fact, speaking now in broken English.

"So," he said, "it was the young mans what lives with the doctor! That was goot. Joost the young mans ve vant. Better make the best of a bad job, mein young friends. You come along quietly mit us."

Perforce, hurried in the direction of the Cove, the two lads were thrust on to the deck of the submarine in the dark and dragged along this to a hatchway, down which they were forced into a heated and dimly-lighted interior. A little dazed as he was over the suddenness of all this, and troubled over what had happened to poor old Tom Liddell, Rodney still had time to be surprised at the unexpected size and comfort of this vessel as seen from inside.

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The moon came out from behind the clouds, and in the dim light Rodney saw his pal, Dan, standing over the form of the old coastguard, fighting desperately with three men. "Stick it out, Dan!" yelled Rodney. "I'm coming!" And with a rush he entered the scrimmage, lashing out right and left. (See this page.)

Roughly hurried along a corridor, he caught glimpses of finely-furnished cabins and saloons, a large room which looked like a glorified signal-box, glistening with levers and wheels and gadgets. It was all so entirely unlike any submarine Rodney had seen that he was puzzled. An air of bustle pervaded everywhere, sailors scurrying to and fro, distant voices calling out orders in Russian. Above all, a curious heavy clanging of metal made itself heard at intervals.

But this passed from Rodney's mind as, with Dan, he was thrust suddenly into a large lighted saloon like a smoking lounge on a liner. And there, standing in a curiously perturbed attitude, gazing out of a porthole, was Dr. Fraser. The doctor swung round on his heel, with an exclamation of surprise, as the boys were forcibly thrust into his company and the door closed behind them.

"You, Rodney lad? And Dan, too?" he asked anxiously. "What on earth brings you here? I was just thinking of you, and wondering what was going to happen to you when I was gone."

"Gone?" echoed Rodney. "You're wanted at Barchester as soon as you can get there. I'd just got the message and was coming to tell you, only I discovered something about this ship and these people in the newspaper. But, first of all, I went to find Dan and tell him. They're smugglers, and—"

He had thrust into his pocket before he left home the torn piece of newspaper containing the paragraph he had read, meaning to show it to Dan. He passed it across to the

doctor, who glanced at it, frowned, and shook his head, laying it aside on a table.

"Well, well?" he urged impatiently. "And you went to find Dan—"

Rodney explained what had happened so far as he was concerned, Dan intervening with his portion of the story.

"You see, doctor," he said, "I did think it terrible queer, finding this submarine and these foreign folk in Littleworth Cove, as I said to Master Rodney. So, as I told him, I went looking for Tom Liddell and told him about it. He'd heard talk of that smuggling business and had the same in mind. 'We'll go down along, Dan, and have word with they!' says he, and along we goes."

"Just as we were by the Cove," continued Dan, "along comes three men, asking for the doctor's house. 'These be they!' says I to Tom, and he starts away asking them questions and saying they'd have to come with him to the police. Sudden, after talking a word or two in their lingo, one of they up with a knife, and stabbed old Tom Liddell quick as lightning. I set about they, and—lucky—Master Rodney happened along—"

"Lucky?" muttered the doctor. "It's the unluckiest thing in the world you two lads have been mixed up in this dreadful business. 'd sooner anything else had happened. And now—"

"Why, doc?" questioned Rodney. "What can they do with us? A smuggling outfit—"

"Smuggling? I'm afraid it's far more than smuggling, boys!" interrupted the doctor. "As you know, they got me here to attend to a sick man. It certainly was, as Karagenski said, a matter of life and death. The man's a bad case. And what he let drop in his delirium about this ship and these people told me that—it's not smuggling. It's something else—much worse. So much worse that, when I'd left the sick man to talk to Karagenski about him and go ashore, it became clear they didn't mean to let me go. They were afraid I might talk—"

"Exactly, doctor!" interrupted a suave voice from the other side of the saloon. "And that is why, too, we welcome on board our young friend and his companion. It would not have suited us for our young friend to be telling his newspaper about the mystery submarine in Littleworth Cove. No; the fewer tongues to talk about it the better."

The newcomer was, of course, the Russian prince, with his gleaming monocle and cynical smile. He had entered unnoticed by a door in the wooden paneling, and with him were the red-faced and bearded man, and the small, dapper man with upturned moustache, whom the two lads had noticed on the vessel's deck when first they saw it.

"I'm exceedingly sorry, my dear Fraser!" added the Russian, as the doctor seemed about to speak in protest. "I regret very much the necessity for all this, the more since it seems that you and I knew each other so long ago. But necessity knows no law. Too many people—too vast interests—are concerned in this affair for us to leave any clues behind. You were destined from the first to remain here, once I'd brought you. Our young friend—I had sent people with a message to him that you wanted him on board, in order to get him here. But it appears other circumstances helped us in the matter. Regrettable circumstances, for we did not want any trouble."

