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BY
Martin
Clifford.



Things look black for Gordon Gay, the ex-leader of the Grammarians, now in the Shell at St. Jim's. Nothing, it seems, could be clearer than the proof of his treachery to his new school—until his plotting enemies overreach themselves!

CHAPTER I. Having It Out!

THE door of Study No. 10 on the Shell passage at St. Jim's flew back with a crash. Gordon Gay, who was alone in the study, sprang to his feet, startled.

He stared, and his face set grimly at sight of the crowd swarming in and around the doorway.

Tom Merry was there, and behind him were Lowther and Manners, with Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy, and a crowd of other Lower School fellows. It was obvious from their angry expressions that this was not a friendly visit.

"Hallo! Here's the rotter!" said Blake.

"Meaning me?" inquired Gay coolly.

"Yes, of course!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Deputation—what?"

"Yes, it's a deputation, Gay," said Tom Merry, his eyes

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glinting as he noted Gay's cool manner. "And I fancy you know well enough what it's about, my pippin."

"I think I do," assented Gordon Gay. "But go ahead! On the ball, old sport!"

"I'll go ahead fast enough!" said Tom Merry. "But I might tell you, Gay, that we don't look upon this affair as a joke if you do."

"Did I say I did?" inquired Gordon Gay.

"No, you didn't; but from your attitude—"

"Oh, let's slaughter the rotter!" snorted George Alfred Grundy from somewhere in the rear. "Never mind gassing, Tom Merry. Here, let me get at him! I'll show the rotten traitor—"

"Shut up, Grundy!"

"I jolly well won't shut up!" bawled Grundy. "That rotter's let us down—everybody knows he has; he knows it himself. He's backed those Grammar School rotters up against his own school—"

"Dry up, Grundy!"

A dozen voices told Grundy to "dry up," and he subsided, growling. Apparently George Alfred Grundy felt very strongly on the subject of Gordon Gay, the ex-leader of the Grammarians. Tom Merry turned to Gay again.

"Now, Gay," he said quietly. "We're going to have this matter out, here and now. When you left the Grammar School a few days ago and joined St. Jim's, we took it for granted that you'd play the game; we'd always taken you for a decent fellow, and a good sport."

"Thanks," said Gay. "And I'm not now, eh?"

—TOM MERRY & CO., THE FAMOUS CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!



"It's up to you to prove now whether you are or not," said Tom curtly. "Anyway, when you came here we expected you to forget that you'd been a Grammarian; we expected you to back your new school as a St. Jim's fellow should—and against your old school if necessary. Instead of that, what have you done?"

"Is that a conundrum?" asked Gay.

Tom Merry set his lips. Though surrounded by a score of hostile faces, Gordon Gay seemed quite cool and unconcerned. It exasperated Tom Merry intensely. But he went on unheedingly.

"Instead of backing us up, you seem to have gone out of your way to do the reverse!" he snapped. "The other day you gave Racke away to the enemy—got him a licking from them."

"Racke is lying! The cad's got his knife into me," said Gay. "I booted him round the study the other day, and he's out to make me sit up."

"Well, we'll let that pass," proceeded Tom. "Then there was Grundy. When he was rowing with the Grammarians in Mother Murphy's tuckshop, you helped Monk and his pals to kick Grundy out, after ragging him."

"Grundy asked for it," answered Gay smiling. "He started on to us just because I happened to be with my old pals."

"You can't blame him for that," said Tom bluntly. "If you will persist in irritating the fellows by associating with the enemy—"

"I don't see why I shouldn't speak to my old pals when I meet them," said Gay quietly. "And what's more, I don't intend to stop speaking to them, either for you or anyone else."

"Right!" said Tom. "We won't argue about that, either. Now we come to what brings us here now. The other day I asked you to call at the village printer's with the copy for 'Tom Merry's Weekly.' I trusted you, Gay; I didn't expect you to play traitor, to let it come into the hands of the enemy, or to monkey about with it yourself."

"I did neither!" said Gay sharply. "I just handed it in to old Tiper. I admit Monk and his pals were with me at the time; but they never handled the copy, and I don't believe they knew what the parcel contained at the time."

"Then how is it," demanded Tom Merry, "that my 'Editorial' was cut out and another one substituted—a footling article holding St. Jim's up to ridicule and making it out that you'd been sent to St. Jim's to teach us how to play footer, and all that rot?"

"Goodness knows; I don't. I'm as mystified about it as you chaps are."

"You expect us to believe that?"

"Certainly."

"Well, we don't!" snapped Tom. "But that isn't all. When we knew what was in the 'Weekly' we rushed off to make sure of getting all the copies that had been printed. But someone—some traitor at St. Jim's—must have phoned through to the Grammarians. They ambushed us and collared the lot. They'll distribute all of them, and we shall be a laughing-stock!"

"Yaas, wathah! It is vewy sewious!"

"Serious, isn't the word for it!" snorted Tom Merry hotly. "We shall never hear the last of it! Either you or Frank Monk wrote that rotten 'Editorial,' Gay. Anyway, you were at the bottom of it—must have been. And we want an explanation here and now."

"Hear, hear!"

There was a roar, and the fellows pressed in around Gordon Gay. He did not turn a hair, though his eyes were gleaming.

"Well, now you've had your say, Tom Merry," he said, "I'll have mine. I've already told you that I don't know how that 'Editorial' came to be tampered with, and I mean

what I say. It wasn't done while in my keeping, nor with my knowledge. As for phoning to the Grammarians, that's a rotten lie, too! I did nothing of the kind!"

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Wubbish!"

"You can think what you like and say what you like," said Gay, keeping cool now with an obvious effort. "But I'm telling you the truth. You fellows know I didn't want to leave the Grammar School and come here."

"We know that," agreed Tom. "We can understand how you feel about it, Gay. You were junior skipper there, and cock of the walk. But your uncle made you come here, and it was up to you to make the best of it and play the game."

"I have played the game. I'll admit I've upset you fellows by knocking about with my old pals," said Gay quietly. "But I've not been false to St. Jim's. I've never backed the Grammarians up in any way, and I've refused to discuss with them anything that goes on at St. Jim's."

"Rot!" roared Grundy. "Rag the rotten traitor!"

"That's the idea! Put the sweep through the hoop!"

"Show him what we think of him!"

Again there was a roar of voices. Obviously the juniors had no doubts as to Gay's guilt. But Tom Merry frowned and eyed the accused junior's cool face keenly. He had always known the ex-leader of the Grammarians to be straight as a die, and he could not help being impressed by his calm statements now.

"Hold on, you fellows!" he exclaimed quickly. "If Gay can prove he had no hand in that 'Weekly' jape—"

"I don't see how I can prove anything," said Gay, his lip curling. "But I've given you my word that I did not, and I expect you to believe me. If you don't, then you can go and eat coke—the lot of you!"

"So that's your attitude?" snapped Blake. "You defy the lot of us?"

"There's no defiance about it. I deny knowing anything about that 'Editorial,' or about the phone message, if there was one. I've not been disloyal to St. Jim's, and what's more I'll prove it before long!" said Gay.

"How?" jeered Grundy.

"By getting back those copies of the 'Weekly,'" said Gordon Gay coolly. "I think I can do it. If I succeed I suppose that will be proof that I'm not working for the Grammar School?"

"I fancy it will," assented Tom Merry dryly, "if you can. But it's a big 'if.'"

"I know that. But I mean to try."

"You—you really mean it, Gay?" demanded Tom Merry eagerly. "My hat! If you can do that—"

"I think so."

"How?"

"You can leave that to me," returned Gordon Gay. "I think there's a chance. You fellows are suspicious of me because I'm an old Grammarian."

"You've made the fellows mistrust you by hobnobbing with your old pals," said Tom Merry briefly. "It's your own fault. I warned you that it wouldn't do."

"I don't see what difference it makes," said Gay heedlessly. "Though I'm still pally with them, I'm as keen to dish them as you are. Anyway, if I succeed in getting those copies of the 'Weekly' back—"

"We'll believe you innocent, not before," said Tom curtly.

"The evidence against you is a bit too strong, Gay. But we'll give you the chance."

"What rot!" snorted Herries. "He's only trying to throw dust in your eyes—just to escape a ragging."

"That's it!" roared Grundy. "Tom Merry, you ass—"

"Shut up, Grundy!"

"But, hold on!" interrupted Blake. "Do you mean that, Tom Merry? Are you letting this rotter off?"

"I'm giving him a chance to show he's not disloyal to St. Jim's," said Tom Merry. "We've no clear proof that Gay did it—either over the 'Editorial,' or by letting the enemy know we were going for those copies. And it's only fair to give him a chance to clear himself."

"Right!" said Blake, nodding. "I'll agree to that."

"Will you?" bellowed Grundy. "But I won't! Here, lemme get at the cad!"

He made a rush at Gordon Gay. That junior smilingly stood up to him. As Grundy rushed up, Gay grasped his arm, twisted the burly Shell fellow round with a powerful swing, and then rushed him to the door, the fellows jumping out of the way to avoid Grundy's waving fists. In the doorway Gay released Grundy, at the same time planting a hefty boot behind him.

Grundy sprawled in the passage, roaring with rage. He jumped up, and was about to charge into the study again when Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, came along the passage.

"Hallo! What's this?" snapped Kildare. "Here, no you don't, my lad!"

He grasped the great George Alfred by the ear and twisted him round. Then he ran him, wildly protesting, to his own study and thrust him inside.

"In you go!" snapped Kildare. "Come out again, and you'll have a taste of my ashplant, kid!"

"Ow! Yow! Look here—"

Slam!

Kildare closed the door and went back to Study No. 10. But the deputation was already breaking up—nobody wanted to argue with Kildare. In a few seconds the study was empty save for its owners—the Terrible Three and Gordon Gay. But neither Tom Merry nor his chums spoke

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to Gay; Tom, at least, had said all he wished to say. It was up to Gay now to prove his innocence. Until he did, the Terrible Three were not likely to speak to him again. And as he met their grim glances, Gay, despite his coolness, looked grim himself. He had set himself a difficult and daring task; but he meant to carry it out, for he knew it was the only way in which he could hope to clear his name in the eyes of St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 2.

Locked In!

"YOU fellows awake?"

It was Gordon Gay who whispered that question in the Shell dormitory at eleven o'clock that night.

There came no answer to his question—only the soft breathing of his Form-fellows in the dark dormitory. All the members of the Shell were sleeping the sleep of the just—excepting Gordon Gay.

That junior smiled his satisfaction, and, slipping out of bed, started to dress swiftly.

The promise he had given to the crowd of angry Shell and Fourth fellows that evening had not been an empty one. Even then a plan for recovering the Grammarians' prize had been formulating in his ready brain—a plan that he meant to put into execution that very night. No one realised more clearly than he that, if the attempt was to have any chance of success, it would have to be carried out as soon as possible.

Certainly, if sheer, breath-taking daring counted for anything, then Gordon Gay was well on the way to accomplishing his task.

Put briefly, his scheme was to break bounds, go to the Grammar School, and gain admittance to the junior studies. The rest he considered would be comparatively easy.

And, really Gordon Gay's "burglary" was not such a wild idea as it might seem at first glance, in spite of its great risk.

Gay knew every inch of the ground, and he knew he could find his way about the Grammar School blindfold, if necessary. Moreover, he had shared Frank Monk's study,

and he fancied that the finding of the precious bundle would be a very easy matter.

His determination to prove his loyalty to St. Jim's was no light boast. He fully realised, for all his light and airy manner when before his accusers, that he was in a decidedly awkward position. He hated to be misjudged and at loggerheads with Tom Merry & Co. and all the decent fellows at St. Jim's. He was miserable enough at the school without making his position worse by becoming an outcast, mistrusted and suspected of being a traitor.

How that wretched "Editorial" had got into the "Weekly" Gay had no idea, nor any idea who had sent the phone message to Frank Monk. But someone obviously had; someone was playing traitor, with the sole idea of making things hot for him. Of that Gordon Gay felt certain.

Well, Tom Merry had said that it was up to him to prove his innocence, and he meant to do so somehow.

He dressed swiftly and noiselessly, and then left the dormitory and stole downstairs. It was as he was passing along the Fourth Form passage that Gordon Gay walked full into a shadowy figure that had emerged from Study No. 6 at that moment.

Naturally, it gave Gay a startling shock, and there was a gasp of alarm from the figure he had collided with.

"Oh, bai Jove!" came a voice. "Who—who is that?"

There was a chuckle in the gloom. There was no mistaking that well-known and aristocratic accent.

"Dear old Gussy!" murmured Gordon Gay. "Good evening, old scout! Rather dark—what?"

"Bai Jove! Gordon Gay!"

"The one and only!" chuckled Gay. "I thought it was a giddy burglar at first! What are you up to, dear old top—running away from school?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Or are you off on the razzle?" inquired Gay. "Dear me! How very, very sad! So young and innocent, too! I'm shocked, Gussy—fearfully shocked to find you such a bold, bad blade! Who has led you astray like this?"

"Pway do not wot, Gay!" said Arthur Augustus. "You

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Passing along the Fourth Form passage in the darkness, Gordon Gay walked full into a shadowy figure that had emerged from Study No. 6 at that moment. "Oh, bai Jove!" came a startled voice. "Who—who is that?" Gordon Gay chuckled. "Dear old Gussy!" he murmured. (See Chapter 2.)

are well awah that I am not the fellow to go on the wazzle! Wathah not, bai Jove!"

"Then what's the game?" asked Gay, peering curiously at Arthur Augustus in the deep gloom.

"I wegwet that I cannot tell you that, Gordon Gay!" said Arthur Augustus stiffly. "My business is a gweat secwet, and I do not wish my intentions to be known and fwustwated! Kindly allow me to pass!"

"But what is the game?" demanded Gay, slight suspicion in his tone now. "You've got your cap, and you're fully dressed, old sport. That means you're going out."

"I wefuse to answah that question, Gay!" said Arthur Augustus coldly. "As an old Gwammawian, and a fellow undah deep suspicion of bein' still in league with them, you are the last fellow I would wish to know where I am goin'! You would possibly wuin my secwet scheme, and those copies of the 'Weekly' would nevah be wecovahed! You might even be the means of gettin' me captuahed by the enemy!"

Gordon Gay gave a deep, deep chuckle. Instead of being annoyed by Gussy's pointed remarks, he was highly entertained at the way in which the innocent swell of the Fourth was keeping his "gweat secwet." He realised that Arthur Augustus, of all people, had hit on the same wheeze as himself.

"Dear old Gussy!" he murmured. "What a lad you are! So you're going to the Grammar School—what?"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Bai Jove! Who evah told you that, Gay?"

"A silly ass I happen to know!" chuckled Gay. "A really burbling ass, in fact! A born idiot who's asking for the sack! You silly chump, so you're thinking of burgling the giddy Grammar School, Gussy?"

"Bai Jove! I pwesume Blake or one of those feahful wottahs has told you?" said Gussy indignantly. "The—"

"My dear man, you've told me yourself!" grinned Gay. "Didn't I say that a burbling ass, a born idiot, and a silly

chump had told me? Didn't you recognise yourself by that description?"

"Bai Jove! If you are askin' for a feahful thwashin', Gay—"

"Not at this hour, old chap! My dear man, are you potty to think of trying to get into the Grammar School to bag that bundle? You'd get collared as sure as Fate!"

"Wats! I weally cannot undahstand how you got to know my secwet, Gordon Gay, since I told only Blake, Hewwies, Dig, and Tom Mewwy & Co. of my intentions!" said Gussy angrily. "But I wefuse to be turned from my purpose by you!"

"You really mean to do it, Gussy?"

"Yaas! Most certainly!"

Gay frowned in the gloom. This was decidedly awkward. Arthur Augustus was a notorious bungler, and would be bound to make a mess of things. In any case, Gay was anxious to bring his great scoop off on his own. He hesitated a second, and then an idea struck him.

"We must talk this matter over, Gussy," he said. "Come into your study, old chap—cold standing here! I've got a suggestion to make, old top!"

"Vewy well, Gay; but I warn you that I wefuse to be turned from my purpose!"

"Right, old chap!"

Arthur Augustus entered Study No. 6. Gay stood in the doorway, his hand on the door knob—at least, it appeared to be there. In the gloom Arthur Augustus did not note that Gay had withdrawn the key from the inside and placed it in the outside of the lock.

That little circumstance quite escaped Gussy's notice.

"Now," said Arthur Augustus coldly, "if you have a suggestion to make—"

"It's this," smiled Gay, "that I go instead of you, old chap, while you remain in here until I return."

"Bai Jove! I shall certainly do nothin' of the kind."

"You're quite mistaken, Gussy," said Gay. "I'm going, and you're remaining here until I come back. Sorry, old dear; but it can't be helped. Try and get a bit of sleep while I'm away. Ta-ta!"

With that Gordon Gay slipped swiftly out and closed the door.

Click!

Arthur Augustus jumped as he heard the click of the key in the lock and understood what it meant.

"Bai Jove! Oh, gweat Scott! Gay, you feahful wascal!"

Only a chuckle answered the astounded Arthur Augustus. Then Gay's soft footfalls died away down the passage, and silence reigned.

Arthur Augustus trembled with wrath and indignation.

He saw it all now. Gay had somehow heard of his intended expedition. Gussy had heard Gay's vow to get back the bundle of magazines, but he did not dream that Gay intended to make his attempt after dark—the ex-Grammarians had dropped on the very same wheeze as himself. Now he had heard of Gussy's intention, he intended either to forestall the Fourth-Former, or to stop him—for other reasons. If his sympathies were still with his Grammatical pals 'his was just what he would do.

"Oh, the—the feahful cad!" murmured Gussy. "Oh, the fwightful wottah! I will give the wascal a feahful thwashin' for this!"

Like an enraged and imprisoned tiger, Gussy tramped about Study No. 6 in the darkness. To shake the door and make a noise was cut of the question. It was comparatively early yet, and it was quite possible a master or prefect was still up, reading or working at that hour.

But Arthur Augustus did not have to wait very long. There sounded a shuffling footstep in the passage without, and Arthur Augustus gasped as the footstep stopped outside the door of Study No. 6.

Arthur Augustus caught his breath. Who was it? It certainly did not sound like Gordon Gay's firm tread. Was it a master or—

Gussy listened, his heart thumping a trifle.

Then the door-knob turned, and there followed a disgusted grunt.

"Groogh! Thought as much. The mean beast's locked himself in!" came a familiar voice.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy, his relief almost as great as his astonishment. "It is that wottah Twimble!"

CHAPTER 3. A Bargain!

IT was Baggy Trimble, the Falstaff of the Fourth. He stood on the outside of the door and rattled the knob somewhat indignantly.

"I say, Gussy!" he called. "I know you're inside; open the door!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Twimble!" answered Gussy, considerably astonished. "What evah are you doin' heah?"

Baggy Trimble sniggered.

"He, he, he! I spotted you," he said. "I spotted you leaving the dorm, old chap. You woke me up, you know—banged into my bed. I just spotted you sneaking out. Then I saw your empty bed, and knew it was you."

"Weally, Twimble—"

"I know the game," went on Trimble, with a fat chuckle. "I guessed at once what was on. I'm surprised at you—really I am, Gussy—being so dashed mean and selfish; greedy, in fact!"

"I fail to undahstand you, Twimble!" said Gussy through the keyhole.

"He, he, he! What about that box of chocs?" asked Trimble knowingly. "I saw them come by this evening's post, old chap; a whacking great box. I asked you for just one, and you refused."

"Quite wight, Twimble. I saw no weason why I should share chocs with you, you fat wottah! I would wathah share them with my fwriends!"

"Yah!" Trimble sneered derisively. "Yah! I like that. What have you come down for now, then—tell me that? I know; you've come down to scoff 'em all by yourself, so you won't have to give your pals any."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

That suggestion quite shocked Gussy, who was the most generous of youths—too generous, in fact.

"You feahful little worm, Twimble!" he snorted in reply. "I have not come down for that weason at all, you gweedy, fat wottah! Open this door, and I will come out and kick you, you little wascal!"

That offer did not appeal to Trimble. Yet it quite surprised him.

"Yah! You've ocked yourself in, Gussy," he answered.

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"I say, it's all right, though. Lemme in, and I'll not tell your pals—not a word!"

"I am quite unable to let you in if I wished, Twimble," said Arthur Augustus haughtily. "Cannot you see that I am locked in? it was that feahful wottah Gay's doin'! If you will be good enough to find the key, Twimble—"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Trimble.

He fumbled about the handle, and his fat fingers encountered the key. Then the fat Fourth-Former understood the position, and he gave a snigger of satisfaction.

"He, he, he!" he sniggered. "I say, Gussy, what'll you give me if I let you out?"

"A good kickin', you little wascal!"

"Not good enough!" grinned Trimble. "Make it that box of chocs, and it's a go!"

"I shall do nothin' of the kind, Twimble."

"Oh, all right!" said Trimble. "Please yourself, old chap. Well, I'm off back to bed, old sport. Night-night!"

"Bai Jove! One moment, Twimble!"

Trimble grinned and retraced the couple of steps he had taken.

Arthur Augustus considered the matter. The study was decidedly chilly, and it occurred to Gussy that Gordon Gay might easily leave him there all night—possibly he might forget all about him. In that case he was booked to spend an uncomfortable night in Study No. 6.

