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EVERY WEDNESDAY.



SCHOOLBOY WHIRLWIND ARRIVES AT ST. JIM'S—

'Dizzy' Desmond— Daredevil!

BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD



CHAPTER 1. Too Funny!

"HALLO! Who's this merchant?" Frank Monk, of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, passed the remark carelessly.

With him were Harry Wootton, Carboy, and Gordon Gay, also of the Grammar School Fourth Form, and they were standing at the bookstall on Rylcombe Station.

Following his gaze, his chums sighted a youth of about their own age sauntering along the platform, rather aimlessly, swinging a handbag in his hand.

"Looks like a giddy lost lamb!" commented Carboy.

"Or a fledgling Saint," remarked Gordon Gay, with a soft chuckle. "I fancy I know who the chap is."

"Blessed if I do, then!" said Frank Monk.

"You wouldn't, old chap—not having the mental powers to put two and two together!" said Gay pleasantly. "That chap with the cheerful chivvy must be Kildare's cousin!"

"You mean that chap Kildare of St. Jim's?"

"Exactly—the giddy skipper of our enemies, the Saints! And this merchant is his cousin, I bet."

"How the thump do you know, Gay?"

"By deduction, my dear Watson! What memories you

sap-headed infants have, to be sure! It's only ten minutes since we heard Tom Merry grousing in Mother Murphy's tuckshop about this chap!" said Gay witheringly.

"Oh!"

"You remember now," said Gordon Gay sarcastically. "Wasn't Tom Merry grousing about having to meet Kildare's cousin, a new kid, at the station this afternoon? He was—no end! Tommy fancies himself above meeting new kids, you know. Anyway, this chap must be the new kid—come by an early train, perhaps!"

"Well, what about it?" asked Carboy. "We're not interested in new kids for a blessed rival school, ass!"

"A little harmless leg-pulling—"

"Oh! Good wheeze!" grinned Carboy, interested at last. "Kim on!"

"Just as well to let new Saints know early that the Grammar School is top dog!"

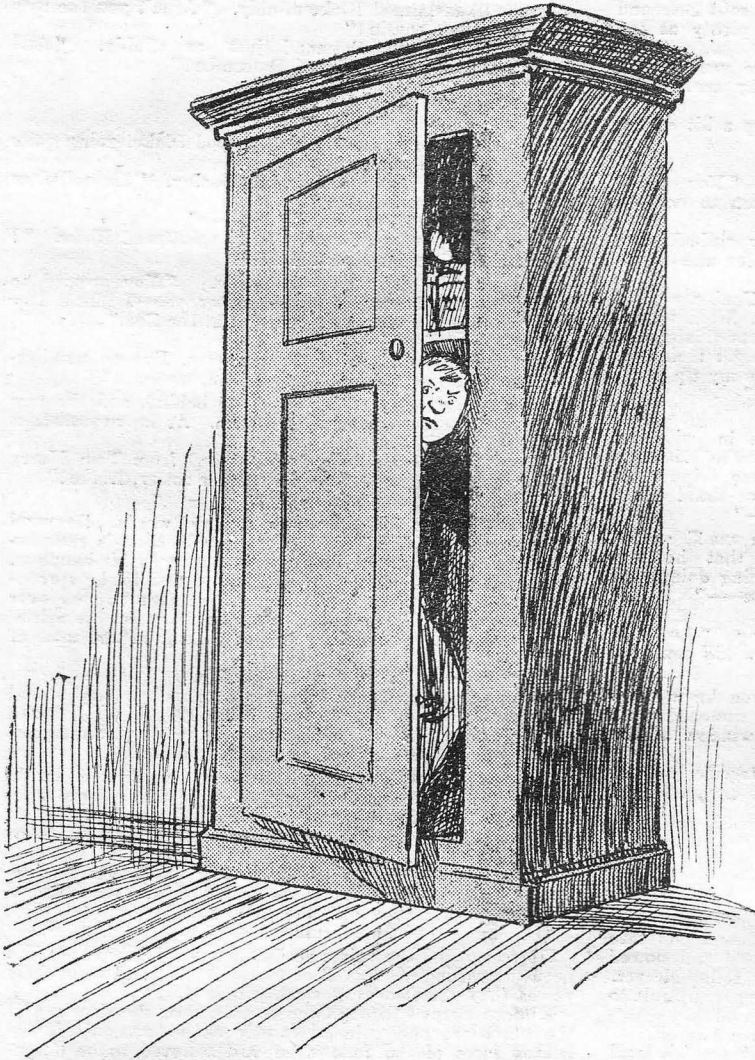
smiled Gay. "Wonder if he knows the difference between St. Jim's caps and ours? I bet he doesn't. It would be rather a lark to warn him to have nothing to do with chaps wearing red-and-white caps—what?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