"As an old school friend, Karagenski, I ask you," said the doctor solemnly, "is it playing the game? We don't know enough to harm your plan, whatever it is. Put us ashore, and you'll be gone undersea before anything we could say or do would matter. I've a serious case needing me in Barchester. These two lads—what hurt can they do to you? Put us ashore, I urge you, and get to sea—"

"Too late, I'm afraid, even if I could do it!" responded the Russian, with a little shrug.

Here a vibratory movement of the floor, very slight but incessant and growing in volume, had become noticeable. Rodney remembered the metallic clanging noise he had heard earlier on. That would, of course, have been caused by the closing up of the submarine for immersion. But something far more startling than the fact that the vessel was already in motion attracted Rodney's eye at the moment. In blank amazement he peered out through a porthole close to where he was standing.

"Why," he gasped suddenly, "we're not on the sea at all now. We're rising into the air. It's some sort of airship, surely?"

Certainly, from the porthole he could see now below—with every instant growing less distinct—Littleworth Cove and the coastline, the broad stretch of Devon, a far-reaching dark mass picked out with little white patches which were Tidewell, Marcombe, Barchester. Every instant the strange vessel which was carrying them into the unknown was lifting, directly and silently, into the night sky, which was black with clouds.

"Yes," murmured the Russian, "it certainly is some sort of airship, as you put it, my young friend. And the sort of airship we don't want talked about—till the right moment

comes. And that is why, regretfully, my friends and I are obliged to have you with us."

### A Threat to the World!

WITH this strange craft speeding them noiselessly away from the earth; there was nothing for it but to accept the inevitable. So swiftly were they mounting into space indeed that, almost before the two lads could recover from their astonishment, the clouds were blotting out all that could be seen of England, and a glance through the portholes showed them only the sky and—very far below indeed—the faint glistening of the sea.

"I would suggest to you, my dear Fraser," murmured the prince suavely, "that you and your young friends here should settle down comfortably and in a friendly spirit. My companions and I have no wish to harm you in the slightest, so long as you meet us in the same way. You are our enforced guests. A polite and, I hope, a pleasant form of imprisonment, without any disagreeable cell, or nasty prison food. Meantime, let me introduce everybody to everybody."

He turned with a gesture and proceeded to do so. The red-faced, bearded man turned out to be a German ex-naval officer, named Von Roden. The olive-complexioned man with upturned moustache was a Greek, named Mirapoulis. They both spoke a certain amount of English and, though they assumed an air of friendliness, it was evident that they felt less kindly than they looked.

Especially Von Roden, from whose guttural voice Rodney recognised at once as being the unseen man behind the electric torch who had interrupted the fight over poor old Tom Liddell's body, and had brought them here. He had savage, glinting eyes, and a dark scar across one cheek, which made his face very ferocious in appearance. It looked less friendly than ever when, holding out his hand to Rodney, the latter pretended not to see it.

"You don't feel pleased at all that you are here, young shentlemans?" he said angrily. "You don't like to shake hands?"

"I'd sooner not," replied Rodney quietly. "I mean—I'd sooner first of all know the kind of person with whom I'm shaking. It doesn't seem to me that people concerned in the kind of thing that's been going on to-night—are quite the right sort—"

"You don't?" glowered the other, withdrawing his outstretched fingers. "Vell, vell! We shall see about that presently when—"

"Come, now, Von Roden!" intervened the prince soothingly. "We can't expect the lads, or the doctor, either, to take to the situation very easily. But, don't let us quarrel over nothing. Our new guests will presently get accustomed to things, and feel less touchy. Supposing we sit down to dinner. We must all be hungry, and I see that it is ready—"

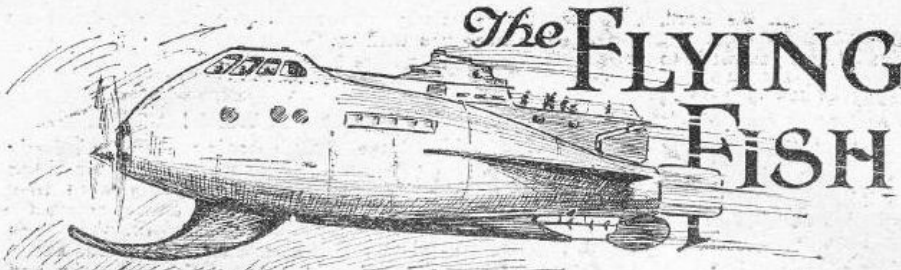
At this moment, a manservant, in a steward's white coat, had flung open a door, showing beyond a brilliantly-lit saloon, with a table laid with shining silver and glass. Just then, however, a startling intervention caused everyone to swing round in the direction of the door through which the prince and his companions had entered the smoking-lounge. This had been left open, and through it there came staggering a tall, lean figure, dressed in pyjamas. In a white and twisted face, a pair of eyes glared madly around. A voice was muttering hoarsely in English:

"Where are the infernal fiends? Let me get at them!" he was saying in his wild mutter. "They're dangerous, wild beasts. For the peace of the world, let me get my fingers on their throats. They fooled me. Don't let them get away with it—"

The thing happened so suddenly, and seemingly so unexpectedly, that the prince and his companions were obviously taken by surprise. And when they had recovered themselves, the wild eyes of the man seemed to have recognised them, for he suddenly hurled himself towards them, his outstretched, clutching fingers flashing towards them, seizing the little, olive-complexioned Greek by the throat.