The thought was not a pleasant one. Moreover, there was every possibility, in that case, of his being caught out of bed—a serious crime enough. And the box of chocolates—a present from a doting aunt—was a mere nothing to Arthur Augustus.

"Make it fifty-fifty and it's a go," suggested Trimble while he waited.

"I uttably wefuse to make it fifty-fifty, Twimble," returned Gussy. "I have no wish to divide my chocs with you undah such circumstances."

"Oh, all right! Well, I'm off. Mind you don't catch cold, old chap. Remember it's the Grammar School match to-morrow."

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus did remember it, and he had no desire to catch a cold, and thus spoil his chances of making a record score at cricket in the first match of the season.

"Oh, bai Jove! Wait a moment, Twimble!" he gasped. "Though I uttably wefuse to share my chocs with you, I will give you the box to yourself, you gweedy little beast! Now open this door."

"He, he, he!"

Trimble again retraced his steps—he had expected to have to do so. And the thought of having the whole box to himself was much better than dividing them with another.

"That's a bargain, mind!" he called. "You'll hand me the chocs if I open the door? Honour bright?"

"Yaas. Open the dashed door, Twimble!"

"Certainly, old fellow!"

Trimble unlocked the door, thrust it open, and rolled into the study. Arthur Augustus had lighted the stub of a candle, and in silence he went to the table drawer and drew out a large chocolate box.

"There you are, Twimble," he said icily. "My fwriends and I have had one each—you are welcome to the west, in the cires, and I twust they will give you seveah indigestion. And now I am goin' to have the pleasure of kickin' you wound the woom for havin' forced me to bargain with you."

"Eh? Look here—I say— Yow-ow! Yooop! Keep off, you— Oh crumbs!"

Trimble scudded round the table, with the irate Arthur Augustus behind him, lunging out vigorously. Gussy had kept to his bargain, and now he intended to keep the bargain he had made with himself—which was to kick Trimble.

"Pway do not yell, Twimble; you will have the beaks heah if you do."

"Yow! Stoppit! Yow-ow!"

Kick, kick, kick!

Arthur Augustus was satisfied at last—while Baggy was more than satisfied. Having finished with Trimble, Arthur Augustus left the study and hurried upstairs, making for the Shell dormitory. He slipped inside and peered round at the beds. One was certainly empty—even in the gloom Gussy saw that. And the empty bed was Gordon Gay's.

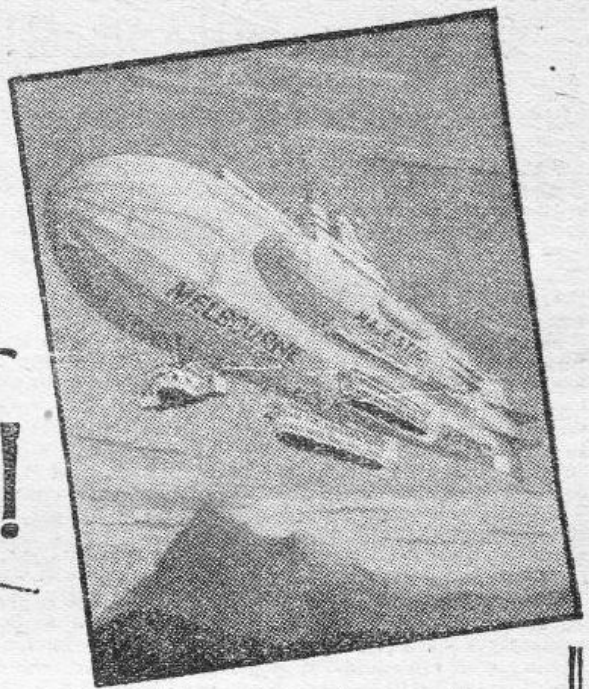
"Bai Jove!" murmured Gussy, not sure whether he was disappointed or not. "So the wottah has weally gone. Vewy well—that settles it. It would be vewy foolish of me to go now in the cires."

And having reached that decision Arthur Augustus went back to bed. He was cold, and rather fed-up. And if Gordon Gay had gone to attempt to get the bundle of "Weeklies" back, then it was useless for the swell of the Fourth to go after him. The ex-Grammarians would stand a

(Continued on page 8.)

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Mechanical steering devices have been installed just recently in some big ocean-going ships, and other schemes calculated to make impossible a human failure that might jeopardise the safety of the vessel and its passengers and crew.

It is inevitable that these will be adapted to the requirements of air liners of the future.

Already there has been put into operation an astounding device with which a pilot can light up for himself an aerodrome or landing place that happens to be shrouded in darkness, whilst he is still a considerable distance away. A gadget fixed to the 'plane can be made to howl for a light—the howl being answered immediately by machines at the aerodrome which automatically switch on a flood of brilliant light immediately. And all this without any human intervention!

The view that passengers will get of the earth as it flashes beneath the air liner's gigantic bulk will not be exciting—for there will be very little indeed that is visible, the "flying city" being *miles* above the ground.

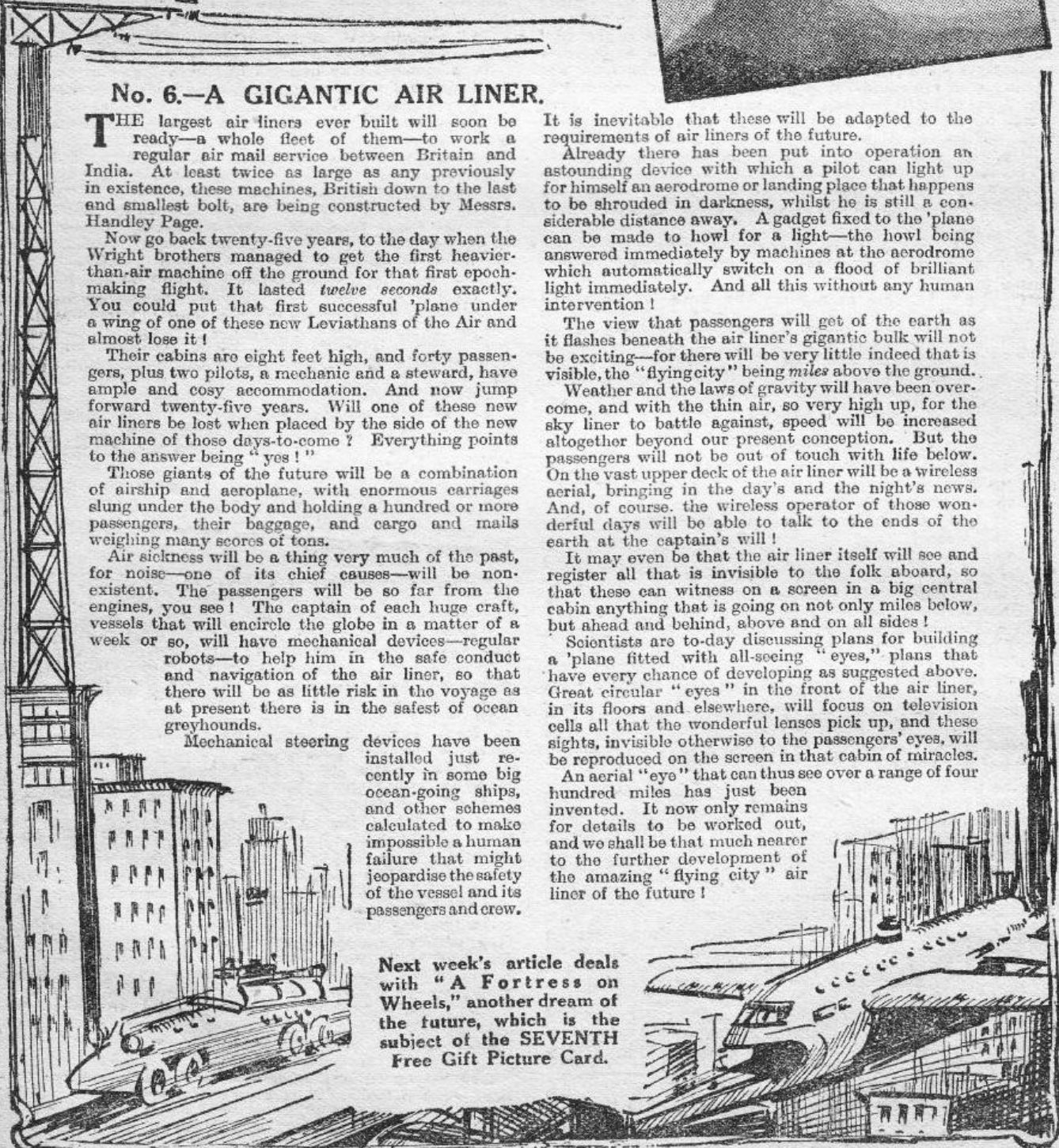
Weather and the laws of gravity will have been overcome, and with the thin air, so very high up, for the sky liner to battle against, speed will be increased altogether beyond our present conception. But the passengers will not be out of touch with life below. On the vast upper deck of the air liner will be a wireless aerial, bringing in the day's and the night's news. And, of course, the wireless operator of those wonderful days will be able to talk to the ends of the earth at the captain's will!

It may even be that the air liner itself will see and register all that is invisible to the folk aboard, so that these can witness on a screen in a big central cabin anything that is going on not only miles below, but ahead and behind, above and on all sides!

Scientists are to-day discussing plans for building a "plane fitted with all-seeing "eyes," plans that have every chance of developing as suggested above. Great circular "eyes" in the front of the air liner, in its floors and elsewhere, will focus on television cells all that the wonderful lenses pick up, and these sights, invisible otherwise to the passengers' eyes, will be reproduced on the screen in that cabin of miracles.

An aerial "eye" that can thus see over a range of four hundred miles has just been invented. It now only remains for details to be worked out, and we shall be that much nearer to the further development of the amazing "flying city" air liner of the future!

Next week's article deals with "A Fortress on Wheels," another dream of the future, which is the subject of the SEVENTH Free Gift Picture Card.



"Condemned by the School!"

(Continued from page 6.)

far better chance than he of succeeding—even Gussy realised that. And if Gay had merely gone to warn his pals—if he really was the traitor St. Jim's believed him to be, then it was much safer not to go—very much safer. He would only find a "nornets'-nest" awaiting him at the Grammar School.

So, wisely, Gussy went back to bed, and was very soon sleeping the sleep of the just, like the rest of his chums.

Meanwhile, Trimble had seated himself in the armchair in Study No. 6, to devour the chocolates in comfort. They were big specimens, and very good indeed. D'Arcy's aunt evidently knew good chocolate. But Trimble very soon disposed of them. Then, his appetite sharpened by his preliminary encounter, he looked around for fresh worlds to conquer, so to speak. He was up now, and it seemed a great pity not to do the job thoroughly—to make hay while the sun shone, and to appease his hunger, merely tickled as yet by the chocolates.

"What a giddy chance!" murmured Trimble, his little eyes gleaming. "That ass, Gussy, has gone back to bed, and I bet he's asleep already. I'll see what's in the cupboard."

There were quite a lot of good things in the cupboard—evidently Jack Blake & Co. were in funds—the land was flowing with milk and honey. Trimble's mouth watered at the sight of half a large plum-cake, two kinds of jam, a pot of marmalade, a tin of sardines, a tin of pressed beef, and several other odds and ends of an edible nature.

"Oh, ripping!" murmured Trimble.

Trimble piled the good things on the table, and then he drew up the easy-chair and got busy. For some time there was no sound in the study save for Trimble's busy jaws.

"This is prime," murmured Trimble, with his mouth full of chocolate biscuit. "I think I'll do this stunt again—yes, rather!"

But all good things come to an end, and so did the good things in that cupboard. When they were disposed of even Trimble was satisfied, and he lay back in his chair, feeling very indisposed to move yet.

The fat junior had not been taking his ease very long when a new sound was heard in Study No. 6—the sound of a long-drawn-out snore!

Baggy Trimble slept.

CHAPTER 4.

The Mysterious Bundle!

"HERE we are again!"

Gordon Gay murmured the words to himself as he stood in the quadrangle of the Grammar School.

It had not taken Gordon Gay long to discover how fellows got out of St. Jim's in the still hours; in fact, Gay had known of the lower box-room window and the old oak by the school wall long before he had arrived at St. Jim's.

He had found it a very easy matter to get clear of the school buildings, and then he had started out for his old school. It was not a very dark night, and he very soon covered the mile and a half that separated the two rival schools.

Well-known notches in the brickwork of the school wall had enabled him to reach the quad in safety, and now he stood below the window of his old study in the junior quarters.

As he gazed upwards at the dark, familiar buildings he could not restrain a gulp. Until a few days ago this had been his home; he had never dreamed that he would be leaving it so soon. He felt as he stood there alone in the dark stillness, that he would have given anything to be asleep with his old pals in the Fourth dormitory.

St. Jim's was a fine school—he did not dispute that—and the fellows, for the most part, were some of the very best. Yet he knew he could never settle there. It had not been his fault that he had been transferred—far from it. His uncle had, owing to various unfortunate adventures on a recent visit, come to the utterly erroneous conclusion that the Grammar School was a badly-conducted school, and that bullying and general hooliganism was rife there. And as Dr. Holmes, the Head of St. Jim's, was an old friend, he had insisted upon the change—especially as he had had "high words" with Dr. Monk.

It was about the worst blow Gordon Gay could have received. It had been hard—very hard, indeed—to leave his old pals, and to give up all he had fought for and won

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at the Grammar School. There he had earned, by sheer merit, the proud position of junior skipper and leader of the Lower School. But at St. Jim's he was a mere nobody—worse, he was scorned as a traitor and informer.

Gordon Gay's first few days as a St. Jim's fellow had been far from happy ones. They had made him feel the change far worse than he would, perhaps, otherwise have done. With the comradeship of Tom Merry and his chums, Gay felt he might have been tolerably happy. But even they were deeply suspicious of him—more, they obviously believed him guilty of charges made against him.

"Rotten!" murmured Gay, as he blinked upwards at the dark window of his old study. "Anyway, it can't be helped. I'm a St. Jim's fellow now, and it's up to me to make the best of things! Here goes to have a shot at clearing myself, anyway!"

With that, the ex-leader of the Grammarians took a firm grip of the thick ivy and started the climb. It was a dangerous task at the best of times, and the darkness made it doubly so. But hand over hand the reckless, daring junior went up doggedly, clinging on with tooth and nail. Fortunately, the junior studies were only on the first floor, as at St. Jim's, and the climb was a short one. At last Gay reached the window-sill, and there he hung on, resting for a moment with his feet on the coping below.

Then he began to examine the window. As he expected, the sash was slightly raised—the juniors were careless, and as the catch of the window was broken they never troubled about fastening it, merely slamming it carelessly down when closing it.

In a moment Gay had his fingers underneath the slight opening, and very, very softly he raised the sash.

Fortunately, it scarcely made a sound, and a moment later Gordon Gay had slipped over the sill into the room, chuckling softly as he did so. It was his first attempt at a "burglary," and he knew what it would mean if he were captured.

Breaking bounds at night was a serious matter, but breaking bounds in order to force an entry into another school was a much more serious matter.

Yet he could not help chuckling at the thought.

He lost no time once he was inside, however.

Very cautiously he closed the window again, and then he lowered the blind. After which he lit the gas, turning the light just low enough to allow him to see what he was doing.

This done, Gay got busy. So far, all had gone well, and in his view had been ridiculously easy. Now he had to find the precious issues of "Tom Merry's Weekly," and get away with them safely.

The familiar study made him feel curiously dismal, and he sighed as he recognised his chums' belongings and saw the photographs on the walls, many of them groups in which he figured prominently.

Yet here he was, like a thief in the night, ready and eager to "do down" his old pals. Certainly he was a St. Jim's fellow now. But—

"Rotten!" sighed the junior. "But, as Tom Merry says, it's up to me to show I mean to play the game, and here goes!"

He found what he was after sooner than he expected—a big bundle of papers in the corner of the study. The bundle had been untied, and Gordon Gay knew what it contained at once. He gave a deep sigh of relief as he noted that the bundle appeared to be intact.

"Oh, good!" he breathed. "They haven't started to distribute them yet, then. Won't dear old Tommy be pleased!"

Hurriedly Gordon Gay retied the big parcel. Then he gave the study a hurried search, in case any loose copies of the "Weekly" were about. He soon found one—stuck in the pocket of a blazer behind the door.

But that was all. Gay stuffed it into his pocket, with a chuckle.

"I fancy that's the lot!" he murmured. "But if it isn't it can't be helped. In any case, to get this little lot is the main thing—it'll put the tin hat on their wheeze of broadcasting 'em around. Now for home, sweet home! Hold on, though—I'll just leave a message for Franky—just to let him see I'm alive and kicking."

And having found a piece of chalk in his rummagings, Gay hastily wrote a message on the mirror. It ran as follows:

"RATS!
WHAT PRICE ST. JIM'S NOW?
HEAR US SMILE!
(Signed) Gordon Gay."

"That'll make 'em open their eyes in the morning, I fancy," he mused. "Now I'd better go while the going's good!"

With another chuckle, Gordon Gay lifted the parcel on to the sill—and, holding it by the cord, lowered it down

into the darkness outside. The slackening of the cord soon told him when it had reached the ground, and then he slipped over the sill, drew down the window again, and started his perilous descent.

It was far more difficult than the climb upwards, but he had nerves of iron, and started back in high feather for St. Jim's.

It had been far easier than he had expected, and he felt a thrill of joy as he tramped back in the darkness. He had accomplished what he had set out to do—he had proved that the charge of disloyalty to his new school was false.

The heavy bundle of papers made the return to St. Jim's no light task, and the journey took him much longer than coming. There was little possibility of his meeting anybody in the lane at that hour, but Gordon Gay was ready to take cover at any moment, if necessary. He reached St. Jim's without mishap, however, and with the help of the length of cord he managed to get the heavy bundle over the school wall safely; with the help of the cord he also raised it up on the leaning outhouse, and through the box-room window.

He drew a deep breath of relief when once he was safe inside the box-room with his burden and had closed the window again.

"Thank goodness!" he breathed. "Now to shove this on Tom Merry's table. I fancy he'll get a pleasant surprise when he comes down in the morning. My hat! Yes, rather!"

With a chuckle Gordon Gay left the box-room, and made his way to the Shell studies. He entered No. 10, and lifted the bundle of papers on to the study table. Then he felt his way out again, and departed for his dormitory. His task was done; he had taken risks few fellows would have taken, and he had succeeded far better than he had even hoped to do. With a light heart and smiling face Gordon Gay went back to bed to sleep the sound sleep of a fellow conscious of duty well done.

Certain it is, however, that he would not have slept anything like so well had he only known what happened after he had gone to bed.

For scarcely had he left Study No. 10 when a fat, white face peered round the corner of the passage, and watched him depart.

It was Baggy Trimble.

Baggy had awakened suddenly in Study No. 6, and it was some moments before he realised just where he was.

But when he did he soon decided to make tracks for bed. He realised that it must be close on midnight—if not later—and he felt a sudden feeling of alarm. Baggy was not a hero, and the thought of being alone at midnight downstairs was not at all pleasant one.

He crept out of No. 6, and it was whilst he was stealthily making his way towards the stairs, that he caught sight of a dark form emerging from Study No. 10 in the Shell passage.



"What a giddy chance!" Baggy Trimble's eyes gleamed as he looked into the cupboard in Study No. 6. Evidently Jack Blake & Co. were in runds, and the fat Fourth-Former's mouth watered at the sight of the good things. "Oh, ripping!" he murmured. (See Chapter 3.)

It was Gordon Gay, of course, though Baggy did not know that. All the same his feeling of dread suddenly left him as he saw the size of the figure just disappearing in the deep gloom.

"Phew!" breathed Baggy, his teeth chattering. "Oh, dear! I did get a start! Now who was it, and what was he after in No. 10—up to something, I'll be bound."

Baggy was still dog-tired, and he was longing to get between the warm sheets again. But curiosity—one of his many besetting sins—overcame cold and tiredness. With gleaming eyes, and an overwhelming curiosity to learn what was "on," he crept to the door of No. 10 and slipped cautiously inside.

The room was in deep gloom, but Baggy had a torch with him—a torch he had "borrowed" from Wildrake when that junior was not looking. In a moment a gleam of white light was lighting up the apartment.

It fell upon the big parcel on the table at once, and Baggy's curiosity increased a hundred-fold as he sighted it.

"Phew! Now I wonder what's in that?" he muttered. "I'll have a squint. Grub, I bet!"

He stepped to the parcel, and felt it over. It certainly did not feel like grub. But it was heavy, and might possibly contain eatables of some sort.

Baggy lived and moved, and had his being in "grub," and all parcels and boxes which came under his notice were possible receptacles of grub.

Had he been hungry at the moment, Baggy would doubtless have made sure there and then. But he was not hungry—after polishing off a big box of chocolates and enough food for half a dozen hungry juniors, it was scarcely possible that he could be hungry.

None the less he had no intention of leaving the parcel unexplored and untouched.

"I'll take it along, and hide it in my study," he grinned.

"And to-morrow I'll see what's in it. There's something jolly queer about it. That chap, whoever he was, must have just brought it here. I was in here close on bed-time and it wasn't here then. Yes, that's the idea!"

He lifted the parcel with an effort, and carried it out of the study. Even as he lifted it, Baggy had a sudden feeling that it contained something very different from grub.