The smiling Grammarians approached the strange youth, who had been eyeing them curiously for some moments. As a matter of fact, Desmond Kildare—for it was the new

OH, BOYS, DIZZY'S SO LIVELY THAT
HE MAKES A FIREWORK LOOK
SILLY!

—AND THE DUST HE KICKS UP IS LIKE A SANDSTORM!



fellow expected at St. Jim's—did not even know of the existence of Rylcombe Grammar School, and he took for granted that Gay & Co. were St. Jim's fellows. Nor had he ever seen a St. Jim's red-and-white cap, having only arrived in England a fortnight ago—his first visit since a child.

"Hallo!" he said, smiling at the jokers.

"All hail!" replied Gay & Co., almost together, bowing low before the astonished new fellow. "Welcome to Rylcombe!"

"You are Kildare, the new chap, I presume?" added Gordon Gay solemnly. "I do hope we're not mistook—"

"I'm Kildare right enough," grinned the youth.

"But—"

"Good!" said Gay. "And how bonnie you're looking—just such another bonnie lad as your cousin, you know. Sorry you've mislaid the brass band; and Carboy here lit the fire with the illuminated address of welcome only this morning."

"Look here—"

"Still, here you are at last," went on the humorous Gay, suddenly eyeing Kildare's face with deep concern. "But what's happened to your face?"

"My face?"

"Yes; I suppose it is your face!" said Gordon Gay gravely. "Did it happen in a railway smash, or did a six-inch gun go off when you were squinting down the muzzle, old chap?"

"Very sad!" commented Carboy, shaking his head and regarding the new fellow pityingly. "I'm afraid you'll have to wear a mask at St. Jim's. And you really ought to walk backwards—not such a shock then to the people you meet!"

And Gay & Co. chuckled.

Desmond Kildare frowned, and his smile faded. He was not the fellow to object to a little leg-pulling, but he didn't quite like the way in which Gay & Co. were poking fun at him.

"Funny, aren't you?" he remarked coolly. "I hope they aren't all as funny as you at St. Jim's. If they are I shall imagine I've made a mistake and been sent to a home for idiots!"

"But, my dear fellow, your face—"

"You let my face alone," said Desmond pleasantly. "Otherwise I may be tempted to alter your features a bit!"

"Dear me!" said Gay, with a sigh. "The new chap sounds offended, you fellows! Such ingratitude! After us meeting him like this—"

"My dear chap, I didn't ask you to meet me, did I?" said Desmond Kildare calmly.

"And my dear old teapot, don't worry!" said Gay airily. "We haven't come to meet you, old son!"

"Then what—" began Kildare, staring.

"We happened to spot you wandering about like a lost lamb, and thought we'd warn you—"

"Warn me?"

"Yes—against the Grammarians!" said Gay, lowering his voice impressively. "I suppose you didn't know there was a rival school near St. Jim's? Well, there is, and the chaps there are hot stuff—scorchers, in fact. They're up against St. Jim's, and if they can get hold of a St. Jim's new chap they'll rag him no end. See?"