There followed a moment of pandemonium, the Greek screaming, as well, with half-choked cries for help. A burly man of a fair German type, apparently having followed hurriedly in the wake of the pyjama-clad man, joined in the struggle to loosen the latter's hold on the Greek. He was violently attempting, with vicious blows, to tear the tall man away, when suddenly Dr. Fraser intervened, stepping briskly forward, raising his voice above the tumult sharply and authoritatively.

"Ashton!" he demanded. "What are you doing? Why have you left your bed like this? Get back to it at once!"



(Continued from previous page.)

Instantly, as though a sudden ray of reason had penetrated a miasma of madness, the pyjama-clad figure quivered, and remained still. The clutching, strangling hands released their grip. The glaring eyes turned round in the direction of the doctor and stared at him—vaguely at first, and then gradually with a faint sign of recognition. He covered them for a moment with a shaking hand, as if trying to remember something, and then flung out a little gesture of apology.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I ought to remember you. Another Englishman. Yes, I thought I'd been dreaming about you. And you're here? What are you doing? I thought the dogs of war had been unloosed, the chariots of Hell were driving past—"

"Come, come!" urged the doctor gently, thrusting aside the fair German, who was still gripping the man viciously, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the latter. "You must come back to bed, Ashton. We shall never get you well if you behave like this, man! Pull yourself together, and be calm—"

"Calm? Calm?" muttered the other doubtfully, his staring eyes roving round, the momentary sanity in them seeming gradually to be blotted out again. "Calm? Go back to bed? While the world is shaken by the horrors of war? While Britain is swept away? While these fiends—"

This time, incoherency and madness once more mastering him, it was upon Von Roden that the man flung himself, with raging threats. And this time, despite all attempts of Dr. Fraser to calm him, it was only by brute force that he was overcome, and, the doctor accompanying him, was dragged back beyond the door from which he had first so unexpectedly emerged.

With him, talking angrily and excitedly in Russian to the prince, went Von Roden and the Greek. The door closed noiselessly, shutting off their voices, and the two lads were left alone together for the first time since they had been brought aboard this queer craft.

"That was evidently the doc's patient," said Rodney. "An Englishman. A bit off his head, but not so much as to be talking what probably wasn't far from the truth. You heard what he said, Dan? Horrors of war. Britain being swept away. We're mixed up in something serious all right, Dan."

"No doubt about that, Mister Rodney," nodded the other, staring out of a porthole, from which could be seen a silver

sheen of moonlight, and—below—a far-stretching carpet of cloud-land. "This be a very queer business altogether. You and me, walking along the cliffs from Marcombe to Littleworth, didn't see any such airship as this come down? What we saw was a submarine, what must have come in Littleworth by way of the sea—"

"That's so, Dan. I've been thinking it all out. This thing we're on. It couldn't have come in Littleworth Cove

by way of the air, or we'd have seen it. Besides, lying there in the water, it was built like a submarine. And the Russian spoke of it as a boat when we were walking home with him. The fact is, Dan, that it must be both."

"Airship and boat? But there be no such thing! Who ever heard of it?"

"People have talked of it becoming possible, Dan. A sort of—I think they'd call it an amphibian. Anyhow, the proof of the pudding's in the eating. Here we are. When we came on board this craft, she was lying snug enough in the waters of Littleworth. And while we stood here in this room, we were being taken up—straight up, Dan. That's another thing."

"It's got vertical lift," he added, "the thing the aeronautical people have been trying all along to get. This is a sort of wonder-craft. It hasn't got gas-bags, like an ordinary airship. It's all metal, and solid, or it couldn't go under the sea. So how is it kept in the air? There must be some wonderful contrivance which is part of its invention. Some sort of helicopter affair, that lifts and sustains its weight. Gee, Dan! What wouldn't the 'Sun' give to know about this craft! And you and I—here we are—among the only people who know of it, travelling in the world's wonder-ship!"

"As for me, I'd sooner be safe and quiet down in Tidewell!" said Dan dryly. "They'll be all wondering what's happened to I that I bean't come back home for supper. There'll be no end of fuss. And they'll maybe send round to ask of you at the doctor's, and find you and he be gone, too. Like enough, they'll find poor old Tom Liddell lying there near the cove, and not knowing what to make of things."

"There'll be no end of fuss, of course!" nodded Dan. "Poor old Mrs. Munt will be in a frightful stew. And Barchester will be ringing through to know when the doc's coming along. And the 'Sun' people have lost their new cub-reporter before he started work. They won't know that—all the while—he's here, stepped right into one of the biggest news-stories ever!"

(It's a big "news-story" all right, but will young Rodney ever live to pass it on to the world? See next week's thrilling instalment, chums, and don't forget to order your free gift number Early!)

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