"I think I'll take it along and examine it now," he murmured, scenting a mystery. "No good leaving it until morning. And if that beast happens to come back and find me here with it—"

Baggy had just reached the passage, and arrived at that part in his meditations, when a sudden sound smote his ears—the sound of soft footfalls.

The fat junior's heart began to thump like a hammer. In the deep gloom, at that hour in the great silent building, the sound sent shivers down his spine, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

Who was it, wandering about at that hour?

Quite suddenly Baggy's nerves, already worn more than a little, failed him completely, and with a gasp of alarm he lowered the big parcel to the linoleum, and scuttled back into Study No. 10.

Behind the door there he waited, shivering.

The next moment the dancing light of a candle flashed round the passage corner, and a tall form appeared—a familiar form. The dancing light flashed on glimmering spectacles in the gloom.

It was Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth.

Evidently he had been sitting up late, either reading or working, and he was yawning as he came along in his slippers, obviously making for his bedroom.

And then, suddenly, something happened which the palpitating Baggy had not anticipated. Mr. Lathom ambled along in his short-sighted way, and then he tripped over the bundle on the floor, and went over with a crash.

"Oh, g-gug-good lor!" groaned Baggy.

He watched through the crack of the door in petrified alarm. To go to the unfortunate master's aid was something utterly beyond the fat youth's powers. He crouched behind the door, shivering with dread.

If Mr. Lathom were to come hunting round, and find him there?

But—fortunately for him—Mr. Lathom did not.

The Form-master staggered to his feet, hurt, and breathless, and wrathful.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Ow-yow! Good heavens! Who—what careless—criminally careless person has left that parcel here, right in the middle of the passage? Ow! I am considerably hurt! Yow!"

Mr. Lathom must have been hurt and shaken. It would have shaken a much younger man than little, short-sighted Mr. Lathom. He hunted about, found his candlestick, and struck a light, and then he blinked down at the offending parcel.

But there was nothing on it to show to whom it belonged. Originally it had been addressed to Tom Merry at St. Jim's. But Frank Monk had taken good care to remove that label when he had captured the parcel.

"Ow!" panted Mr. Lathom, tearing off some of the thick brown paper that covered it. "Dear me! It appears to be a bundle of exercise books. How—how criminally careless to leave them here. I will inquire into this in the morning, and the responsible person shall be severely reprimanded. Ow!"

Grabbing the parcel by the string, the irate master staggered away with it, and the light from his candle vanished round the corner of the passage.

Baggy Trimble watched the flickering light until it vanished, and then he drew a deep breath of relief.

"Phew!" he gasped. "What a jolly narrow escape! Serve the silly old buffer right. Fancy, only measly exercise books! Blessed if I can understand it. Anyway, I'm off to bed, now. Grooogh! It's cold!"

And dismissing the bundle of exercise books from his fat mind, Baggy Trimble, keeping his eyes open for further danger, rolled off upstairs, and went to bed. Soon he was fast asleep again, his exciting night's adventures over.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lathom had carried the bundle to the nearest store cupboard, and placed it inside, fully intending to see to it in the morning. Then he went to bed.

But Mr. Lathom was notoriously as absent-minded as he was short-sighted, and when morning dawned, and rising-bell rang out to awaken St. Jim's to a new day, Mr. Lathom had forgotten all about the precious parcel that reposed in the store cupboard on the landing at the bottom of the stairs.

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CHAPTER 5.

Rather a Shock!

"I AM goin' to thwash Gordon Gay!"

Arthur Augustus spoke as if he meant it.

"Oh, cheese it, Gussy!" urged Blake. "Let the rotter rip!"

"I wefuse to let Gordon Gay wip, Blake," said Arthur Augustus firmly. "I am goin' to give the feahful boundah a tewwible thwashin'!"

"My dear man, you couldn't thrash one of his eyebrows!" said Herries mildly. "Chuck the idea! We don't want to be bothered with a funeral just now."

"Wats! I uttably wefuse to be turned ffrom my purpose, you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "He uttably wuined my plans, and left me locked up, a beastlay pwisonah, in our studay. It was a gwoss insult, and it placed me in a vewy undignified position. I was obliged to bargain with that fat wottah, Twimble!"

"Awful!" agreed Blake, winking at Herries. "Still, we warned you not to try that silly, footling idea. You were bound to make a muck of it."

"We told you so," said Digby.

Arthur Augustus breathed hard.

"It was a wippin' scheme!" he snorted. "It would have been a twemendous success if that feahful wuffian, Gay, hadn't chipped in and wuined it. Then Twimble—"

"I'm saving up a few kicks for Trimble," said Blake grimly. "Those chocs were no end good, and I was lookin' forward to some more."

"Same here!" nodded Herries and Digby.

"We'll settle with Fatty," said Blake. "But it's rather queer about Gay, Gussy. You really think he went out of bounds?"

"Yaas, wathah! I went up to the Shell dorm, and his bed was empty. Eithah the wottah went to twy to get the w'etched papahs, or else he went to warn his old fwriends that a waid was contemplated, y'know."

"H'm!" said Blake. "I can't see Gay going all the way to the Grammar School to warn them that a born idiot was going to act the goat. He'd know, of course, that you couldn't manage such a job, and he wouldn't worry about your pulling it off, old chap."

"Bai Jove! Weally, Blake—"

Gussy's wrathful protests were interrupted as the Terrible Three joined the group on the stairs. It was a bright, spring morning, and Tom Merry was looking very cheery.

"Ripping day for the match, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "The giddy wicket should be in perfect condish. Hallo! What bee has old Gussy got in his bonnet now?"

"He insists upon thrashing Gay," explained Blake. "But we want him to postpone it until he's insured himself, and made a will in our favour."

"Weally, Blake—"

"What's Gay done now?" Tom Merry asked grimly.

The captain of the Shell frowned, suddenly remembering the affair of the "Editorial" in the "Weekly." The thought of it sent all the cheeriness out of Tom's face.

"Tell him, Gussy," grinned Blake. "I fancy he'll be interested, as well as amused."

"Bai Jove! I see nothin' whatevah amusin' in the affair!" said Arthur Augustus frigidly. "Howevah, I considah Tom Mewwy should know."

And Arthur Augustus told the junior skipper of his night's adventures.

Tom Merry whistled.

"So—so you actually intended to do that silly stunt, after all, Gussy?" he exclaimed. "Well, my hat! It was just as well, perhaps, that Gay did muck up your silly game."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"But it's queer about Gay," said Tom, frowning again. "I'm inclined to think the chap genuinely intends to try to get that bundle back again. If he did let us down, he must see now that he's only making things hot for himself here, and—"

Tom was interrupted by a cough behind him. He wheeled round to see Gordon Gay's smiling face.

"Cheerio, Thomas!" exclaimed the ex-Grammarian leader cheerily, as if nothing unpleasant had taken place between them. "Top of the morning, old scout! Have you been down to the study yet?"

Tom Merry coloured a little, realising that Gay must have overheard his remarks.

"No, I haven't been down yet, Gay," he said quietly. "Look here! Here, hold on, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to hold on, Tom Mewwy!" gasped D'Arcy, glaring at the smiling Gay. "Gay, you feahful wuffian, I insist upon an explanation heah and now of your beastlay conduct last night!"

"Certainly! You shall have it, old chap!" said Gay cheerfully. "I acted as I did to prevent a born idiot from making a fool of nimsel, also because I didn't want a little game of my own to be mucked up by the said born idiot!"

Arthur Augustus spluttered with wrath. This was adding insult to injury. He made as if to rush at Gay, but Blake and Herries grabbed and held him.

"Hold on, Gussy! You can't scrap on the stairs!" chuckled Blake, though he eyed Gay curiously. "And you don't want to scrap before breakfast, either. Spoils a chap's appetite. Besides, you'd better make sure of your breakfast, old chap. If you scrap with Gay you may never get another one."

"Does Gussy want to scrap with me?" inquired Gay, with interest. "What a giddy fire-eater he is! Won't a humble apology do instead, Gussy?"

"I shall certainly insist upon an apology, whethah I thwash you or not, Gay," said Arthur Augustus frigidly.

"Then here's the giddy apology," said Gay. "I'm awfully, fearfully, terribly sorry, Gussy! No words of mine can express my deep regret for having to lock you in your study last night. And, by the way, who let you out, Gussy? I clean forgot all about you."

"I wefuse to tell you that, Gay," said Gussy angrily. "And I believe you are twyin' to pull my leg now. Your apology is not sincere, you wottah!"

"Oh, Gussy!" murmured Gay. "Unsay those cruel words! But actually, old man, I simply had to prevent you mucking up my plan," added Gordon Gay, changing his tone suddenly. "And I fancy you'll agree to accept my apology, and be jolly thankful when you hear that my little scheme was successful."

"Eh? What's that?" exclaimed Tom Merry quickly. "You mean—"

"My little trip over to the Grammar School last night met with complete success," grinned Gordon Gay. "I found that parcel of rags—I mean, copies of the 'Weekly,' and I brought it back safely."

"Bai Jove!"

Tom Merry jumped.

"You mean that, Gay?" he demanded incredulously.

"Just that. I couldn't find any more copies about after a search," grinned Gay. "And I fancy I collared the lot. In any case, I did all I could do. If you'll come along to Study No. 10 you shall have the pleasure of feasting your optics on them."

"Phew!"

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "If you really have done it, Gay, then you're a marvel! Come on, chaps!"

With eyes gleaming eagerly Tom Merry dashed off for Study No. 10, his chums at his heels. The capture of the full issue of that famous periodical, "Tom Merry's Weekly," by the Grammarians, had brought dismay and dismal forebodings to Tom and his chums. Knowing Frank Monk & Co., they were well aware that the enemy would make the most of such a score. The juniors were likely to dance with joy if Gay had really done what he claimed.

Gay himself was smiling as he strolled after the excited chums. Even Arthur Augustus had forgotten his injuries in the excitement.

But Gay's smile faded somewhat when he arrived at Study No. 10 to find Tom Merry & Co. staring round the study, and looking perplexed and grim.

"Well?" demanded Tom Merry. "Where are they, Gay? Blessed if I can see the bundle, anyway!"

"Nor can I," snorted Blake. "This another of your funny games, Gay?"

Gay staggered as he quickly glanced at the table, and then round the room.

"M-my hat! You—you fellows haven't shifted it?" he gasped.

(Continued on next page.)

Here's the Next of Our Interesting series of Railway Articles!



Regimental "ROYAL SCOTS!"

Express engines of the "Royal Scot" class, on the L.M.S. Railway, are named after famous regiments of the British Army. You will learn from our contributor all about the "Scottish Borderer" locomotive.

If you look at the name-plate on Locomotive 6104 of the "Royal Scot" class, you will not see the words "Kokky-olly Bird" printed upon it. Indeed, were you to raise your cap and say—

"Hallo, Kokky-olly Bird!"

the great engine would look down upon you disdainfully, and, with a scornful sniff of steam from its squat tunnel, reply:

"Dear me, my lad, where were you dragged up?"

For although this giant loco is named "Scottish Borderer," after the famous regiment of 25th Foot, more familiarly known as "Kokky-olly Bird," "Botherer," and "K.O.S.B." (King's Own Scottish Borderers), none of these nicknames admirably suits the dignity of the monster engine.

But turn to the three mottoes of the regiment and we shall have more success. The first is "Nisi Dominus frustra" (Latin text books out, please!), which means "All is vain without God." The second is "Nec aspera terrent" (Difficulties do not frighten us). And the third, "In Veritate Religions confido" (What a mouthful!) means "I trust in the truth of religion."

From our point of view, and from the point of view of the railway, the second motto, namely "Difficulties do not frighten us," is admirably suited to the mighty locomotive which daily draws a weight of over five hundred tons non-stop from London to Carlisle, a distance of three hundred miles, in less than six hours.

The famous Scottish Borderer Regiment, from which the locomotive takes its name, belongs to a unit raised in 1689

in four hours by Lord Leven in Edinburgh. Pretty quick work that! And that is why the regiment has the exclusive privilege of "beating up" for recruits in the streets of Edinburgh at any time without asking leave of the Lord Provost, who is the chief magistrate of the city.

As well as achieving fighting fame at Namur and Minden, this famous regiment has claim to literary distinction. Those of you who have read "Tristram Shandy" will remember that the two characters, Uncle Toby and Corporal Tim, belonged to the Kokky-olly Birds.

Locomotive 6104 has a great reputation and a great past to live up to in being named after this famous regiment of the British Army.

(Another interesting railway article next week.)

"Of course not! Look here, Gay, is this all spoof?"
 "Oh, crumbs!" groaned Gay. He looked under the couch and under the table, and in the cupboard, and his startled eyes scanned every other possible place. But the big parcel was not to be seen. "Oh crumbs!" he repeated. "It—it can't have walked. It must be about somewhere. I swear I shoved it on the table before going to bed."

"Well, it isn't here now."
 "I can see it isn't!" gasped Gay. "I—I can't understand this, you fellows. You're sure you haven't interfered with it, D'Arcy?" he demanded suddenly.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not! Pway do not be wedic!"
 "Then somebody else must have shifted it," said Gay, with some heat. "Dash it all, this is a bit too thick, after all the risk and trouble I took last night!"

"Then you still stuck to the yarn and expect us to believe it, you spoofing rotter!" said Blake, his lip curling.

Gay started, and flushed.
 "I've told you the truth!" he said desperately. "I'm not spoofing at all, you silly owl! Gussy will tell you I went out!"

"I know you were not in your bed, Gay," said Gussy coldly. "But that does not say you went and fetched those w'etched papahs!"

"But I did!" shouted Gay, all his coolness gone now. "You awful cads, can't you believe me? Am I the sort of fellow to go on telling lies like this? I tell you I shoved the dashed, rotten bundle on this table for Tom Merry to find here. Then I went to bed. Somebody's shifted the rotten things."

Tom Merry & Co. stared at the new St. Jim's fellow. His earnestness seemed quite genuine, and Tom Merry especially was impressed.

"Well, it's queer," he said. "Look here, just hunt about a bit. Perhaps you put it in another study in the dark, Gay!"

"I don't think so—in fact, I know I didn't!"
 "Well, we'll look, anyway!" said Tom grimly.

The juniors went along to the other studies on both sides of the passage, and looked inside each, peering under couches and tables. But it was a useless search—the big parcel was not forthcoming.

Gay groaned when they gave it up at last. He could see only too clearly that Blake and several of the others did not believe a word he had said.

Tom Merry did not know what to think. He had always known Gay to be straight enough, and he could not believe that he was spoofing now.

"It's queer!" he said. "Anyway, let's get off now—time for chapel, chaps. I'm fed up with the whole rotten business!"

"Not so fed up as I am," snapped Gay. "There's something funny about this business. I swear I fetched the things, and shoved them on this table. Somebody's shifted them."

"Well, it can't be helped now," said Tom curtly; and he was walking out when Gay called him back.

"Hold on, Merry!" he said. "It's the Grammar School match this afternoon."

"It is!" assented Tom.
 "Am I playing or not? I think I ought to know by this time," said Gay, his lips meeting. "You promised me a place—"

"That was before this business happened," said Tom, looking uneasy. "I—I've not decided about it yet."

"Look here, I've done what I could to prove my loyalty to St. Jim's," said Gordon Gay quietly. "I'm keen to prove it still more by doing my best in the match. It isn't my fault that some howling cad has taken that parcel again. I swear I got it."

"I'll think it over this morning," said Tom briefly, "and I'll let you know in good time, Gay."

With that Tom Merry went out with his chums, leaving Gay alone. Blake eyed Tom in amazement.

"You—you're actually thinking of playing that rotter?" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"You're an ass if you do," growled Herries.

"I'm thinking it over," answered Tom Merry briefly. And that was all he would say in the matter—then.

CHAPTER 6.

Tom Merry Risks It!

DURING lessons that morning Tom Merry did think it over. It was a great temptation to play the ex-leader of the Grammarians. Gay was a very good bat, and a wonder with the ball. His inclusion in the team would make the match almost a foregone conclusion for St. Jim's.

On the other hand, was he risking too much? Already, so it seemed, Gay had proved himself a traitor, disloyal to his new school. He had let them down badly in so far as

japing was concerned. Would he also let them down at cricket?

Most of the fellows believed that he would. They thought it madness of Tom to dream of putting him in after what had happened. The captain of the Shell knew that if he did put Gay's name down again it would arouse a storm of opposition and criticism.

As a matter of fact, Tom had already crossed Gay's name off the list. He had done that the evening before. But he was sorely tempted to put it on again. Somehow he simply could not believe Gay guilty of the charges made against him. There was something radically wrong somewhere. He had always liked the cheery, fun-loving Australian junior, and he could not bring himself to believe him capable of playing false.

By the end of morning lessons Tom Merry had not yet made his decision. Just before dinner Kildare called him.

"You're wanted on the phone, kid!" he said. "It's young Monk, from the Grammar School."

"Oh, good!" said Tom.

Actually, Tom pulled a wry face as he thought of speaking to the new Grammarian leader. Frank Monk wanted him for something in connection with the match, of course. But he would be bound to pull his leg about the Grammar School's tremendous score over the issue of the "Weekly."

The captain of the Shell went to the prefects' room, and took up the receiver.

"Hallo! Tom Merry here! That you, Monkey?"

"Yes, old bean!" came the cheery answer. "Just a word about the match, old son. Stumps pitched at two-thirty—that suit you? Right! We're looking forward to giving you the licking of your innocent young lives. I say, are you playing Gay?"

Tom Merry grinned. He saw now why Monk had rung him up; he was anxious to know if they were playing Gordon Gay.

"I'm not sure yet," he said grimly. "But if we don't you've still need to worry, old bean. We can lick you without Gay."

"Oh, rats! You're keeping him as a dark horse, what—won't tell us! Fathead!" returned Frank Monk. "Well, whether you do or not we mean to lick you, my pippin! You did us down nicely last night. You scored, I'll admit. But after all, it was an old Grammar School chap who did it. We'll get our own back, never fear. Well, cheerio, old scout!"

"Here, hold on!" gasped Tom; but Monk had rung off.

Tom Merry left the prefects' room with a queer expression on his face.

He had expected the Grammarian leader to pull his leg unmercifully regarding the "Weekly." Yet, far from doing so, he had actually spoken as if the St. Jim's fellows had scored over them, and he had referred to them "doing them down" the night before. Moreover, he had hinted that it was Gordon Gay who was responsible.

Then it looked as if Gordon Gay was speaking the truth. Obviously Frank Monk had nothing to crow about now. Gay had certainly done something the previous night. In his own mind Tom Merry felt almost sure now that Gordon Gay had been speaking the truth—that he had indeed visited the Grammar School the night before and had done what he claimed to have done.

"That settles it," muttered Tom. "He must have done them down somehow, anyway. I'll risk the bounder. Yes, I will. I can see the Grammarians are funking us this afternoon, so they must think Gay's playing and that he will play up for us."

He joined Lowther and Manners a moment later, and told them.

"Phew! It's beginning to look like it!" agreed Manners. "And you're going to risk it?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom went straight to the notice-board in Hall. He crossed the name of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy out and substituted that of Gordon Gay. Quite a lot of fellows were in Hall, and there was a buzz as they saw what he had done.

"Bai Jove! You've crossed my name out, Tom Mewwy!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Yes, old chap. Sorry, but I fancy Gay's a better man!"

"Bai Jove! However, as a mattah of fact, I am wathah glad, deah boy. I shall be able to visit my tailah in Wayland. I have some wathah important bizney to discuss with him," said Gussy. "But—welly, Tom Mewwy, aren't you wathah wisikin' a lot?"

"I fancy not!" smiled Tom, and he led his chums away back to Study No. 10, leaving Big Hall in a buzz. From the startled remarks it was clear that Tom's action had aroused consternation.

But Tom did not mind. In Study No. 10 the Terrible Three found Gordon Gay, seated moodily in the armchair.

"I've just put your name down again, Gay," said Tom briefly. "You're playing, and I hope you'll put your beef into it."

"I'm playing?" ejaculated Gay, jumping up. "Oh, good! Yes, rather! I'll put my beef into it all right! My hat! That means I've got to cut off to Rylcombe for my cricket-shoes immediately after dinner. What an ass I was not to go before dinner, only I'd given it up as a bad job, Merry."

Tom said nothing; he did not wish to explain what had made him decide the matter. And just then the door flew back and Grundy rushed in, his rugged features red and angry.

"Look here, Merry," he bawled, "what's the meaning of this?"

"Of what?" asked Tom. "Your face? Goodness knows! I suppose it's been jammed in a door or something; it looks like it."

"I don't want any cheek!" hooted Grundy, who was almost stuttering with excitement. "I want to know what you mean by shoving that rotten traitor there down to play this afternoon? Are you potty?"

"I hope not! I've no desire whatever to resemble you, old chap!"

Lowther and Manners chuckled, but Grundy's deep frown grew deeper.

"You silly owl!" he roared. "You know that cad's

already let St. Jim's down. He's in league with those rotters from the Grammar School! You know it—everybody knows it! I punched his head only the other day for it. Yet—yet— Oh, you burbling fool!"

"Rats!"

"And what about me?" gasped Grundy, words almost failing him. "What about me? Passed over time after time—never given a chance to show what I can do. Yet—yet you'd play a rotten traitor like that! Oh, you—you—"

"Oh, dry up and get out!" said Tom Merry irritably. "I'm cricket captain, Grundy, and it's for me to say who shall play. I don't put you in, simply because I don't want any comedians in the team, and also because I don't want any match marred by accidents. If you didn't kill someone with a bat you'd brain somebody else with a ball!"