"Oh, I didn't know—"

"I can see you didn't!" said the Grammarian joker. "If you'll take my tip you'll steer clear of any fellows wearing red-and-white caps. Have nothing to do with them, and if they do happen to stop you, dot 'em in the eye—that's my advice. And whatever you do, don't go with them if they want you to. See?"

"Yes, but—"

"That's all, then! Steer clear of fellows wearing red-and-white caps, Kildare! Come on, you fellows—I can see this new chap can take care of himself," said Gay confidently, and he led his smiling chums away, and they left the station.

The new fellow stared after them, not a little puzzled, but far from suspecting that the fellows he had been speaking to were Grammarians themselves. But he was feeling disappointed and depressed. He had been told that someone would meet him at the station, and he had been waiting nearly twenty minutes now. He was just deciding to leave the station and wait no longer when three fellows came hurrying on to the platform, their faces flushed and heated. They were Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther, of the Shell at St. Jim's, and they had been sent to meet him, but had forgotten the time while in the village tuckshop.

Kildare did not know this, however, and, spotting their red-and-white caps, he eyed them warily as they ran over to him.

"You the new kid?" asked Tom Merry cheerily. "Sorry we're late, but—"

He paused and flushed, for instead of taking Tom's outstretched hand of welcome the new fellow bent down and stared at it.

"Soap and water—that's what it wants!" he remarked coolly.

"Why, you—you—" spluttered Tom astounded.

"If they don't dish out soap at the Grammar School," said Kildare, "then come along to St. Jim's for some!"

The Terrible Three stared, while Tom Merry himself breathed hard. He was not accustomed to cheek from new kids; he had been rather wrathful at being sent to meet the new fellow as it was; but he had been prepared to be decent to him and do the honours. And this was how the cheeky new fellow was greeting him.

"Look—look here!" he spluttered. "New kids—if you are the blessed new kid—"

"Haven't seen any animals, either kids or goats, until you three trotted into the station just now," said Desmond Kildare cheerfully. "I've heard there are plenty at the Grammar School, though!"

"Grammar School! What the thump are you gassing about?" stuttered Tom Merry. "You cheeky ass! What d'you mean?"

"Only this, old fruit; you'll have to get up a bit earlier to take me in!"

"Take you in?"

"Just that," smiled Desmond Kildare. "You see, I happen to know who you are, and I happen to be well able to take care of myself. Good-bye!"

He was walking away when Tom Merry rushed after him, grabbing him wrathfully by the shoulder and whirling him round.

"Hold on, my pippin!" he snapped. "You've a jolly sight too much cheek for a new kid. Now, listen to me, Kildare. You may think you're very clever, but this sort of thing won't do at St. Jim's. New kids who get their ears up generally get sat on—hard! If you'll take my tip you'll keep your silly cheek and swank to yourself!"

"Thanks! Anything else?"

"Yes!" snapped Tom, holding his wrath in with an effort. "You may fancy yourself because you're Kildare's relative, but though we think no end of our skipper we shan't stand cheek from you just because of that! See? We came here prepared to welcome you—"

"I know how you intended to welcome me!" smiled Kildare, still blissfully under the delusion that he was addressing Grammarians. "But there's nothing doing, old beans! You see, I happen to know your caps—"

"Our—our caps?"

"Exactly," said Kildare, his eyes gleaming. "And this is just to show you that even a St. Jim's new kid can hold his own against your mouldy lot!"

With that, before the Terrible Three even knew what was happening, the strange new fellow had snatched their caps off and flung them through the open window of the stationmaster's little office.

Then he bolted for the exit, while a terrific yell of fury followed him from the astounded and enraged Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 2.

A Bad Start!

OUT in the sleepy High Street Desmond Kildare glanced behind him, and then chuckled and slowed down as he saw he was not being followed—yet. Evidently the capless trio were finding it difficult to get their caps again from the stationmaster's office.