"Why, you—you—"

Such deadly insults proved too much for the excited George Alfred Grundy was a very decent fellow in some ways, and he really did believe Gordon Gay guilty—just as he had an overpowering belief in his own amazing abilities as a cricketer. And Tom's deadly insults were the last straw.

(Continued on next page.)



A Bermondsey reader has sent in a challenge from his grand-dad, aged ninety, to our ancient Oracle for a walk of fifty-two miles, from London

to Brighton, the loser to pay for a fish supper for both. In declining this kind invitation the Oracle states that he does not think he could enjoy a fish supper after "legging" it to Brighton, and anyway, it doesn't cost much to go by charabanc!

Q. What is the Dox?

A. A giant seaplane to be launched this month (May) in Switzerland by the Dornier Aircraft Company. The machine is 150 feet in length and capable of carrying no less than 80 persons. And here are a few more wonderful facts about this largest and most luxurious of the world's flying machines: Fully loaded, its weight is 50 tons, yet it can take-off from a heavy sea and fly at a speed of 200 miles an hour, developing 6,000 horse-power from its twelve 9-cylinder radial engines. Aboard it there is a reading-room, restaurant and promenade for the passengers; also telephones, refrigerators, and a well-appointed cook's galley. The wealthy people who use this and the two sister seaplanes that are to be built will find that they will enjoy the extreme of air luxury!

Q. What is a dipping lug?

A. A sail of the kind usually set in life-boats, "Viking" of Wapping. A life-boat itself may be defined as a boat pointed at both ends and fitted with air-tight tanks. The sail is shown better than I could describe it, in the accompanying sketch.



A Dipping Lug—a sail usually set in lifeboats.

Q. Who was Mowgli?

A. Undoubtedly, Claude Meadows, you were remiss in accepting as correct the statement of the boy next to you in the examination room that Mowgli was the head of a well-known firm that makes Indian chutney. If you put many replies like that into your exam. paper you have no need to be so surprised that you got "ploughed." Mowgli is a very famous character in literature. Beg, borrow or buy copies of the Jungle Books by Rudyard Kipling and make the intimate acquaintance of this young Indian boy hero who was brought up by a wolf.

Q. What is the Davis Cup?

A. This, "Two Sportsmen" of Doncaster, is the trophy which is played for between Great Britain, the United States, France, and other nations at lawn tennis.

Q. What is the money value of a well-trained performing flea?

A. Bless my whiskers! What next question will appear in my correspondence? The above query was sent in by a young and ingenious reader who signs himself "Billy" and who lives in a certain popular seaside resort which shall remain nameless. He tells me that he has a taking way with all dumb animals and has taught tricks to dogs, mice and rabbits in his time, and once actually trained a goldfish so that it would ring a small bell when it wanted its ants' eggs for brekker. This feat it accomplished by tugging at a thin string dangling in the water of its bowl, and, if given a bit of blotting-paper for a serviette, it would actually dry its mouth after feeding! Phew! Now my young reader wants to try his deft hand at more elusive game, and wonders if there is any money to be made by his efforts. Well while not admitting to be any authority on the subject, Billy, I can tell you that Paddy, the crack flea owned by Professor Huber, of New York, and which holds the world's long jump record of 26 inches, has a money

value of no less than £300. In an interview recently the talented professor stated that he could train any bright flea in three weeks, but he omitted to say how much the intelligent parasite would then be worth. Frankly, Billy, I should abandon this new project of yours if I were you; alas, I foresee that if you proceed with it you may soon become very unpopular among your relations and friends.

Q. What are the Doldrums?

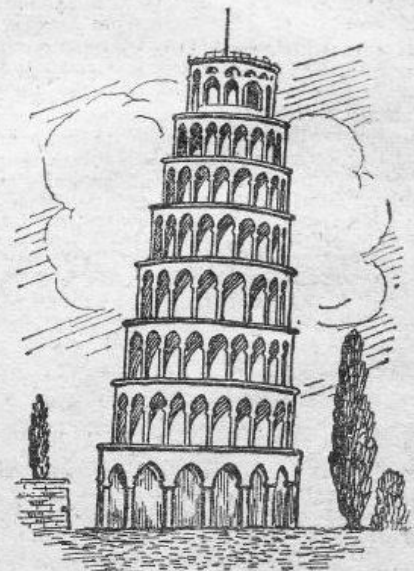
A. Certain portions of the ocean, G. G. B., near the Equator noted for alternate calms and very baffling winds. In the old days of sail, many a wind-jammer had to spend weary days, and often weeks, in these areas.

Q. Where is the Leaning Tower?

A. At Pisa in Italy—at least this is the only tower I can think of which you may have at the back of your mind, Wally of Walsall. This famous tower has been leaning for over 800 years, and although it appears to be falling, it is really perfectly balanced owing to extra building work done on it centuries ago.

Q. What is a bandy?

A. This term occurred in a letter sent to one of my reader-chums from a correspondent in India. It means a type of Indian cart, or buggy.



Leaning over as shown above, the famous tower at Pisa is said to be perfectly safe.

He rushed at the junior captain, his big fists whirling. "I'll teach you!" he bellowed. "I'll teach you to play ducks and drakes with the team, and then insult a fellow who's trying to do his best for the school! Take that, you idiot!"

Bang!

"Yooooooooooooop!"

It was not Tom Merry who howled, but George Alfred Grundy. As he slammed a hefty left at Tom Merry's smiling face, Tom moved his head swiftly to one side, and Grundy's fist connected with the edge of the door.

The concussion almost paralysed Grundy's fist and arm.

The next moment he was dancing about, sucking his bruised knuckles frantically.

Just then the dinner-bell rang, and the Terrible Three and the smiling Gordon Gay went off to dinner, leaving the zealous George Alfred to dance and nurse his bruised knuckles alone.

CHAPTER 7

Racke Takes a Hand!

AUBREY RACKE stood by the window of his study and looked out into the sunny quadrangle, a deep frown on his brow. The bright green of the well-kept lawns, and the trim gravel paths overshadowed by the ancient elms did not seem to give Racke much pleasure, bright and cheery as they made the outlook from the window.

Quite possibly Aubrey Racke did not even notice the outlook.

In the armchair Gerald Crooke sprawled, a slight smile on his face as he watched his chum at the window. Crooke often found great entertainment in his chum's varied moods—though he took very great care that Racke did not realise the fact.

"That cad Gay looks like wriggling out of it, after all, Racke," he remarked at last.

Racke's frown grew deeper; as Crooke well knew, Gordon Gay was the subject of his thoughts just then.

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Racke. "Think I don't realise it?"

"It's rather a sell!" mused Crooke. "But, after all, it's only Tom Merry who seems to be sticking to the cad, and perhaps Talbot and Lowther and one or two more. The rest are up against him; they're raving about the mighty Thomas having shoved him in the team."

"Hang Tom Merry!"

"And draw and quarter him!" agreed Crooke, with a chuckle. "As for Gordon Gay—"

"Hang Gay, too!" said Racke, with a snort. "I thought I'd fixed him up for good. And now—well, you see how things are going? Merry's shoved him in the dashed team. He's bound to do well, and that will soon bring the rest round. If he does well they'll forget about that 'Weekly' business, or, at least, they'll be ready to overlook it. Let's hope those Grammarians rag our chaps well, anyway. That won't do high-and-mighty Gay any good!"

"No need to worry about him, anyway, now," said Crooke. "You've paid him for that kicking; let him rip after this! It's rather a risky game you're playin', old chap."

Racke did not reply to that; he was not accustomed to taking the slightest notice of his chum's advice, good or otherwise.

He stared through the window for another moment or two, and then his eyes gleamed as he saw a crowd of fellows, carrying hand-bags, swarming through the gates, obviously en route for the Grammar School.

"Merry and his men just off!" he announced, a curious note in his voice. "Gay wasn't with them, though."

"Saw him hookin' it out of gates with his bike after dinner," said Crooke. "Gone to the village, I think. My hat! I suppose he really is playin'!"

"Must be," said Racke, slowly and thoughtfully. "I wonder now—I think I know; the cad's gone to the village for his cricket shoes. I heard him tryin' to get that fat ass Trimble to go for him just before dinner. That's it!"

"He seemed in a fine old hurry," remarked Crooke. "But what's the idea Racke? If you're thinkin' of tryin' to work another wheeze—"

"I've thought of an idea, and it might work," said Racke. "Phew! I've got it now! I say, just stand by the window and watch for the cad comin' in, Crookey."

"But what—"

"Do it!" rasped Racke impatiently. "Confound you, Crookey, you're the biggest funk I ever knew!"

"Yes; but—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Racke was not a very pleasant-mannered youth, even to his own pals.

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,109.

As he spoke he jumped to his private desk. Racke was a youth with expensive tastes and plenty of money to indulge them. His study was most elaborately and expensively fitted up.

Opening his desk now, he snatched out a notebook and opened it at random. Then he snatched a silver pencil from his pocket, and started to scribble furiously on one of the pages.

He finished in a matter of seconds, and then he ripped out the sheet of paper, threw the book back into the desk, and pocketed the pencil. This done, he glanced through what he had written and chuckled.

"Not back yet?" he demanded.

"Not seen him," granted Crooke. "Why, what's that?"

"Read it—quick!" grinned Racke.

Crooke read it, and his eyes opened wide, and he whistled.

"Phew! You mean to send this to Gay?"

"I mean him to have it. Will it do?"

"Good gad! But—but it's not Tom Merry's hand-writin'; he'll spot it!"

"Not he!" sniffed Racke. "My dear man, Gay won't be familiar enough with Merry's fist to notice anythin' wrong, that's certain. And as long as it isn't my fist—"

"It certainly isn't like yours."

"Then that's all that really matters!" chuckled Racke. "Rather a lark—what? If this doesn't cook Gay's goose, nothing else will."

"You really mean to do it?"

"Of course—and the sooner it's done, the better. Come on!"

"Hold on! Supposin'—"

"Supposin' nothin'!" snapped Racke. "I'm doin' it!"

And Racke opened the door and glanced out. The passage was empty—practically every fellow had already started off for the Grammar School. After a moment's hesitation, Racke ran along to Study No. 10, and entered. The room was empty, and, throwing his note carelessly on the table, Racke withdrew and hurried back to his own study.



"Just in time!" breathed Crooke, as he entered. "Gay's just come through the gates!"

"Gad! What luck!" grinned Racke gleefully. "I've fixed him, then; he's bound to go to his study. There was nothing else on the giddy table, so he can't miss seein' the note."

Crooke looked serious.

"It's a jolly risky thing to do, Racke!" he said. "I've had nothin' to do with it, remember."

"You rotten funk!"

"I don't care. It was too risky, I think. I wish you'd listened to me, Aubrey. Signin' another fellow's name alone is a serious matter," said Crooke uneasily. "I say, don't be an ass, old man; go and get that note back before it's too late!"

"Not likely!" smiled Racke coolly. "My dear man, Gay's already under a giddy cloud here. This will about put the tin hat on him. Even Tom Merry can't overlook this—in fact, the other fellows wouldn't allow him to. Gay's fixed?"

"Yes. But that note—"

"I defy anyone to prove it's in my handwritin'," smiled Aubrey Racke. "My dear ass, I'm as safe as houses! If the worst comes to the worst nobody can prove I've done it. I don't see how on earth anyone can even suspect me, in fact!"

"I don't like it, anyway. If you'll take my advice—"

"Too late, in any case!" grinned Racke. "Here he comes!"

There was the tramp of feet in the passage, and someone hurried past the study. The black sheep heard a door opened higher up the passage.

"No need to look!" yawned Racke. "That was dear old innocent Gay. I fancy I've got square for that kicking now! We'll just lie low until the coast's clear, Gerald."

And with that Aubrey Racke picked up a magazine, made himself comfortable on the couch, and started to read. He had done his little bit; the rest depended on Gordon Gay, his victim.

But Racke need not have worried. As he had opined, Gay was not at all familiar with Tom Merry's hand-writing—at least, not enough to notice anything wrong in the note.

Hand over hand, Gordon Gay made his perilous climb up the ivy-grown wall of the Grammar School, clinging on with tooth and nail. The darkness made his task doubly dangerous, but at last the daring junior reached the window-sill and hung on, resting for a moment with his feet on the coping below. (See Chapter 4.)

The writing was scribbled—obviously at a furious rate, for one thing. But, as a matter of fact, Gay never gave the handwriting a thought. He was far too much concerned with the contents of the note.

The moment he had caught sight of the name on the outside he snatched it up and read it, his face growing darker and darker as he did so.

"Dear Gay" (it read).—"I have changed my mind regarding playing you in the match this afternoon, and regret

that I cannot make use of you. In view of recent happenings, I think it much better if you do not turn up at the match at all.

"Yours,
"TOM MERRY."

"Well, the—the rotter!" gasped Gordon Gay.

He almost felt sick with sudden, bitter disappointment.

He had looked forward eagerly to playing—not only because of the enjoyment of the game, but for the opportunity of proving once and for all that he was a St. Jim's man in deed as well as by name.

Now his chance was gone. At the last moment Tom Merry had let him down—had changed his mind. And that last sentence regarding him turning up at the match showed the reason—to Gay. Tom Merry, like the funk he was, had bowed to public opinion. He hadn't the courage to carry out his own judgment and wishes on his own. He had not even waited to tell him personally, but had taken refuge behind the note.

"Well, the howling rotter!" repeated Gay. "Fancy letting a man down at the last moment like this! I've a jolly good mind to go, anyway!"

The temptation was strong to defy Tom Merry and go, but after a few moments' reflection Gordon Gay decided against it. His presence there might easily lead to trouble after what had happened—and trouble with the St. Jim's fellows in front of his old friends from the Grammar School was the last thing Gay wanted.

"Oh, hang the rotter!" growled Gay, his brow dark with bitter anger. "Hang the lot of them!"

With the outburst the ex-leader of Grammarians crumpled up the note and threw it savagely into the fireplace. Then he flung his unwanted cricket shoes into the corner, snatched his cap again, and went out of doors, intending to try to calm his angry feelings with a brisk walk. For once, Gordon Gay's sunny good-temper had quite deserted him.

Meanwhile, the St. Jim's team had arrived on the Grammar School cricket ground. They were rather late, and Tom was feeling exasperated in consequence. He had waited until the last moment at St. Jim's for Gordon Gay, and on the way they had taken their time, expecting him to catch them up. But he had not done so.

Not that it was wholly Gay's fault. He would have fetched his shoes the previous evening, but for the fact that Tom Merry had crossed his name off the list after the row over the Grammarian jape.

None the less, Tom Merry was feeling fed-up.

"Oh, blow the idiot!" he snapped, looking across the cricket field. "No sign of him yet. Hallo! Here's Monk!"

Frank Monk ran up.

"Not changed yet?" he said, staring. "You're cutting it rather fine, you fellows. I say, I thought you were playing old Gay!"

"We are, but he hasn't turned up yet," said Tom briefly. "Anyway, we'll get changed right away."

"Right-ho! Buck up!" And, with a grinning nod, Frank Monk trotted away.

The St. Jim's fellows were very soon ready. By that time Tom Merry was looking very grim indeed. Where was Gordon Gay? He had said he would come over on his bike, and in that case he should have made an appearance long ago.

"It's queer!" said Tom to Blake. "Where can the ass have got to? I can hardly think—"

"If you ask me, the bounder isn't going to turn up at all!" grunted Herries. "He'll let us down."

"Blessed if I'm not beginning to think so, too!" said Blake, his face going grave. "Hang it all, the fellow should have been here long ago! If he hasn't got his dashed shoes he could easily have borrowed a pair, or used his old ones!"

"I fancied that shoe business was put on," said Kangaroo. "Looks to me like it, anyway!"

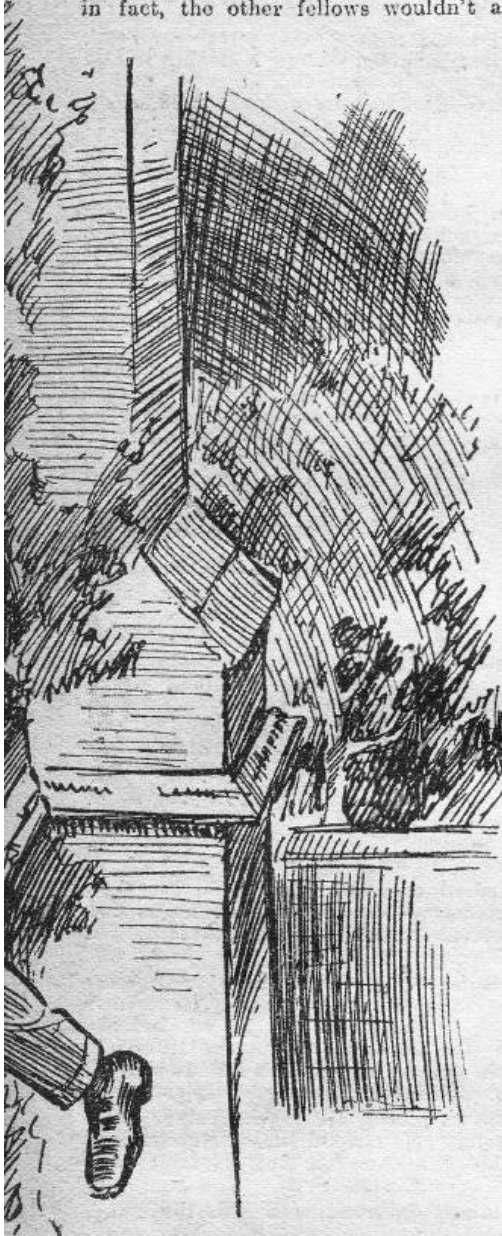
"If—if the rotter has—if he's let us down," breathed Tom, "he'll know about it from me this time! We'll scrag him!"

"Yes, rather!"

They waited a little longer; the Grammarians were already eyeing them curiously. Tom Merry's face set hard as the note of the half-hour past two o'clock chimed out from the clock-tower of the Grammar School.

"That settles it!" said Tom through his teeth. "We're waiting no longer for the cad! What a rotten trick! I could have played old Gussy, who's the next best bowler we have to Fatty Wynn. I've dropped Gussy out to make room for that sweep, and now Gussy's gone to Wayland. Hang the fellow! Is Clive here?"

Fortunately, Sidney Clive was on the ground. He was fetched, and in a few minutes he was changed, having come as a reserve and brought his cricket things with him. And



then Tom led his men towards the waiting Grammarians, and Frank Monk and he tossed.

To Tom's disgust, Frank Monk won the toss and elected to go in first. And the match commenced—with the Saints wrathful and indignant, and Tom Merry himself far from being in the right mood to play good cricket. The recent happenings had put him thoroughly out of gear, and he felt instinctively that St. Jim's was booked for a licking.

And so it proved!

CHAPTER 8. A Reckoning!

"**B**AI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave a jump.

The swell of the Fourth had had quite an enjoyable afternoon in Wayland. He had visited his tailor—a most important personage in Gussy's opinion—and the interview had been very satisfactory on both sides. It had been rather a long one, for Gussy was very particular indeed about the cut of his "clobber." But he quite enjoyed it—and the tailor certainly did not mind. Arthur Augustus was an exceedingly good customer, so he could afford to spend an unusual amount of time on him.

Then Gussy had made a round of the shops; he had purchased a dozen new neckties and a new pair of gloves, a natty new walking-cane, and various other odds and ends of outfitting.

Feeling very pleased with himself, Arthur Augustus had taken the Rylcombe train; and it was as he was leaving the Rylcombe station that Arthur Augustus gave that jump.

It was at the sight of Gordon Gay, just emerging from Mother Murphy's, in the High Street. And Gordon Gay was with Carboy of the Grammar School.

Naturally, as Arthur Augustus had been "dropped" from the team in order to make room for Gay, he was quite startled at seeing him then. The match was not likely to be over yet.

"Bai Jove!" repeated Arthur Augustus. "How vewy, vewy stwange! One moment, Gay, deah boy!"

He called across to Gay, and that junior came over, with Carboy. Carboy was grinning, but Gordon Gay was looking anything but pleased. He also looked surprised at seeing Arthur Augustus. Naturally, he had expected Gussy to be on the cricket field, believing Tom Merry had reinstated the swell of St. Jim's in his place.

"Well," he demanded, "what's the matter, Gussy? Aren't you playing, after all?"

"Bai Jove! No, deah boy! I was dwopped to make woom for you, of course. What evah are you doin' heah, Gay? Suahly the match isn't ended yet?"

Gordon Gay stared at him.

"Y-you mean to say you imagined I was playing, D'Arcy?" he stuttered.

"Yaas—of course!"

"Well, like you, I've been dropped in my turn," said Gay, his eyes gleaming. "Tom Merry is a rotten cad to play tricks like this! At the last moment he left me a note telling me he'd changed his mind. Not only that, the cheeky cad told me I'd better not even turn up at he match!"

Carboy was eyeing both of them in astonishment. Gay had met him in the woods, and after a stroll together they had repaired to the tuckshop for tea. But Gay had mentioned nothing to him beyond the fact that he wasn't playing.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "That is vewy stwange indeed! It is wathah wotten both to you and me, Gay. I am willin' to admit that you are wathah a bettah playah in some ways than I am. But I do not agree that Tom Mewwy could find a bettah man at St. Jim's than myself."

"How modest he is!" murmured Carboy.

"It is quite twue, Carboy," said Gussy. "Howevah, I am vewy surprised at Tom Mewwy—though I can quite undahstand his dwoppin' you, in the cires, Gay," he added severely. "I am afwaid your conduct has been wathah suspish, to say the least of it."

Gussy spoke with kindly severity, having long ago overlooked the matter of his imprisonment in Study No. 6 by Gay on the previous evening. In Gussy's view, this was a suitable time to speak a good word in season to the delinquent. Gussy was very sorry indeed at the recent behaviour of Gordon Gay, and he was very anxious to point out the error of his ways.

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Unfortunately, he did not realise the state of Gordon Gay's mind just then. Gay was not quite in the right mood for Gussy's words in season.

"Oh, has it?" snapped Gay, his eyes gleaming. "So you still think I let St. Jim's down, D'Arcy?"

"I wish I could think othahwise," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his head sadly. "Tom Mewwy seemed to be wathah inclined to take your word, but—"

"You burbling ass!" snorted Gay. "If you weren't such a duffer I'd punch your silly head for you, D'Arcy!"

"Bai Jove! Weally, Gay—"

"It was all your silly fault the other night," snorted Gay angrily—"at least, I shouldn't at all be surprised if it was! I put that parcel in the study, and you were the only fellow about at the time. Anyway, I'm fed-up with the lot of you!"

"Bai Jove, I see no weason why you should be so feahfully wude, Gay!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity. "I was onlay pointin' out—"

"Then don't—unless you want your silly head punched!"

"Bai Jove, I should nevah allow you to punch my head, Gordon Gay!" said Gussy angrily. "And I uttably wefuse to be insulted in this wotten mannah! I was merely pointin' out that your conduct in bein' disloyal to St. Jim's is vewy w'ong, and likely to get you into— Oh! Ah! Bai Jove! Oh, gweat Scott!"

Bump!

"Yawwoooogh!"

Arthur Augustus sat down with a bump on the pavement as Gordon Gay slammed his fist full on the crown of the glimmering silk hat surmounting Gussy's aristocratic head.

The sheer force and unexpectedness of the blow sent the swell of St. Jim's to the pavement, his topper rammed over his eyes.

Leaving the unfortunate Gussy seated there, struggling desperately to release his head from his crushed headgear, Gordon Gay and Carboy walked away, Carboy roaring with laughter.

"Gwoogh!" gurgled Gussy, his voice sounding muffled inside the hat. "Gwoooogh! Mum-mum-my hat! Ow-wow!"

He succeeded in releasing his head at last, and staggered to his feet, fairly

seething with indignation and wrath.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he gasped. "Oh, gweat Scott! The— the feahful hooligan! The wotten ruffian! I will give him a feahful thwashin' for that, bai Jove! Yaas, wathah!"

But D'Arcy looked round in vain for Gordon Gay. Both he and Carboy had vanished. And as several villagers were looking on in great amusement, Gussy hurriedly decided to depart from the scene of his humiliation.

He picked up the small parcels he had been carrying, and, cramming the damaged hat on anyhow, he started off down the High Street, crimson in face with indignant wrath at the outrage.

Outside the village Gussy breathed with relief, and, after pressing his hat into something approaching its former shape, he hurried back to St. Jim's. As he reached the cross-roads where the lane branched off to the Rylcombe Grammar School he saw swarms of St. Jim's fellows making their way schoolwards. Evidently the match was ended.

Arthur Augustus was surprised, for it was rather early for the finish of the match. He sighted Blake, Herries, and Digby with the Terrible Three, and he hurried after them and caught them up.

"Bai Jove, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "Is the match evah? I twust—"

"Yes, it jolly well is!" snorted Blake. "But—my hat! What on earth have you been up to, Gussy? Your clobber's all dusty, and you topper's busted!"

"I am well awah of that, Blake!" said Arthur Augustus, his voice trembling with indignation. "That feahful wuffian Gordon Gay attacked me in a most wuffianly mannah! I was simplay givin' him advice—"

"You've seen Gay?" exclaimed Tom Merry, his eyes glittering curiously. "Where was he?"

"In the village. He was with that wottah Carboy!"

"What?"

"Yaas. I met them just comin' out of Mothah Murphy's!" explained Gussy heatedly. "Gay seemed to be in a wotten tempah and he was most wude and insultin'. Then he suddenly stwuck my toppah, and made me sit down on the pavement, the wuff wottah!"

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"Well, I'm hanged!" breathed Tom Merry. "The outsider left us in the lurch just to go with one of his old pals!"

"It's what he meant to do all along!" grunted Blake. "What did he say, Gussy?"

"He was wild because you had dwopped him at the last moment, Tom Mewwy. Weally, it was wathah wotten of you—"

"I did?" yelled Tom. "He says I dropped him?"

"Yaas. He says you sent him a note—"

"I did nothing of the kind!" hooted Tom. "The rotter's let us down! He never turned up at the match! We had to play Clive, and we've been licked to a frazzle as a result!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"Oh, bai Jove!" he repeated. "I thought ffrom your faces that you must have been licked, deah boys. But—"

"Licked by over eighty runs!" groaned Tom. "Gay letting us down threw me absolutely off form and upset us all. Clive played up well, but our biggest score was thirty. Monk's lot batted first, and piled up a hundred and sixty between them. Then we went in, and our wickets went down like skittles. We only made seventy odd between us. Oh, that—that rotten cad!"

"Oh, gweat Scott!" said Gussy, shaking his head. "It is just as I feahed, deah boys. I twus you will not dream of 'dwoppin' me again, Tom Mewwy!" he added severely.

"You silly chump!" said Blake. "It wasn't dropping you—it was that cad letting us down that put us in the soup! We're going to have a reckoning when we get hold of him! And then he had the nerve to go off with one of his old Grammarian pals! That puts the tin hat on it!"

There was a growling murmur of agreement. The St. Jim's cricketers, as well as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, returned to St. Jim's that evening fairly seething with wrath and indignation. There was likely to be a warm welcome awaiting Gordon Gay on his return.

CHAPTER 9.

Sent to Coventry!

GORDON GAY returned to St. Jim's that evening in a somewhat better mood. His walk and the companionship of his old chum had cheered him up a little. Carboy, of course, had been considerably astonished at the conversation between his former leader and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and he had wanted to know the meaning of it. But Gay had refused to enlighten him. He had vowed not to discuss happenings at St. Jim's with his old pals, and he meant to keep his word.

At first he had intended to have it out with Tom Merry. He considered he had been rather unfairly treated. But now he decided to say nothing—to take the unexpected rebuff smiling. Certainly he expected trouble on his return to St. Jim's—with Arthur Augustus, who would be after his "gore" for a certainty. He felt rather sorry now that he had been so ruthless with the swell of the Fourth. Gussy was labouring under a delusion; but he was a good sort and meant well. An abject apology might put that right, however.

Gay was almost smiling as he entered the School House and made his way upstairs. He was not at all put out by the numerous hostile looks he met with on his way to Study No. 10—he was getting used to them since he had come to St. Jim's.

But on reaching Study No. 10 he got rather a shock. The room was full of fellows—the cricket team and a swarm of other Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers were there.

"Hallo! A giddy mass meeting!" murmured Gordon Gay, little dreaming that he was the object of the mass meeting. "Any room for a little one!"

There was a chorus of cries as he tried to wedge into the study.

"Here he is!"

"Here's the rotter!"

"Here's Gay, Tom Merry!"

"Let him come in!" snapped the junior captain. "He's just come at the right moment!"

"Have I?" inquired Gay, in some astonishment and not a little alarm. "What have I been doing now, Thomas?"

(Continued on next page.)



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He spoke in his old bantering manner, but he could not help feeling very uneasy as he saw the grim looks about him.

"So you've come back, Gay?" snapped Tom Merry, his lip curling as he looked at Gordon Gay. "You've got the cheek to ask what you've been doing—eh?"

"I can see I've been transgressing again in some giddy way or other!" grinned Gay, though it was a somewhat feeble grin. "What am I supposed to have done this time—dotted the Head on the boko, or drowned the school porter? Or is it that little matter of Gussy's topper?"

"Weally, Gay, you feahful wottah—"

"You ring off, Gussy!" called Tom Merry grimly. "You can settle with Gay another time. Now, Gay, we're waiting for your explanation of this afternoon's trick!"

"What trick?" inquired Gordon Gay, wrinkling his brows. "If you will tell me what the giddy trick is, I'll oblige with an explanation if I can. I can't say more than that."

"Trying to be funny won't help you!" snapped Tom. "The matter's a bit too serious for that, Gay. You let us down over a matter of japing; but letting us down over cricket is a bit more serious, my friend. You can't laugh that off quite so easily."

Gay stared at the leader of the Shell, and his grin faded. "Just what d'you mean by that?"

"What I say," said Tom, while an angry murmur arose.

"I was ready to take your word over that matter of the 'Weekly,' and even now I'm puzzled about that, I'll admit. But this is clear enough. I put you down for the match this afternoon. I allowed D'Arcy to go to Wayland, believing you were playing. Up to the very last moment of leaving St. Jim's you gave me to understand that you would play! Instead of that—"

"Why, you silly owl—" began Gay indignantly.

"Wait a moment!" said Tom calmly. "You wanted me to tell you what you've done, and I'm doing so. You've let us down badly, Gay; you've tricked us into believing you intended to play until the last moment. Then you cleared off with one of your Grammar School pals and left us in the lurch. Your trick lost us the match, as you, I've not the slightest doubt, intended it should. We were licked by over eighty runs—a record licking. We owe that to you, you cad!"

Gordon Gay could have dropped. He seemed struck dumb for a moment. Then he burst out angrily:

"What on earth are you talking about you fool?" he shouted, stung to anger by the scorn in Tom Merry's voice. "Didn't you yourself leave me a note saying you'd decided not to play me after all? It was you who let me down, you rotter!"

Tom Merry smiled mirthlessly.

"We've heard that yarn about a note from Gussy," he said. "You can tell it to the marines—perhaps they'll swallow it—we don't intend to. It's pretty clear that you never intended to play, and that you'd already arranged to meet your old pal, Carboy."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Smash the rotten twister!" came Grundy's bellowing voice from the crowd. "Didn't I tell you what would happen, Tom Merry? Didn't I warn you, you burbling owl, not to trust the cad? Here, let me get my hands on the rotten traitor! Why, I'll—"

"Throw that silly ass out, 'omeone!" said Tom Merry impatiently. "We've had enough of his gas! Now, Gay, you've heard what I've said! If you've anything to say—"

He paused.

Gordon Gay gritted his teeth with rage. He looked about him as if he contemplated charging right and left at his accusers. To be called a liar and a trickster after being treated as he had been treated was too much.

"You—you howling cads!" he spluttered. "Well, of all the nerve! Can't you believe a fellow? Tom Merry, you know jolly well you did send me a note!"

"Rot! Are you going to keep that up, Gay?"

"Yes, I jolly well am!" shouted Gordon Gay angrily, his face flushed. "Dash it all d'you take me for a worm to listen to your rotten lies and insults like this? I've stood enough since I came to this rotten show!"

There was a roar at that. Gordon Gay had certainly made a bad blunder in saying it. But he was in the mood now to say anything.

"You can pull faces and shake your silly fists as much as you like!" he shouted, glaring at the hostile faces about him. "I'm fed-up! Be hanged to the lot of you!"

"No good losing your temper, Gay!" snapped Blake. "We're still waiting for your explanation, and we mean to have one."

"I've explained all I can explain, you fool!" hooted Gay, crimson with rage and indignation. "I've told you I received a note from Tom Merry, signed by Tom Merry."

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It informed me I was dropped, and that I wasn't wanted at the match at all. So I went for a walk—I was feeling wild about it. I went out and I happened to meet Carboy. That's the truth, and that's all you'll get out of me."

"And you expect us to believe that?" demanded Tom Merry. "You expect me to believe it—that I sent you a note when I know I didn't and these fellows know I couldn't have done?"

"I don't care. Is this some rotten game of yours, Tom Merry?" demanded Gay careless of what he said in his anger. "Are you trying to get all the fellows against me? Are you afraid that I might try to take your job from you, or something? I'm hanged if I can understand this otherwise! You sent me that note, and you're a rotten liar if you say you didn't!"

For a single moment Tom Merry stared at Gay's furious face, and then, his eyes blazing, he tore off his jacket.

"Call me a liar, would you, you trickster?" he shouted. "Out of the way, chaps—I'll deal with this cad!"

"I'm ready for you!" snapped Gay.

He was—only too ready! Both had quite lost their tempers now, and as the crowd parted to make room Tom and his old friend came to grips. The next moment they were fighting furiously.

It was not by any means the first time they had come to grips, but this time it was not mere friendly scrapping but a fight made deadly earnest by the anger and bitterness on both sides. Tom was still raging at the Saints' bitter defeat at the hands of the goating Grammarians, and still worried and anxious regarding the missing bundle of copies of the "Weekly." He felt he had more than enough to settle with Gordon Gay.

For his part Gay was just as furious and bitter.

It amazed him that Tom Merry should dare to deny writing him a note, and he was really beginning to wonder if Tom was not at the back of all his troubles since coming to St. Jim's. Having been the junior skipper at the Grammar School—and a very efficient skipper at that—Gay was likely to make a very formidable rival for Tom Merry. Many fellows had expected trouble between them.

Knowing this, Gordon Gay could not help wondering now whether there was something in it, and whether Tom Merry was really jealous and had been working against him in an underhand way.

He could scarcely credit it, knowing Tom Merry as he had believed he did. Yet—

There was no time for thinking it out now, however. The two were at grips, and Gay gave himself to the task in hand.

But there was scarcely room to move, much less fight. It was a mere scramble amid a chorus of shouts and cat-calls. Grundy was bawling at the top of his voice as several fellows strove to prevent him "chipping in." Grundy was very anxious to deal with Gay himself, apparently.

There was to be no glory for George Alfred Grundy, however. Such a commotion and uproar could scarcely have failed to be heard outside the study. The door suddenly flew open, and two seniors dashed in.

They were Kildare and North, of the Sixth. Kildare cut through the throng like a knife through butter, and in a flash he was between Tom Merry and Gay, holding them apart by sheer strength.

"Let go, Kildare!" snapped Tom Merry savagely. "I'll—"

"No, you won't!" said Kildare curtly. "Here, hold that other fire-eater, North! Now, Merry, enough of this! Is this the sort of thing for a junior skipper to do—fighting in a study?"

"I—I—"

"Let's have no more of it, young 'un!" snapped the captain. "I've something better to occupy my time than stopping junior scraps. Hallo! It's you, Gay, is it? You seem to have caused more than a spot of trouble since you came here, kid! Take my tip and stop kicking up a fuss. I know you're here at St. Jim's against your will, but that's no reason why you should be causing trouble all round."

Kildare spoke far from sharply, but Gay's face crimsoned and a bitter look came to his eyes. It was the last straw—Kildare's speech was the limit. He was now being blamed for this row!

"I started the scrap, if that's what you mean, Kildare," said Tom Merry, his eyes glinting at the ex-leader of the Grammarians.

"Oh, did you?" said Kildare. "Then you can take a hundred lines, and every other fellow in this room can take fifty. Any more of this and I'll double 'em! Now out of this room every fellow who doesn't belong here—sharp! I'll give you one minute to clear."

He walked out with North, feeling quite confident that his order would be obeyed. But for once it was not obeyed quite so briskly. Jack Blake immediately jumped up on the table.

"Hold on!" he called. "One moment, you fellows! You've all heard what Gay has to say—his explanation's

turned out to be a rotten, unfounded charge against Tom Merry. He says Merry's out to get all the fellows against him out of jealousy! Of all the nerve and bunkum that takes the bun! I vote we send the rotter to Coventry! Hands up, those in favour!"

Every fellow's hand in the room went up excepting Gay's own. He looked on, his flushed face bitter, his lip curling.

"Carried unanimously!" said Blake. "Right! You agree to that, Tom Merry?"

Tom hesitated a moment; then he nodded.

"Yes," he said.

"Then that's the sentence, Gay," said Blake curtly. "From this moment you're in Coventry. Understand?"

"Quite! I've no desire to have anything to do with such a set of unjust rotters!" snapped Gay. "You can go and eat coke, the whole confounded lot of you!"

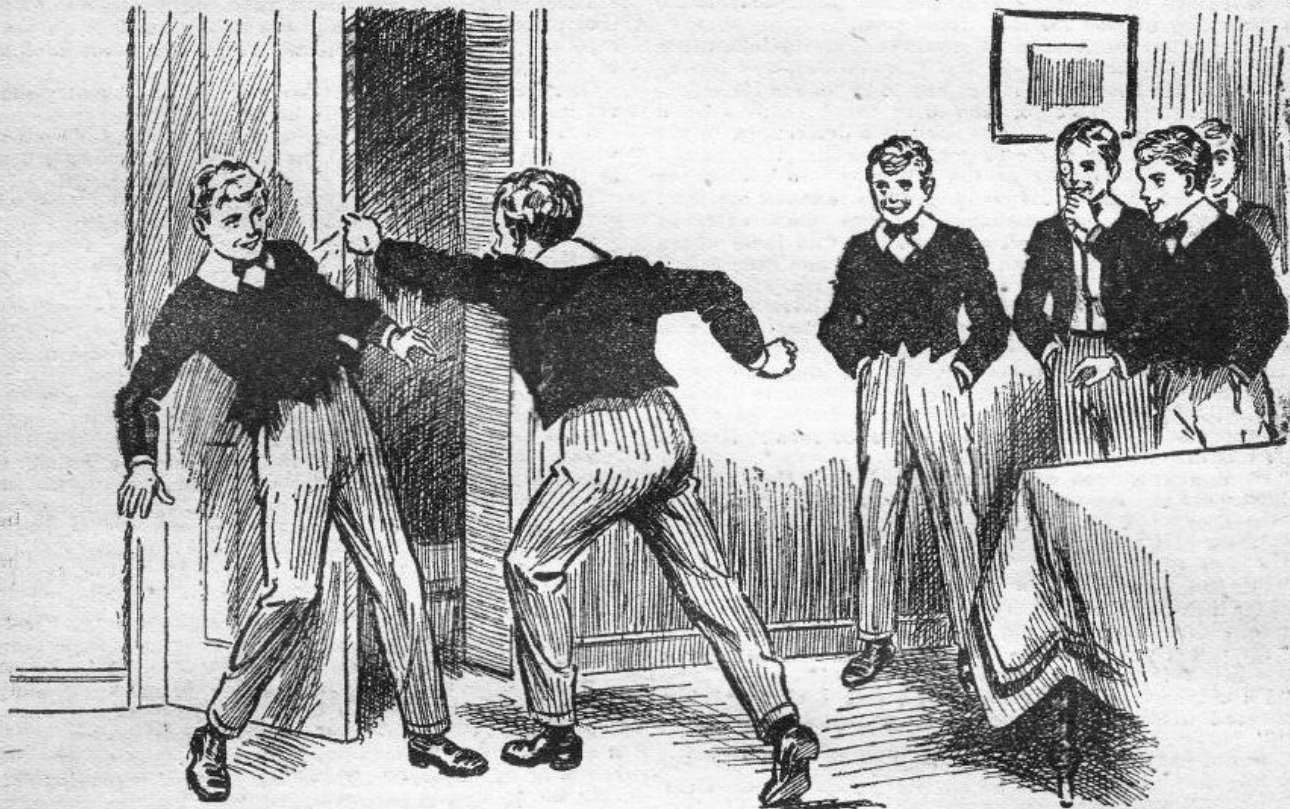
Nobody answered that. The sentence was now in force, and without a glance at Gordon Gay the juniors filed out, even the Terrible Three going, leaving Gordon Gay alone.

Moreover, he had scarcely cared. He felt like a fish out of water at St. Jim's, and, try as he would, he could not settle to the fact that he was there as a fixture. Something would happen, he had felt sure, to bring about a change. And the one change he wanted—was longing for—was to be sent back again to his old school.

Now, however, he was beginning to see what a fool he had been to take his position so lightly and carelessly. The other fellows did not take the matter lightly. And this was what it had brought him to. With the friendship of fellows like Tom Merry & Co. he had believed he could survive the change in his fortunes, and be tolerably happy at St. Jim's. Now he had lost their friendship—worse, he was treated as an enemy and an outcast. He was alone at St. Jim's—sent to Coventry, and treated as a fellow not fit to speak to.

Gay gritted his teeth as he thought of it.

He realised it was no use blaming them. They obviously believed him guilty of disloyalty. If he had been disloyal they would have been justified in their treatment of him.



As George Alfred Grundy slammed a hefty left at Tom Merry's smiling face, Tom moved his head swiftly to one side, and Grundy's fist connected with the edge of the door. Bang! "Yooooop!" It was not Tom Merry who howled, but George Alfred Grundy. (See Chapter 6.)

To two fellows, at least, in the Lower School the sentence gave a great deal of satisfaction. In Racke's study, a few seconds later, Racke and Crooke joined each other. Racke's face wore a smile—a gloating smile. Crooke grinned.

"It's come off, Aubrey!" he said. "My hat! You've pulled it off! But—"

"Now don't start croaking," chuckled Racke. "Well, I said I'd fix that rotter up, and I've done it, what?"