The new boy was feeling very pleased with himself.

He had known nothing of the rivalry between the local Grammar School and St. Jim's—had not even known there was a Grammar School. But now he knew he was prepared to do his bit, and he congratulated himself on being able to score over the enemy on his first day at St. Jim's. It would be something to relate to his new chums at St. Jim's when he arrived there, at all events.

Musing thus, Desmond Kildare walked, a trifle hastily it must be admitted, along the High Street. He hadn't had the faintest idea which direction he ought to take, but he felt it necessary in the circumstances to get clear of the station as soon as possible.

He smiled a little as he sighted four juniors walking towards him. Three of them were wearing the now familiar red-and-white caps, but the fourth wore a gleaming silk hat, which was, like the gallant knights of old, stainless and above reproach.

The four were Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth at St. Jim's.

But Desmond Kildare did not know that, and he smiled grimly, and eyed them warily as he had done the Terrible Three.

"Hallo!" remarked Jack Blake, sighting the new fellow. "That looks like the new chap—old Tommy must have missed him!"

"It is—it are!" chuckled Herries. "I can see his giddy initials on his handbag—'D. K.'"

"Going into the Shell, I believe," commented Blake. "Bit of bad luck, for him, of course, being a measly Shell-fish. Still, we'll make his giddy acquaintance. Must be a decent kid if he's old Kildare's cousin, what?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

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The four planted themselves in the new fellow's path, and smiled at him agreeably, but with the loftiness they usually bestowed upon new kids!

"Hallo!" exclaimed Blake affably. "Aren't you the new chap—Kildare's cousin?"

"Hallo!" rejoined Desmond, just as affably. "And aren't you the four freaks of Rylcombe?"

"Eh?"

"Bai Jove!"

Blake & Co. stared.

"Wha-what did you say, kid?" gasped Blake, going quite red. "What did you call us?"

"Four freaks!" gasped Herries, glaring. "He called us that—a rotten new kid!"

"Yaas, wathah! Weally, Kildare—"

"You—you cheeky new bouncer!" spluttered Blake. "I suppose you think you're funny—"

"Not at all," said Kildare coolly. "You seemed to know me, and I seemed to remember you—I think I've seen you somewhere before—in cages at the Zoo."

"Look—look here—"

"Too painful, old fruit! In any case, I've no monkey-nuts, so it's no good expecting— Oh, my hat!"

There was a sound of running feet behind, and the new fellow looked round in sudden alarm. As he expected, it was the Terrible Three.

"Stop him!" came in a furious howl from Tom Merry as he came tearing up. "Hold that new rotter, Blake!"

"Collar him!" roared Lowther.

It was the time for action now, and not words. Desmond Kildare acted swiftly. He knocked aside Gussy's restraining hand, butted Blake in the waistcoat with his handbag, and made a blind rush, sending Herries and Digby sprawling. Jumping after him, Arthur Augustus tripped over Herries' rather big feet, and went headlong on his aristocratic nose, his glimmering topper rolling in the mud of the gutter.

Then the new fellow flew for his life.

He was hampered, however, by his handbag, and round the first corner of the winding High Street he glanced quickly about him, realising that only strategy could save him if pursued—as he undoubtedly would be.

Sighting a small confectioner's shop, he dashed inside and closed the door. It happened to be the village tuck-shop, and, ordering a ginger-beer from the startled Mother Murphy, Kildare took it behind the partition and sat down at one of the little tables.

He chuckled as he sipped his cooling drink, but his face changed abruptly as the shop bell tinkled again and a noisy crowd tramped into the little shop.

"Oh, my hat!" he murmured.

He recognised the voices easily enough. His strategy had been unavailing—it was Tom Merry & Co., and from their voices they sounded very wrathily indeed.

Kildare peeped through the curtain over the doorway of the partition, and grinned faintly as he recognised the heated faces of the fellows he still believed to be Grammarians. But it was soon clear that they little dreamed he was so near to them.