And Aubrey Racke selected a cigarette from his gold case, lit it, and puffed out a cloud of smoke with great satisfaction. His little plot had succeeded—much better than he had even dreamed. And the cad of the She! gloated.

But the game was not ended yet!

CHAPTER 10.

Gay Investigates!

ALONE in Study No. 10 Gordon Gay flung himself into a chair.

His face was white save for a dark bruise where Tom Merry's fist had landed on his cheek.

For the first time the ex-leader of the Grammarians saw that his position was serious. Up to now he had been merely annoyed and exasperated by the charges made against him. His fun-loving nature had refused to allow him to take matters seriously.

Certainly he had not enjoyed the knowledge that he was under a cloud, suspected of being a traitor. But he had met all accusations almost cheerfully, determined not to allow them to upset him. He had felt quite certain that the clouds would roll away, and that the fellows would see, sooner or later, what asses they were to have suspected him!

That much Gay was level-headed and calm enough to realise now.

What—or, rather, who—was behind it all?

Now he was cooler and could think matters over, Gay bitterly regretted having made that foolish charge against Tom Merry. The junior skipper of St. Jim's was the last fellow to suspect of being jealous, and certainly the last fellow who would attempt such a method of disposing of a rival. Tom Merry, obviously, had not written that note at all. As he pondered over the matter Gay realised that more and more.

Then who had written it? And why?

The thought suddenly brought Gay to his feet, his eyes gleaming. Why hadn't he thought of it before? He remembered throwing the note into the fireplace. Had it reached the flames, or was it still there?

With feverish anxiety Gordon Gay sprang to the grate, and hunted about eagerly.

His heart leaped as he found a crumpled sheet of paper among the cinders. A glance at it, and then his eyes lit up. It was the note he had found on the table that afternoon.

He examined it closely. Scribbled as it was, the note showed obvious signs of an attempt to disguise the handwriting. Then Gay noted that the sheet had been torn from a duplicating notebook, and was numbered at the top right-hand corner.

"That's interesting!" he said grimly to himself. "If I can find the book that it was torn from, I'll be well on the way to solving this thumping mystery."

He thought of rushing off to find Tom Merry and show him the proof of his statements. But then his jaw set squarely.

"I'll show him when I've solved this business—not before!" he grunted. "I'm taking no risks of being sneered at by anybody. Now, who the thump's got his knife into me at this show?"

It did not take Gordon Gay long to think that out. There was only one fellow he could think of whose enmity he had aroused at St. Jim's previously to his disgrace. And that fellow was Aubrey Racke.

Racke had never chosen to disguise his hatred of the ex-Grammarians. Before coming to St. Jim's Gordon Gay had had more than one brush with the cad of the Shell. But it seemed almost incredible that even Racke, vengeful schemer as he was, could have gone to such lengths as this to get him into trouble. Racke was a very unpleasant fellow, but he would draw the line at such trickery.

So Gordon Gay tried to tell himself; but he wasn't convinced.

"I'll go and have a talk with Racke, blessed if I won't!" he muttered at last. "If he knows anything, he'll give himself away somehow. I suspected him over that phone message they blamed me for. Here goes!"

It seemed a forlorn hope. Racke was a crafty fellow, not easy to get anything out of. But Gordon Gay was feeling desperate. He knew what it was like to be sent to Coventry, with nobody to speak to, and with every fellow's hand against him. Moreover he was resolutely determined to get to the bottom of the whole business somehow. Why hadn't he mentioned the matter of the "Weekly" to Carboy, or one of his old chums? He could easily have found out from them how they had managed to get that wretched "Editorial" into the paper, and who had told them where and when to wait in ambush that day. He had been a fool to refuse to discuss St. Jim's matters with them, after all.

But he would do so now. And he would have a talk to Aubrey Racke first of all. If Racke's attitude gave him any grounds for suspicion—

His mind made up, Gordon Gay did not linger. Placing the note carefully in his pocket, he went along to Racke's study. Racke and Crooke were alone, and they gave him far from amiable looks as he strode into the room. Racke's look was distinctly uneasy.

"I just want a word with you, Racke!" said Gay.

Racke did not answer in words. He pointed significantly to the door. Crooke followed his example. It was Gay's first taste of Coventry.

He laughed grimly.

"I'd forgotten I was in Coventry," he remarked. "I wonder if my boot will persuade you to talk, Racke?"

Racke spoke then. He did not want Gay's boot again.

"I'll yell if you touch me, Gay!" he said. "You'll get a Form lickin' if you start any tricks like that!"

"I'll chance that, my friend," said Gay coolly. "I just wondered whether you happen to know anything about—Ah!"

Gay did not finish his question—he had no need to finish it. For just at that moment his sharp eyes fell on clear proof that Racke did know something—a great deal!

For Racke's desk was open, and Gay's eyes had fallen upon a notebook. It was the topmost article in the desk, and instinctively Gay knew what it was.

He pounced upon it in a flash and ran through the pages. Then he gave a gasp of deep satisfaction.

The notebook was the same size as the sheet on which the note was written. Moreover, that swift glance had shown him that a page was missing.

As he ran through it, Racke gave a startled gasp, and leaped to his feet.

"You cheeky, impudent rotter!" he roared furiously. "Put that book back! Put it back, you cad!"

Without waiting for Gay to obey, he rushed at him, and made a frantic grab at the book. Gay flung him back, with a grim laugh. Racke rushed again, his fists whirling. With his free hand Gay caught him swiftly by the collar and sent him whirling across the room with a powerful swing of his arm.

Crash! Clatter! Crash!

Racke sat down in the fender with a crash that shook the study.

"You asked for it!" said Gay his eyes glinting now. "If ever a fellow deserved a hiding you do, Racke! But that will do to be going on with, my pippin. If you want more, come after me for it. I'm borrowing this notebook for a while."

Without a glance at the staring, alarmed Crooke, Gay left the study, and hurried back to No. 10. Behind the closed and locked door he started to examine the notebook, comparing it with the loose sheet of paper.

Racke's name was written on the cover, but there was scarcely anything else written in the book.

One sheet that was missing was the one numbered thirty-two. The sheet he held in his hand, on which the message had been scribbled, was also numbered thirty-two. More—
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over, when placed in the book at that spot the jagged edges of the torn sheet fitted exactly.

To clinch matters the page numbered thirty-three in the notebook bore the deep impression of a pencil. Many of the words were clear and easy to read. After a final comparison with the loose sheet Gordon Gay gave a grim laugh.

He had been right, then. It seemed amazing that his investigations should have met with success so early. There was no doubting the evidence of the book, and the sheet torn from it. Like a bungler Aubrey Racke had quite overlooked the possibility of someone investigating and finding that book. It was sheer good fortune, Gordon Gay told himself, that he had gone along just then when the desk was open and spotted the notebook.

No wonder Racke had flown into a rage, and even dared to attack him.

"What price me as a giddy detective?" grinned Gordon Gay. "Detecting giddy criminals like dear old Aubrey is as easy as falling off a horse. I've been lucky!"

There was no doubt about that. Still smiling, Gordon Gay placed the notebook and the loose sheet into his pocket carefully, and then he left the room, and went in search of Tom Merry.

Gay was determined that his sentence of Coventry should not last longer than he could help.

As the Terrible Three, obviously not desiring his company, were not in Study No. 10, he went along to Study No. 6 in the Fourth. But only Blake & Co. were there.

They glared as they sighted the visitor, and Blake, without speaking, pointed to the door as Racke had done.

Gordon Gay grinned and withdrew. It was Tom Merry he wanted, and Tom Merry only. Blake's significant action made him smile now.

He went back to Study No. 10, intending to wait there for the return of Tom Merry. It was quite early yet, and the Terrible Three would doubtless have to come in to do their prep. But a new idea came to Gay then.

Why not make a thorough job of it while he was about it? There was still the matter of the "Weekly," and he fancied now that Frank Monk might help to clear that up.

Yes, he would trot over to the Grammar School and continue his investigations there. He had already met with remarkably swift success, and his luck might still hold out. There was still time to go and return before lock-up, though the thought of being late did not worry Gordon Gay. And having arrived at that decision, the ex-leader of the Grammarians got his cap, hurried out, and was soon en route for his old school, feeling quite cheery and hopeful.

CHAPTER 11. To the Rescue!

"ROTTEN!"

The Terrible Three were agreed upon that point. It was rotten. Gordon Gay had been a friend of theirs—a rival, certainly but a friend. The events of the evening had had a very dismal effect on the chums of Study No. 10.

"Well, he asked for it," said Manners, shaking his head. "I suppose being sent here has quite upset his appercart—made him do things he wouldn't dream of doing in the ordinary way. I could see from the very beginning that he couldn't settle here, and I guessed there would be trouble."

"He should have played the game, anyway," said Lowther.

"That's so," agreed Tom. "But—"

He paused.

"You're going to make more excuses for him?" said Lowther. "That's just like you, Tommy. With that swollen nose I should think you'd not be feeling very friendly towards the man."

"I don't know," said Tom uneasily. "I wish I could convince myself that we aren't making a thundering mistake, you fellows! In the study when we were excited, I honestly did believe that he was guilty, and that he had taken us in all along. But—"

"Now you're letting your giddy good nature get over your common sense," grunted Manners. "It's no good, Tom. Gay's proved himself a rotter. Who but a rotter would stick to a yarn like that about a note? Everybody knows there wasn't one."

"I'm not so sure," said Tom.

"What?" almost yelled Manners. "You—you ass! You'll be saying you did write one next, fathead!"

"I won't!" said Tom grimly. "But that doesn't say that nobody else wrote one."

"Oh!"

Manners jumped, and Lowther eyed Tom queerly.

"My hat!" said Lowther, staring. "You surely don't think—"

"I'm blessed if I know quite what to think!" said Tom. "I only know that we've known Gay for terms, and we've never known him do a mean trick before. I can't forget that. I don't pretend to understand what's happened today. But I'm thinking more of that 'Weekly' business. Did you notice that not a single Grammarian crowded over us about the 'Weekly' this afternoon?"

"Phew! You're right!"
 "I fully intended to tackle Frank Monk, but I was in such a wax that I forgot all about it. But thinking it over it's struck me as no end queer that not a single chap there attempted to grow or rub in how they'd scored by writing that 'Editorial,' and collaring the whole issue of the 'Weekly.' If they still had the things, do you suppose they'd have kept quiet about it? My hat! I went there, to be quite frank, in a blue funk this afternoon. I expected every Grammar School fag to be bawling at us about that 'Editorial.' Instead of which it wasn't even mentioned."

"Well?"
 "Doesn't it begin to look as if Gay's yarn about going there in the night and collaring the lot was true?" asked Tom sagely. "And remember what Frank Monk said on the phone. And remember also that Gussy found Gay prowling about at night, and that Gay claimed that he actually did go out."

"It does look rather queer."
 "Queer! My hat! I'm practically certain Gay did go, and that he collared the bundle, and did the Grammarians down. But we can soon settle the matter. I was thinking too much about other things to tackle Monk this afternoon; but there's time even yet. Will you fellows come along to the Grammar School with me now?"

"Oh, my hat!"
 "I've another reason for wanting to go," said Tom. "I want to ask Monk just how they managed to get that 'Editorial' in, and from whom they got that phone message. I shall tell him frankly why I want to know, and if Gay is innocent, then they'll be only too jolly glad to tell us the truth."

"Phew! We ought to have thought of doing that before this, Tommy."
 "I see that now. But better late than never. Are you fellows game?"

"Yes, rather!"
 "Then let's get off—just about do it before call-over."
 The trio were strolling about the quad at the moment, and Tom led the way towards the gates. Taggles, the porter, was smoking his pipe there, and he stared at seeing them going out just then.

But they ignored Taggles, and started off at a trot for the Grammar School, taking the short cut through the woods. They had covered about three-quarters of the way when they suddenly became aware of a terrific commotion ahead of them. Above the noise sounded a well-known, strident voice.

"That's Grundy!" chuckled Lowther. "What a man he is for getting into trouble! Been cheeking some villager, I bet!"

They put on speed, and, bursting suddenly through the trees into a clearing, they came upon an interesting scene. On his back on the grassy sward was the burly form of George Alfred Grundy, and he was struggling furiously in the grasp of four fellows wearing Grammar School caps.

He was fighting like a Trojan, and his bellowing voice rang out far and wide as he roared out threats and defiance.

"On the ball!" grinned Tom Merry.

There was no question as to what he and his chums

should do. They knew it was useless to go up quietly and start arguing. Grundy would never stop fighting to argue. And it was a case of one Saint against four Grammarians.

It was up to them to pile in to the rescue. And they did. They came up with a rush, and it was only when they were in the thick of it that Tom Merry recognised the four as Frank Monk, Carboy, and the two Wootton brothers—just the fellows he wanted to have a peaceable chat with.

It was really most unfortunate, but the Saints were in it, and there was no drawing back if they wanted to. Grundy was on his feet now, and the scrap waxed fast and furious, four couples wrestling and struggling to gain the ascendancy. How it would have ended was a problem; but quite suddenly running feet sounded, and a newcomer appeared through the trees. He stopped and stared at the scene, and then without a word he piled in on the St. Jim's side with a will.

It was Gordon Gay, and, as he saw him bring Frank Monk crashing down, Tom Merry gave a gasp.

"My hat!" he panted. "It's Gay! Oh, good man, Gay!"

In the excitement of the moment Tom quite forgot that Gay was in Coventry. Somehow, he felt a strange feeling of relief as he saw Gay piling in with a will—clear proof of his loyalty to St. Jim's.

His arrival turned the scales against the dismayed Grammarians.

They gave in at last, realising the uselessness of further scrapping.

"Chuck it, Monkey!" grinned Tom Merry breathlessly. "No use going on, old bean! You've whacked, and I want a quiet word or two with you!"

"Make it pax, then!" gasped Frank Monk. "No larks!"

"Right! That's understood!" gasped Tom. "Matter of fact, we were just coming over to see you, Monkey!"

"Well, I'm hanged!" panted Grundy, glaring at Tom Merry. "Making pax just as I was getting going! What rot! Come on—smash the cads!"

"You dry up, Grundy! If you start again we'll all start on you, old scout!" grinned Tom.

Grundy grunted his disgust and dropped his hands. A scrap was meat and drink to the great and mighty George Alfred. But he saw that he would have to carry on the fight alone if he wanted more.

"Cheeky rotters!" he growled. "Started on me, all of them—just because I told Monkey I'd punch his nose!"

"Only going to rub your chivvy in the ditch for being too cocky, old chap," grinned Frank Monk. "But you said you wanted us, Merry. If that ass Gay hadn't come along you'd have seen more than you wanted of us, too!"

"Rats!" said Tom, glancing curiously at the breathless Gordon Gay. "Look here

He paused a moment and glanced at Gay again. Then he decided to speak out openly. The matter needed to be settled once and for all, and it was better settled in Gay's presence.

"Look here, Monk," he began, "I don't know if Gay's told you about it, but there's been a lot of trouble at St. Jim's lately. And most of it has been about that rotten 'Editorial' you managed to shove into our 'Weekly.' Has Gay told you anything of—"

"Gay's told us nothing, fathead!" said Monk quickly. "What do you take the dear old fellow for? We've tried to pump him, but he's like a giddy oyster! Why," he

Your Editor Says—

WEDNESDAY—RED-LETTER DAY!

The brightest day of the week, in the unanimous opinion of all Gemites, has always been the day when, bright and early, they trot round to their newsagent's for their copy of the brightest and best twopenny-worth obtainable.

And now, judging from the shoals of letters with which your hard-working Editor has been simply snowed under, Wednesday morning finds them ten times more eager for their weekly treat. In fact, if some of the enthusiastic epistles which I have received are to be believed, when the jolly old newsagent takes down the shutters in the morning there's a lengthy queue waiting to storm the shop!

Well, I'm not surprised. I just know that when the first of the FREE GIFTS given away with the Gem made its appearance it would be given a wonderful reception. That's the stuff!

This week's unique free coloured picture-card shows us an amazing 200 miles-per-hour locomotive of the future, and you can take it from me that No. 6—THE AIR LINER—will be every whit as good!

This fascinating picture of a giant of the skies will be a grand addition to your set. Make sure of getting it, chums!

Next week's magnificent yarn of the chums of St. Jim's brings to a fitting conclusion the splendid series of yarns featuring that ever-popular figure—Gordon Gay, of the Grammar School.

"THE BOY WHO WANTED THE SACK!"

is the title of this spanking effort from Martin Clifford. Don't miss it on any account!

Further items on next week's bumper programme are another top-notch instalment of our gripping serial, "THE FLYING FISH," more rib-tickling replies by our tame ORACLE, and, to finish up with, a further interesting article on the subject of the L.M.S. "Royal Scot" Locomotive No. 6105.

YOUR EDITOR.

added, glancing from one fellow to another, "you fellows don't think Gay's been gassing to us about what goes on at St. Jim's?"

"We have thought so," admitted Tom Merry quietly. "But I'm beginning to wonder."

"Gay's refused to tell us anything!" said Carboy, with no little anger. "Gay isn't a traitor, you idiots! I thought something was wrong," he added, looking at Gay curiously. "I was asking him only this afternoon what was wrong. He wouldn't say a word."

"Then I fancy that the sooner we get to the bottom of things the better," said Tom Merry grimly. "I'm going to ask you a question or two, Monk. If you want to help your old pal, Gay, you'll answer them. In the first place, did Gay let you see the copy for 'Tom Merry's Weekly' the other day?"

Monk started.

"My hat! Of course not!" he said, with a faint grin. "He didn't even know we'd spotted what the packet was. But I saw the printer's name on it and guessed."

"Then how on earth did you get that 'Editorial' in?"

Monk chuckled, and his chums grinned broadly.

"Easily enough," he said. "We saw Gay hand the copy to old Tiper, the printer, and trot off to the dentist's. Then we saw Tiper shove the copy on the counter and go into that room at the back of his shop with his giddy tea. Knowing he wouldn't be out for a bit, I slipped inside, opened the package, and, taking out your giddy old 'Editorial,' I wrote another and shoved it in its place."

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"Easy as falling off a form!" grinned Monk. "Anything else? I hope you fellows haven't been such asses as to blame dear old Gordon for that!"

"Yes, we did!" said Tom quietly. "But go on! Now I'd like to know who phoned you when we were going for the printed copies and gave you the tip to ambush us?"

"It wasn't Gay, anyway," said Carboy warmly. "It was a chap named Lacy—you fellows know him well enough—who told us and gave us the tip. Nobody phoned—Lacy said he'd overheard you yourself telling the printer's boy that you'd be along for the copies in half an hour. He said he was in Mother Murphy's and heard you."

Tom Merry gasped.

"Well, the awful liar!" he said. "Why, I was never in Mother Murphy's at all that day."

Monk shrugged.

"Then he's telling whoppers!" he said. "Just like that cad! I suppose someone at St. Jim's had given him the tip—probably his pal Racke. They're as thick as thieves! Birds of a feather, you know."

"My hat!"

The Terrible Three looked at each other, and then they looked at Gordon Gay in a rather shame-faced manner. Gay gave them a cheery grin. It was utterly unlike the good-tempered Australian to bear any malice or ill-will.

"Dear old Racke," he remarked, with a chuckle. "What a lad he is! I'd already put my money on Aubrey! But these fellows are longing to know where the bundle of copies you collared are, Franky. Do tell them!"

"Yes, we do want to know that!" said Tom Merry grimly.

"Don't talk rot!" said Harry Wootton, with a grunt. "You know jolly well where they are—at least, Gay does! He burgled the Grammar School and collared the lot, the daring, reckless ass!"

"Did us down fairly," grinned Monk ruefully. "But after all, he was a Grammar School man until a few days ago, so you Saints needn't crow."

"We haven't been crowing," said Tom Merry, "simply because we didn't believe Gay when he told us what he had done. We thought he was spoofing!"

"Mum-my hat!" breathed Grundy, beginning to get a drift

of the conversation. "Did Gay actually do it? How d'you fellows know he did? I don't believe it!"

"Simply because we found a message written in chalk on the mirror in our study," said Monk, with a sniff. "It was signed Gordon Gay, and I think I know his fist. And you idiots ought to know Gay better than to believe him capable of telling whoppers anyway. Satisfied now?"

The St. Jim's juniors nodded.

"But haven't you got the copies?" demanded Carboy. "That should have been proof—"

"Alas," said Gay, "that was just where the snag came in! I shoved them on Tom Merry's table for him to find in the morning. When we came down the next morning they'd gone. I've almost wondered since if you chaps might have raided 'em and got 'em back again."

Monk chuckled.

"No fear, though we might have tried if we'd known! But, look here, there's some dirty work going on somewhere. Tell us what's been going on?"

Tom Merry told the Grammarians frankly enough, Gay saying nothing. Frank Monk spluttered as he heard of Gay being sent to Coventry.

"Well, you are a fine lot!" he gasped. "As if Gay would play a rotten trick like that! Somebody else must have written that note."

"I'm beginning to think so! In fact, I'm pretty sure of that now," said Tom Merry, biting his lips. "That never occurred to me at the time, but since—"

He looked at Gay, who met his troubled, uneasy glance with a grin.

"We're going into it now, though," said Tom quietly. "If it's at all possible I'll get to the bottom of this affair somehow. Look here, Gay, if—have you got that note, by any chance? If you have—"

"Yes, old bean!" chuckled Gay, taking it from his pocket. "Here it is!"

Tom Merry took the crumpled sheet and glanced at it. Then his face grew dark.

"It's a forgery, of course," he snapped. "That isn't my handwriting—you fellows can see that," he added, handing the sheet first to Manners, and then to Lowther.

"Phew! Of course not. I fancy I'm beginning to smell the rat out now," said Manners. "The fellow who wrote this was the same fellow who sent that message to Lacy. And it was done to get Gay into trouble, or I'm a Dutchman."

"What a brain!" murmured Gordon Gay admiringly. "How do you think things out, Manners, old chap? But what a pity you didn't start thinking a bit earlier! It would have saved Tommy here getting a busted nose, and quite a lot of unpleasantness all round."

"We see that now," admitted Tom. "But now we've tumbled to the game, we'll not be long finding the rotter who's responsible."

"My dear man, you can save yourselves the trouble," smiled Gay, taking the notebook from his pocket. "Here's the book that page was torn from, and here's the name of its giddy owner. What price me as a giddy Sherlock Holmes?"

"Phew!"

"Racke—Aubrey Racke!"

"I guessed it!" breathed Tom Merry. "When I spotted that note I guessed the rest. It is a bit of rotten revenge on Racke's part, Gay. We've acted like howling rotters, and we owe you an apology."

"All serene," grinned Gay; "though, as I say, it's rather a pity you fellows didn't start thinking a bit earlier. However, better late than never," he added, a slight trace of bitterness in his bantering tone. "Now what about taking this book back to Racke? He'll be getting anxious about it—in fact, I know he is."

"Phew! Does he know you've got it, Gay?"

"I left him sprawling in his study fender!" chuckled Gay. "He was like a tiger being robbed of its giddy cubs when he saw me collar this. Methinks we'd better get along before he manages to think of a way of throwing dust in our optics—what?"

"Yes, rather!"

And with that Tom Merry and his fellow Saints parted on quite amicable terms with the Grammar School fellows. Before Tom Merry & Co. started back to St. Jim's they offered their sincerest apologies to Gordon Gay, who accepted them with his usual good-natured affability, and shook hands all round to show that he bore no ill-will. Even Grundy was quite humble about it.

"I'd made up my mind to smash you to a frazzle the first chance I got," he told Gay darkly, as the little party hurried back to the school. "But now I'm going to smash that howling rotter Racke instead!"

"I should," advised Gordon Gay solemnly. "You'll find it much safer, old chap."

And Grundy was so humbled that he didn't even reply to that.

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"We've acted like howling rotters, Gay," said Tom Merry frankly, "and we owe you an apology." "All serene," said Gordon Gay. And the ex-Grammarians shook hands all round to show that he bore no ill-will. (See Chapter 11.)

CHAPTER 12. All Clear!

"I TOLD you so!" grunted Gerald Crooke. "You wouldn't listen to me, Racke! Remember, I had nothing to do with it."

"Oh, shut up!" said Racke savagely.

Racke's face was white and anxious. He knew well enough that Crooke had "told him so," but it brought no comfort to him to be told that. Crooke as a Job's comforter had an exasperating effect on Aubrey Racke.

Crooke shut up, and Racke paced the study in a state of deep agitation and fear.

What would Gordon Gay do? That he had "tumbled" to the game, Racke was certain. But he was not so certain that he would be able to prove anything with the book now he had it. Racke had quite overlooked the matter of the numbered pages, and was quite unaware that most of the words he had written were imprinted deeply on the next page.

None the less, he was almost shivering with fear.

If the truth became known—if it was found out that he had played the rascally trick on both Tom Merry and Gordon Gay, he knew he could expect no mercy from his Form-fellows. By his underhand plot he had not only done Gay an injury, but he had caused a great deal of trouble all round. Moreover, he had lost St. Jim's the match. Gay's inclusion in the team would have made all the difference; even Aubrey Racke knew that, little as he troubled himself concerning cricket matters.

There was another possibility. Once the fellows knew the truth about the note, they would soon begin to wonder about Gay's guilt in the matter of the "Weekly."

They would inquire, and it was more than likely that Lacy would let the cat out of the bag.

"Oh, hang the luck!" gritted Racke.

Somehow all his little schemes came unstuck sooner or later—a fact Crooke had been long aware of, if Racke himself had not.

For long minute after minute the schemer paced the study, Crooke watching him sulkily. Crooke was afraid of his own skin. There came the sudden tramp of numerous feet in the passage, and Racke started and went paler still.

His fears were not without grounds.

The door was suddenly flung back, and a crowd of Fourth and Shell fellows swarmed into the expensively furnished study. Racke wheeled round and stood with his back to the far wall, breathing hard.

Gordon Gay was there, and with him were Tom Merry,

Blake, and a whole host of fellows. And all were looking grim.

"Look—look here," gasped Racke, "get out! What's this mean? What are you fellows after?"

"The biggest rotter in St. Jim's!" said Blake calmly.

"And we've found him! On the ball, Tommy!"

"Look here," muttered Racke, his face pallid, "if that beastly cad Gay's been telling lies about me—"

"If he has we'll send him to Coventry again!" said Lowther. "It's the crime of crimes to tell fibs about dear old Aubrey who never did anything wrong!"

Tom Merry flung the notebook on the desk. Racke started as he sighted it. The worst had happened, then! Gay had shown it to the fellows, and—

With a desperate spring Racke made a dive for the book, intending to dash it into the fire. But he was a trifle too late. Lowther shot a foot out, and the cad of the Shell went over it with a crash and a howl. He was hauled upright again like a sack of coal, Blake's strong grasp on his collar.

"No, you don't! We want you to explain something in that notebook, Racke!" said Tom Merry curtly. "Now, my lad this afternoon St. Jim's lost the match against the Grammarians! They lost it because Gay failed to turn up in the team! And Gay failed to turn up because some howling rotter sent him a spoof note supposed to come from me, telling him he was dropped!"

"That—that was Gay's yarn!" panted Racke. "If you fellows are fools enough to believe him—"

"We are!" said Tom Merry coolly. "We were fools for not believing him, and remembering what a reptile we had in the House! But, fortunately, Gay himself remembered. He came here himself to question you, Racke. He found that book in your desk, with a page torn out. It was on that page that the note was written—the forgery telling Gay he was dropped. Now do you get the drift of it all? You were very smart, Racke, but not quite smart enough to destroy the only evidence against you."

"It's a rotten lie!" said Racke, through his teeth. "I never wrote that dashed note!"

"Then we're going to do you a great injustice like we did Gay," said Tom. "For we're already satisfied that you did write that note, Racke!"

"I tell you—"

"You can tell us what you like!" said Tom Merry, his lip curling. "And if you deny it still, then we'll give you the opportunity of telling Kildare. He's very anxious to

know why the Grammar School licked us as they did. He'll be interested to hear just why, and I fancy he'll insist upon Mr. Railton knowing, too."

"You—you rotters!" gasped Racke. "You've planted this yarn on to me—"

"You'll go before Kildare, then?" asked Tom. "Right! Come along, old bean—"

"I won't—of course I won't!" gasped Racke. He licked his lips. He was cornered, and he knew it. "It—it was only a lark!" he said huskily. "I never expected it would really work, and I only wanted to score off that rotter Gay! I—I was feeling disgusted with him about that—that affair of the 'Weekly.'"

Racke's confession almost took away the juniors' breath.

"Well, you cheeky cad!" gasped Blake. "Why—"

"Leave this to me, Blake!" said Tom Merry grimly. "You awful worm Racke! We know quite well why you did it—to get your own back on Gay for that kicking he gave you—a kicking you richly deserved. As for the 'Weekly' affair, we've found out who was responsible for that—at least for the capture by the Grammarians of the bundle of copies. You phoned through to your pal Lacy, you sweep!"

"I never did!" said Racke thickly. "I tell you—"

"We happen to know you did!"

"I never went near the phone that afternoon—you can ask Crooke."

"We'd rather take Skimmy's word than Crooke's, any day," said Tom, his lip curling. "Come here, Skimmy."

Herbert Skimpole, the scientific genius of the Shell, came into the room looking very unhappy.

"Skimmy happened to be in the Common-room a few minutes ago when we were talking about it," snapped Tom. "I was telling the fellows before coming here to see you, Racke. Skimmy claims that he found you and Crooke in the prefects' room that afternoon. You had been using the phone, and he remembers your mentioning Lacy, and he remembers what you were saying as you came out."

"The fool's lying!"

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole, wagging an admonishing finger at the crimson-faced Racke. "It is very wrong of you to say that, Racke. You know you were there, and you were extraordinarily angry with me, and most rude and rough. You caused me grave pain and injury by sitting me down hard on the floor. I distinctly remember hearing the bell ring as you left the phone, and I distinctly remember what you were saying. You were remarking—"

"Oh, shut up!" hissed Racke.

He could see from the faces around him that it was useless to keep up his bluff any longer.

"Well, are you satisfied, Racke?" said Tom Merry, "or do you still wish it decided by Kildare?"

"I—I own up!" panted Racke, bitterly regretting his treatment of Skimmy now. "It—it was only a lark, and I'm sorry now."

"That's good enough! Well, you'll get the same medicine we were giving Gay," snapped Tom. "though it's deserved in this case! You're sent to Coventry for a fortnight, and I hope every fellow will kick you every time he meets you instead of speaking to you!"

With that Tom Merry led the way out, and the crowd began to follow, though many of them looked as if they wanted to start kicking Racke there and then. In fact, George Alfred began to put his vow into practice.

Long before Grundy had finished with Racke, the cad of the Shell regretted bitterly from the bottom of his heart that he ever tried to get even with Gordon Gay.

"Well, and that's that!" remarked Tom Merry, in deep relief, as he led Gordon Gay to Study No. 10. "I'm sorry about it all, Gay, and I hope we'll rub along better together after this!"

"It was my own fault, in a way," grinned Gay. "I got your backs up by saying silly things about St. Jim's, and by knocking about so much with my old pals from the Grammar School. That alone made you fellows suspicious of me. I only wish I could give Monkey a miss in a way, but—well, I can't. I'm afraid my giddy heart's still at my old school. Anyway, there's only one jolly old mystery to solve now, and that's where the dickens those copies of the 'Weekly' have got to."

"Goodness knows!" said Tom. "I don't suppose they'll ever turn up now!"

But Tom spoke too pessimistically.

CHAPTER 13. Not Grub!

BEAST!" Baggy Trimble was referring to his study-mate Wildrake.

Baggy was hungry—not an unusual circumstance with the fat Fourth-Former. He had just had some supper

in his study, but Wildrake had only allowed him his own share and part of Wildrake's own share and Mellish's. As Trimble had not provided anything whatever towards the supper, Wildrake and Mellish naturally objected to his having the lot.

Baggy could have eaten the lot easily enough, and he had wanted the lot. It was because Wildrake had scotched that idea that Baggy was now referring to him in such disrespectful terms.

"Beast," repeated Trimble, as he wandered out into the passage. "The rotter wouldn't care if I starved. Oh crumbs! I'm awfully hungry, and I know I shan't sleep to-night if I don't get some more grub from somewhere."

And Baggy groaned dismally.

"No good trying Blake's study!" he mumbled to himself as he rolled along the passage. "They still think I raided their rotten cupboard last night! Suspicious beasts! Besides, there wasn't really much in the cupboard, and I never touched the bread or the cheese. My hat! I wonder what happened to that parcel?"

The sudden recollection of the big parcel he had found on the table in Study No. 10 brought a gleam to Trimble's eyes.

What had happened to it? It was a whacking great parcel, and frightfully heavy. Trimble felt sure it contained grub—heaps of it. Mr. Lathom had taken a header over it in the dark, and he must have done something with it. Baggy could not quite understand what the master of the Fourth could have done with it. He had not questioned anyone so far as Baggy was aware.

Baggy wondered if he had kept it to himself, intending to "scoff" the contents at his leisure! Really it would be a frightfully mean and selfish thing for Mr. Lathom to do! Yet Baggy could scarcely imagine Mr. Lathom doing that. The master of the Fourth was a very small eater, he knew; and grub was not in his line at all. Mr. Lathom seemed to thrive on mental fare. Baggy dismissed that idea from his mind almost at once.

But what had the master done with the parcel?

It must be somewhere, and it was very surprising indeed that Mr. Lathom had not made inquiries as to its ownership—if only to punish the careless fellow who had left it lying in the middle of a dark passage.

"He'd lick me, perhaps, if I claimed it!" grunted Trimble reflectively. "On the other hand, it might be worth a licking to have a mountain of grub like that."

By this time Baggy had quite convinced himself that the big parcel did indeed contain grub—tinned and otherwise.

As he ambled along the passage Baggy debated the problem in his fat mind. Should he risk it and claim the parcel? After all, it was his. He had found it on the table in Study No. 10, and findings were keepings. Everybody knew that!

"My hat! I—I think I'll risk it!" murmured the fat junior. "I'll risk a licking, and take it along to the box-room. I only hope he hasn't sent it down to the kitchen, or something like that."

The thought quite alarmed Baggy, and he almost ran to Mr. Lathom's study, now his mind was quite made up. He tapped rather nervously on the door, and stumbled inside in response to Mr. Lathom's invitation to enter.

Mr. Lathom was a kindly little gentleman, and he looked amiably over his spectacles at Baggy.

"Well, Trimble?"

"It—it's about a—a parcel, sir," stammered Trimble. "I—I've lost a parcel—a big one, sir! And I—I wondered if you'd found—I mean, heard of one being found, sir. It—it was a big parcel, and rather heavy."

"Dear me!" remarked Mr. Lathom, adjusting his spectacles and frowning. "I have no knowledge of any parcel being— Bless my soul!"

Recollection came to Mr. Lathom with a rush. Considering the force with which Mr. Lathom had come a cropper the previous night, it was really amazing that he could have forgotten the incident.

He remembered it now, however, and he frowned deeply.

"I certainly do remember a parcel now you mention it, Trimble!" he said sternly. "Last night, when going to my bed-room at a late hour, I fell headlong over a parcel which some careless individual had left in the middle of the passage. If that was you, Trimble—"

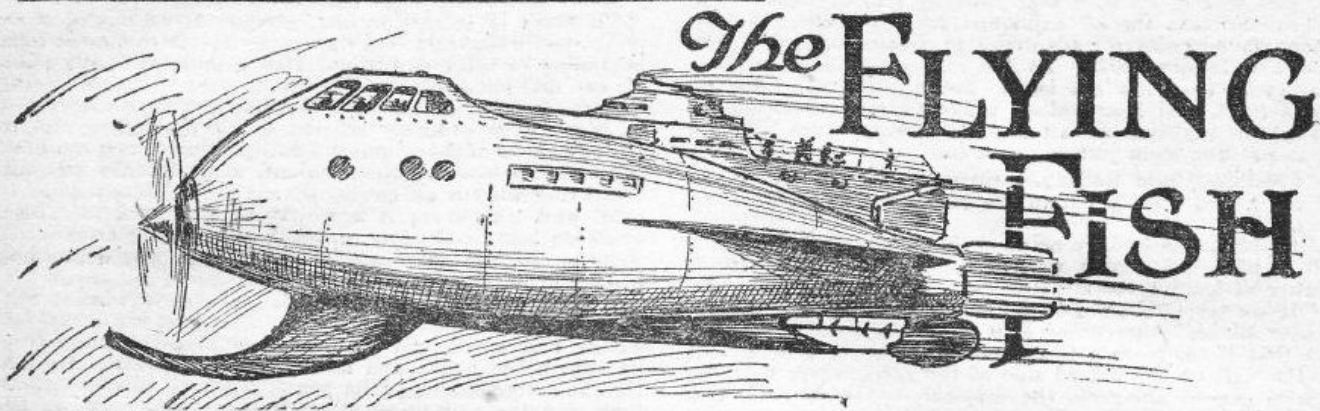
"Oh, nun-nun-no, sir!" gasped Trimble. "It—it was my parcel right enough, sir; but I didn't leave it there. Certainly not! I—I wouldn't dream of leaving a parcel for you to fall over, sir. That is, I mean—"

"If you did not leave it there, then who did, Trimble?" snapped Mr. Lathom, eyeing him suspiciously. "If you claim that parcel belongs to you—"

"Oh, ye-es, sir! It's mine—a present from my uncle, Admiral Sir Percy Trimble," said Trimble, drawing on one of his long list of imaginary aristocratic relations. "I—"

(Continued on page 28.)

BEGIN THIS FINE STORY TO-DAY, CHUMS!



By Leslie Beresford.

"Adrian Blake and that young viper of a son of his shall be food for the wolves before the morning," is the amiable boast of Wummburg, the revolutionary. But the "young viper" isn't having any!

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

RODNEY BLAKE, a stocky youngster, whose one ambition is to follow in the footsteps of his father, **Adrian Blake**—a news correspondent now out of England on business for his paper—is strolling along Littleworth Cove in company with his chum,

DAN LEA, when he sees a strange-looking craft resembling in shape an airship and a boat combined.

PRINCE ALEXIS KARAGENSKI, the ship's commander, informs Rodney that there is a serious case of illness aboard, and in consequence succeeds in getting Dr. Fraser, the youngster's guardian, to go aboard. Some time later Rodney and Dan are captured by Karagenski's men and taken on to the ship as prisoners. The strange craft then rises after the fashion of an airship and speeds them away to the "Valley of No Escape" where, in the charge of Wummburg, an obnoxious, one-eyed giant, and a host of armed guards, are thousands of prisoners building at desperate speed a fleet of Flying Fish. With this formidable fleet the heads of the conspiracy hope to conquer the whole world. Following a rumpus with Wummburg Rodney is overpowered and thrust into an underground kitchen where, to his amazement, he comes face to face with his father. Adrian Blake hurriedly explains that, under the guise of a Russian expert in poison gas, he has gained access to the conspirators' stronghold with a view to encouraging the wretched half-starved slaves to revolt against their task-masters.

(Now read on.)

A Timely Warning!

ADRIAN BLAKE then began to explain how, burning under the lash and brutality of Wummburg and the thousand odd armed guards driving them to and from their task and making their lives a living death, the ten thousand workmen had welcomed the prospect of a rising against their tormentors.

The groundwork for this rebellion was completed. Arms had been stolen and hidden away. Little secret dumps of ammunition had been made ready. Leaders had been selected, and the plans of revolt so carefully laid that, by its very element of surprise, and—if successful—the seizure of important strategic positions in the valley, the sudden rising of those ten thousand vengeful slaves of Boronov and his friends had much hope of sweeping all before it.

"And when does the fun begin?" asked Rodney, after poring with the others over a map of the valley outspread on the wooden table. He had a good impression of the whole scheme, and was only too eager for it to be set in motion right away.

"The fun as you call it," replied Adrian Blake, with a grim little smile, "will probably begin—"

Here his voice was startlingly interrupted by a hurried and insistent hammering noise on the door. Someone was evidently anxious to gain admission by the same barred wooden door above the steps down which Rodney had been dragged.

At this sound O'Hagan and Adrian Blake were immediately on the alert, staring at each other in surprise. The Irishman motioned the two lads into the unlit depths of another room leading out of the one in which they had been sitting. Then Mr. Blake, with a warning gesture, mounted the steps to the barred door and flung out an imperative question in Russian.

"It's only Piludski!" he exclaimed, evidently relieved, after an answering voice had replied faintly through the woodwork of the door.

Then, cautiously opening this, he admitted a swirling cloud of fog and a tattered, hurrying figure which the two lads at once recognised as belonging to the very same old man who had been the cause of their interference with Wummburg outside in the street a while earlier. The old

man stepping in, Adrian Blake promptly shut out the fog and refastened the door by throwing over it the thick wooden barrier as before.

Agitated and in evident haste, the old man began jabbering excitedly in Russian, Adrian Blake and the Irishman listening and asking more questions in the same language, which neither Rodney nor Dan understood. But it was clear to them that something important and unexpected had happened. Presently Adrian Blake turned to the curious pals.

"It seems, after all," said the newspaper man, "that you two might have done much worse than have that rumpus with Wummburg over our old friend here. He's just been telling us all about it. He's Piludski, one of the most important people in our coming rising. Wummburg was trying to arrest him when you interfered. And a lucky thing that you did, for something unfortunate has happened, and his arrest would have been a disaster."

It appeared that some hidden arms and ammunition had been found by Wummburg's guards in the house of one of the revolutionaries, who—threatened with torture if he did not confess how he came by them—had said he had received them from Piludski, and that a rising was intended. Wummburg, naturally, had sought out Piludski, only to be interrupted by the two lads. In the fog the old man had made good his escape and hidden till things had quietened down and he could make his way here undetected.

This complication, Adrian Blake told the lads, would necessitate an immediate change in plans. It would probably mean putting forward the signal for the rising.

"It may begin—right away—to-night?" asked Rodney eagerly.

"Well, possibly just before dawn," answered his father. "That's what we have to settle now. And you two lads—knowing how the land lies—had better be off now, and make your way back to the castle."

"What?" Rodney gazed blankly in surprise. "Back to the castle? Why, dad, what's wrong with us staying here and giving a hand with things when they start? That would be talking, wouldn't it, Dan?"

"We'd see that we made ourselves mighty useful, Mister Blake!" said Dan, as surprised as Rodney.

"Besides," urged the latter, "my place surely is with you, dad, now I've found you again?"

"And that's something you must keep to yourself. Don't forget that your father is the very last person in the world supposed to be here. No, lad. For the time being the castle is the right place for you two. When, and if, the rising succeeds, it will be time enough for you to join in. Much as I'd like to have you with me, I don't want you and Dan needlessly poking your heads into danger. Besides, even up at the castle you may be of some use to us."

"But how?" frowned Rodney a little impatiently. His father's word had always been law to him; but here he felt that he was being unnecessarily wrapped in cotton-wool. "If we're stuck up at the castle, how are we going to find a way of getting in touch with you?"

"I'll tell you of one," replied the father, "which—if you and Dan can only find it—may help to make the rising a complete success and shorten the whole business. It was partly to tell you about this that Larry and I wanted to get hold of you to-night."

Taking up the oil-lamp, he led the two lads into the unlit inner room in which they had momentarily hidden when Piludski had been knocking for admission. Here the lamp-

light now showed them that a portion of the wall at the far end was in ruins, a big, yawning gap of black.

"From inside there," explained Adrian Blake, "a long underground passage leads direct to the castle, so O'Hagan and I have discovered. At the far end of it is a stone wall, with a narrow slit in it. Through the slit we could see a light, and hear voices, when we were investigating things last night at about ten o'clock. Your voice and that of Dan. You were just going to bed."

"Meaning," said Rodney, surprised, "that the castle end of the passage comes out in the room they've given us up there?"

"Exactly. Somewhere on your side of the wall where the slit is there must be a way of using the passage. It's a matter of looking for the slit—"

"It do seem to me I've noticed that slit you speak of, Mister Blake," interrupted Dan in his slow way. "Sure I am that is so, more I think on it. There be a small slit in the wall on the innard side of the room where there be figures carved alongside the fireplace. More'n once I've pondered it."

"Then there you are!" said Adrian Blake. "Somewhere about there the wall has a secret opening, there's no doubt. The passage wasn't built for nothing. It's a question of solving the secret, lads. You may not be successful. But if you are—it might make all the difference. We might then be able to make a surprise raid on the castle that way in force, and capture those vultures up there in their own lair before they knew what is happening."

"That certainly would be a bit helpful," agreed Rodney, with more eagerness than before. "In any case, I suppose the sooner Dan and I get back there and see what can be done, the better. If that stone wall is to be squeezed open, we'll do it."

"Well, well!" laughed his father softly. "Don't be too optimistic, lad. We only hope you will succeed. But—if not—it can't be helped. Anyhow, you're just as well up there till we get things going down here. And, in case that passage fails, you may be sure Larry or I will find some way of getting in touch with you. Now—little as I like to lose sight of you, sonny—you and Dan had better be going. We've no end of things to cram into the next few hours, if we are going to make a start."

It was with natural reluctance that presently Rodney said good-bye to his father again and slipped out with Dan unseen into the fog, to grope their way through the town in the direction of the castle. They had left Adrian Blake and his companion poring over a map of the valley and discussing the plans for advancing the rising to an hour before dawn. The hour was now only about eight o'clock in the evening, but there was no time to be wasted if the change of plans was to be made without hitch.

The heavy fog shrouding the valley was, if anything, more useful to their purpose than otherwise. It enabled much to be effected under its dense cloak which otherwise might have been impossible without the attention and suspicions of the armed guards being aroused. But the same fog presented Rodney and his friend—not so well acquainted with the byways and lay of the town—with unexpected difficulties in making their way to the castle.

Larry O'Hagan had given them parting directions which had sounded simple enough; but, once set out and walled in by fog, it was practically impossible to follow any directions, however simple. As a result, they had not groped their way through the dense blanket of mist very long—though it had seemed to them an endless trudge—when Dan gripped his companion by the arm.

"Seems to me we ain't on the right road, after all, Mister Rodney!" he said. "If we were making for the castle, by rights we'd be going up hill. But it's down hill we're going fast. We must somehow have taken the wrong turning."

"Just what I was thinking!" agreed Rodney impatiently. "Confound the fog! There's no knowing where we've landed ourselves now, and not a soul within hearing to give us any idea where we are!"

"Maybe we don't need anyone, so far as that goes," said Dan, not unaccustomed to finding his way over broad stretches of Devon moorland in foggy weather, as he stood peering around in the darkness, listening intently and sniffing at the dank air like a bloodhound on the trail.

"Over there," he added, pointing in the direction from which they had just come, "I can hear the river. Don't you get the sound of it, Mister Rodney?"

"Yes I do. Then we must have crossed the bridge."

"Just where we should have turned left, as Mister O'Hagan said, we must have turned right. And now the river's behind us. We're making straight for the works."

"Then we'd best turn right back and try to strike the

bridge again," said Rodney. "This is a waste of good time—confound it! Let's get back to the bridge."

"It won't be so easy to find, maybe. If we missed it we might just walk right into the river. Seems to me the fog's beginning to think of lifting. Half a minute! Let's see if we can find out just where we are."

Here, as Dan moved on a few paces, with Rodney close to him, lights suddenly seemed to be descending out of the sky ahead of them, and the dull purring of engines grew momentarily louder. Next instant, while Rodney was still wondering what it all meant, the air around him seemed to swirl and whistle as if a whirlwind had arisen. Dan, grabbing him by the arm, dragged him forcibly backwards, shouting to him to run. A great bulk was descending blackly upon them from the sky.

A moment later Rodney had realised clearly what it was. He remembered that in the early afternoon the completed Flying Fish which had brought them here had risen from its slip in the works and flown away northward. He and Dan had stood admiring its graceful beauty which so amazingly hid the evil thing it really was. And now, in the fog, it had returned.

Unlike the old gas-filled and unstable airships of the past, it needed no mooring, no hundreds of men to help make its landing safe. It merely settled itself without aid comfortably on the flat ground, throwing out through the fog the rays from its lighted windows and open doorways. But in the next few minutes people with hand-lamps came running, and voices sounded muffled by the mist.

Rodney and Dan shrank back out of sight as much as possible when, a second later, the headlights of an approaching motor crept slowly in their direction from that of the town. In the brilliantly-lit car they could see Prince Karaganski sitting with Boronov. The car passed them, drawing up a little distance from the glowing form of the Flying Fish, the prince and Boronov alighting from the vehicle.

"Something of importance going on!" said Rodney to Dan in an undertone. "Being on the spot—and fog-bound—we might as well hang around and see what it's all about. What's that just to your right, Dan? Looks like a building. Let's creep along the side of it and get nearer."

The black mass dimly to be seen through the fog was, as a matter of fact, part of the high wall surrounding the works.

Following Rodney's suggestion and making use of its shelter, the boys made their way forward till they were able to see and hear without being seen themselves. Out of the airship Von Roden had just descended. With him was another man of obviously German nationality, together with a lean, bearded man looking pale and emaciated.

Von Roden, with a stiff military salute towards Boronov, began to speak in his rasping voice; and his German words, drifting to Rodney's understanding ears, sent a sudden shock of alarm through the lad as he listened in blank amazement.

An Unexpected Complication!

THE truth about that mysterious wireless message this morning from Moscow is an astonishing one, my friend!" Von Roden was saying excitedly.

"We have unwittingly admitted our worst enemy into our midst. But now he is cornered, and in our hands for good at last. This, Herr Boronov, is my old friend, Von Stahl, of Hamburg, who kindly sent us Herr Alexis Saranoff, the gas expert. But the Herr Alexis Saranoff who came to us turns out not to be the right one at all. Here is the real one."

Von Roden's pointing finger indicated the lean, bearded man, who moved forward, speaking in German in a high-pitched, querulous voice:

"Certainly, I am Alexis Saranoff! I have been confined in prison in Warsaw as a spy, all through the machinations of an English newspaper man—a Herr Adrian Blake. If it had not been for an accident I might have been there now. Robbed of my papers and everything I had, and flung into gaol—what could I do? Let me be confronted by the wretch who did this thing to me!"

"As soon as possible!" muttered the hunchbacked and vulture-like Boronov, a grin of triumph creasing his evil face and showing his jagged, tiger teeth. "As soon as possible, my friend. We will have him sent for at once, and shot for the pariah dog he is. For once, that Adrian Blake has gambled on too poor a show of cards. Where is Wumberg? Send for him, and have the fellow brought to the castle!"

Meanwhile, Rodney, in the dark shadows of the wall, had dragged Dan furtively further away from the chances of being noticed, whispering in his friend's ear the whole of

the story he had just heard. There was no need to listen to any more. There was not a minute to be wasted.

"We've got to get a warning through to Dad before Wummborg reaches him," he said, under his breath. "We must find our way back to that house and him, somehow—as quickly as we can."

"That's right!" nodded Dan, as they moved off noiselessly through the mist. "But that's easier said than done in the fog. We couldn't find our way to the castle. It isn't going to be a walk-over finding a house which—well, we've not much idea where it is, have we?"

That was perfectly true, but somehow or other the difficulty had to be surmounted. In silence Rodney and Dan set out, retracing their steps in a search for the bridge, hurrying ahead into the wall of mist as fast as they could. It was Dan who, suddenly pulling Rodney on one side, made that first problem easier by letting the returning lighted car find the bridge for them.

It moved cautiously past them, with the real Alexis Saranoff and the others seated in it. As it did so, its speed being little more than a crawl, Dan gestured to Rodney, and they hung on to the spare wheel at the back of the big saloon-body. Presently the rumbling torrent of the river grew louder, and the two chums felt the wooden planks of the bridge under their feet. Once on the other side they loosened their hold on the car, which swung off to the left in the gradual climb to the castle.

"Ours is the opposite way," said Dan, with a better sense of location than his friend. "I've got the house fixed in my mind. If you remember, we'd not long been across that bridge earlier this evening when we came on Wummborg and the old man. We'd turned to the right from the bridge, meaning to take the short cut to the castle. And it can't have been far from here that I said to you it seemed as if we were being followed. It'll be a bit ahead, and to the right. That house, if I'm not wrong."

Meantime, it became more and more apparent to the two lads that not only was the fog lifting, but that a certain amount of furtive activity was manifesting itself in the town. Here and there doors were opening and shutting. More than once figures flitted across the street, and eyes peered at the two lads. In some of the houses carefully-shaded lights could be seen carried to and fro. Voices were softly singing some song—a weird melody, something like that of the "Marseillaise."

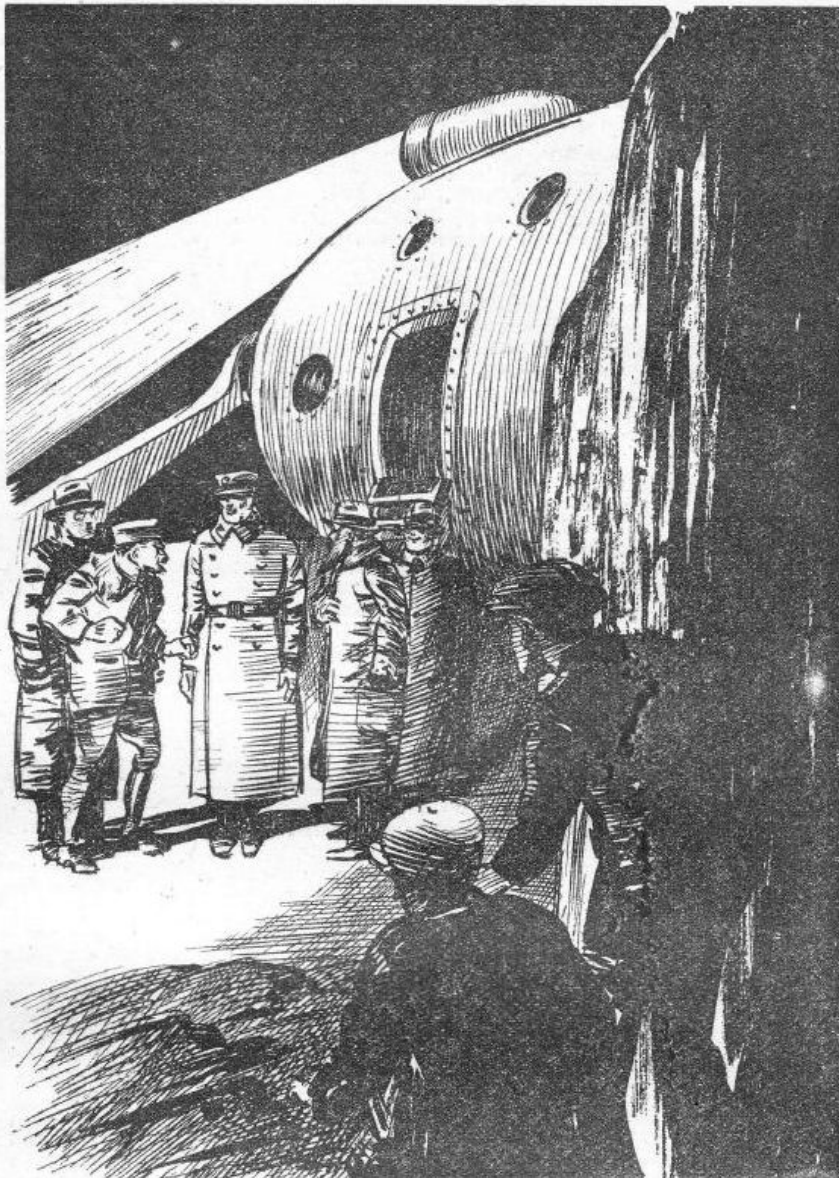
Suddenly, as Dan was examining carefully the spot where they had come to a standstill, and was pointing out to Rodney how they had reached the turning where stood the drinking den out of which Wummborg had chased the old man, Piludski, near to which, of course, must be the house they were seeking, the tramp of feet in a military tread, and the sound of guttural voices talking in German warned them of armed guards approaching. One of the voices was that of Wummborg. From what he was saying to his men, it was evident that he had met the car containing Boronov and the others, and had received his instructions for the arrest of the false Alexis Saranoff.

"He and that young viper of a son of his shall be food for the wolves in the forest above the castle before morning!" he was saying, in his raucous, boasting tones.

Shrinking back in the shadows Rodney understood, and translated what he had said for the benefit of Dan. The appearance of Wummborg and his man on the scene so soon left the two lads little, if any, margin of hope. At any rate, they could not forestall Wummborg by warning Adrian Blake, for Wummborg knew the house while they did not. The most they could do was to follow him and his men, and act as seemed best at the moment.

Wummborg and his men, however, seemed made almost as uncertain by the fog as Rodney and his friend were. A little further along the road they hesitated doubtfully in a group, arguing with each other. At the same moment, just near to where Rodney and Dan were clinging to the misted shadows of the houses, a door opened; voices could be heard speaking softly, and some people came out into the street.

Softly there drifted to the two lads' ears the voice of O'Hagan talking.



Von Roden's rasping voice sent a shudder of alarm through the two lads, as they listened from their place of concealment: ". . . as soon as possible, we will have Blake sent for and shot for the pariah dog he is!" (See page 26.)

"Well, we'll be after setting a match to the fire now—you and I," he was saying. "It's a better and quicker bit of work we've done than I'd hoped. Best have it begin right away, and let's know the worst. Any minute now Piludski will be letting off the signal. We've just time to be making for our posts, ready to let fly!"

At that moment, startlingly, the roar of an explosion somewhere to the north of the town shook the houses, and sent its violent echoes rebounding from all sides of the valley. It was—the two lads knew from what they had been told by Adrian Blake and the Irishman earlier in the house—the explosion of a hidden mine, the expected signal at which the rising was to occur.

The explosion, naturally, caused intense excitement among Wummborg and his men, who began jabbering in German.

"Whatever it is, our first duty is to capture that infernal Englishman!" Wummborg was saying. "I tell you that the house must be further up this way. Follow me."

Rodney, meanwhile, when the echoes of the explosion had passed, had noticed that his father and the Irishman had begun to move up the road. Rodney's first thought had been to hurry after them with a warning, but there was no time for that. Swiftly, his mind conceived another plan.

"We've got to meet Wummborg and keep him well occupied, Dan, till dad and O'Hagan have had time to get clear away," he said.

"Exactly what I was thinking, Mister Rodney," muttered Dan.

Next moment, as Wummborg and his men came looming through the thinning fog, Rodney stepped out and met him face to face.

"So I'm to be food for wolves, am I?" said he in German.

"We'll see! Meantime, remember, wolves have teeth!"

(Next week's instalment is full of startling developments, chums, so don't miss it, whatever you do.)

"Condemned By the School!"

(Continued from page 24.)

"I—the fact is, sir, I think I must have dropped it—unawares, you know."

"What? What nonsense! It would be quite impossible to drop such a heavy parcel without knowing—"

"I mean, I couldn't carry it, and I went to fetch someone to help me, you see, sir!" gasped Trimble, getting quite afraid of the possibility of losing the parcel, after all. "Then I forgot it. I'm awfully sorry, sir, if you fell over it. But it was bed-time, and—and I was tired, and—"

"Very well, Trimble," said Mr. Lathom. "You were exceedingly careless and thoughtless, and you will take a hundred lincs. You have caused me grievous pain and discomfort; it might have resulted in serious injury for me. Fortunately— However, if you will come with me I will hand over the parcel, which I had imagined contained exercise-books."

"Oh, crumbs!"

The very thought of exercise-books made Trimble shudder. But he was still hopeful, and he followed eagerly enough, his little eyes glimmering with anticipation.

Mr. Lathom stopped before the cupboard at the foot of the stairs and opened wide the door. Then he pointed to the big parcel within.

"There is your parcel, Trimble, and I trust you will be more careful in future, you careless fellow!"

"Oh, ye-es, sir! Thank you very much, sir!"

Mr. Lathom departed, looking impatient. He had been engrossed in an interesting book, and he wanted to get back to it.

Trimble gave a fat chuckle and grabbed at the big, hefty parcel. The next moment he was stumbling, half-running, along the passage with it. His one fear now was that someone would come along, see what he was carrying, and ask awkward questions. Some fellows were such suspicious, interfering beasts.

He almost trembled with anxiety as to its contents. Supposing it was only beastly exercise-books. Supposing—

Baggy had just got that far in his musings, and had just reached the doorway of Study No. 10 in the Shell passage with his burden, when someone emerged suddenly.

Trimble barged into him, quite unable to stop himself.

"Biff!"

"Yoooop!"

"Biffup!"

Baggy sat down with a concussion that seemed to shake the Shell passage.

The next moment Trimble found himself sitting amid a sea of printed magazines. There were copies of "Tom Merry's Weekly" to right of him, to left of him, behind him, and in front of him. The fall had burst open the package and scattered its contents, and the fat Fourth-former fairly wallowed in them.

"Oh, bai Jove!" Oh, gweat Scott!"

There was a startled exclamation from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, followed by other equally startled exclamations, as Blake, Herries, and Digby, who had gone to No. 10 to render a humble apology to Gordon Gay, came out after Gussy, and saw the strange sight.

The next moment they were followed by the Terrible Three and Gordon Gay.

The latter youth sighted the papers, recognised them, and burst into a roar of uncontrollable laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Trimble. "Ow-ow! Yow! Oh, what an awful sell! It's not grub, after all!"

"Oh, bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Even Tom Merry began to get an inkling now of the true state of affairs, and he joined in the roar.

"Oh, bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus, too astonished to laugh. "Twimble! What, what— Twimble! Bai Jove! It is that wretched bundle of 'Weeklies,' dear boys! Twimble—"

"Ha, ha, ha! And Trimble thought it was grub!" gurgled Blake. "I fancy I can guess what this means. Gussy left Trimble in our study last night—the fat beast about cleaned our cupboard out of grub. We intended to settle with him about it, but this affair made us put it off. He—ha, ha, ha!—must have found that bundle on your table and collared it!"

"Ow-ow! Oh crumbs!" groaned Trimble.

"So that's it!" gasped Tom Merry. "That's what happened, then! Trimble—"

"I say, you fellows, you ought to reward me!" gasped Trimble. "I'm awfully hungry—had no supper yet! I'll join you fellows, if you don't— Here, what— Yoooop!"

Trimble howled and jumped away, just missing Tom Merry's boot as he did so. He fled, realising only too well that there was nothing doing in the supper line for him.

"Well, my only hat!" gasped Tom Merry, beaming with joy. "What ripping luck! Did you ever? Bring them inside, you fellows, and don't lose one, for goodness' sake! And to-morrow morning we'll have a bonfire—the first time on record that 'Tom Merry's Weekly' will be publicly burned with the approval of its giddy editorial staff!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Tom Merry & Co. got busy, laughing as they did so. They could afford to laugh now. The clouds had rolled away, the last mystery was solved, and, best of all, that "spoof" "Editorial" would never be read by enemy eyes again.

There was joy in Study No. 10 that night. The clouds had indeed rolled away—for the time being, at all events. And Gordon Gay was cheery and bright that night, and for many nights after, in fact. On the following Wednesday the return match with the Grammar School was played, with Gordon Gay in the team for St. Jim's. Suffice it to say that the fellow who had been condemned by the school covered himself with glory, helping in great measure to adjust the balance and to bring about the Grammarians' crushing defeat.

But this, and the friendship of Tom Merry & Co., brought little comfort or happiness to Gordon Gay. His heart was still at his old school, and he still longed for the companionship of his old chums, and in his mind was a growing determination to get back to the Grammar School—somehow. Whether he would succeed or not remained to be seen.

THE END.

(Be sure you read the final story in this magnificent series, chums, entitled: "THE BOY WHO WANTED THE SACK!" which will appear in next week's GEM, together with another dandy FREE picture card.)

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