"Never mind!" Tom Merry was growling wrathfully. "He's given us the slip now, but we'll get him at St. Jim's!"

Desmond Kildare gave a start at hearing that. Why did the chap speak of St. Jim's like that, he wondered. Was it possible they were St. Jim's fellows, after all?

"Oh crumbs!" murmured the new fellow.

The juniors ordered ginger-beer, and Desmond Kildare could not help chuckling as he heard the uncomplimentary remarks concerning himself.

"Blessed if I can understand it!" Tom Merry was resuming. "The kid must be a regular worm! I offered him my hand, and instead of shaking as any decent fellow would have done, he advised me to use soap-and-water on it. Check? I call it swank, not just harmless check! He's a cocky little sweep if you ask me!"

Naturally, Tom Merry, being the junior skipper of St. Jim's, was incensed beyond measure at being treated so off-handedly and impudently by a mere "new kid."

"Must fancy himself just because he's Kildare's thumping relative!" said Herries. "I'll fancy him when I get hold of the rotter!"

"Yaas, wathah! The woung wuffian has uttably wuined my new toppah besides causin' me to come a fwrightful cwoppah!" snorted Arthur Augustus, who was mopping his injured nasal organ. "I shall give him a feachful thwashin'—"

"Thumped me in the bread-basket!" snorted Blake.

"Sent me spinning!" said Digby excitedly.

"What about us?" demanded Lowther. "Bunged our

caps into the stationmaster's office. Mine's smothered in ink—it sent an inkpot flying, and mucked up some papers. The giddy stationmaster chased us out—he was raging. It was lucky we managed to get our caps back.”

“We'll smash him!” said Manners.
 “Too cocky by a long way!” said Blake. “But we'll make him toe the line—we'll put him in his place at St. Jim's!”

“Yaas, wathah! The wottah's impudence was quite uncalled for, you know!”

“Seems a queer sort of worm altogether!” said Herries. “My hat! Supposing he turns out like that relative of old Ratty's who came here! Chap who used to sneak to his uncle about the chaps—you remember? This chap may go sneaking to old Kildare—”

“Kildare isn't like old Ratty, though,” said Blake, shaking his head. “Old Kildare would boot him hard if he tried that game!”

“And we'd boot him a jolly sight harder!” remarked Tom Merry grimly. “Still, this chap's shaping badly so far—too thumping cocky for a new kid, by a long way.”

“Yaas, wathah!”
 “Oh crumbs!” murmured Desmond Kildare, in deep dismay.

If he had any doubts as to who these St. Jim's fellows were they had vanished now. Obviously they were St. Jim's fellows, after all. He had made a big mistake. It was all clear to him now, and he groaned. The fellows he had met first must have been Grammarians, and they had pulled his leg fairly. He had been far too sure of himself—far too clever. No wonder those chaps were wrathful and disgusted.

The new fellow felt like kicking himself as he saw how easily he had allowed himself to be taken in by the cheery Gordon Gay & Co.

None the less, he could not help grinning as he heard Tom Merry & Co. discussing him. So they thought him a cocky and a frightful worm, did they? And they expected him to go sneaking to Kildare, his cousin! Why not let them go on expecting that? Actually Desmond Kildare, if a trifle cocksure and independent, was a decent fellow. He was also a great practical joker, and he saw a chance now of pulling the august legs of Tom Merry & Co.

He chuckled deeply and his eyes glimmered as he peered again through the curtains. Besides the thought of a little leg-pulling, at the back of his mind was a feeling of resentment that Tom Merry & Co. should even suggest that he was a crawling worm who might sneak to his cousin, the skipper of St. Jim's. Well, as they seemed to expect it, he would play up to their expectations, and extract a little enjoyment out of the situation!

That was the sudden scheme that came into the new fellow's mind then. It was a somewhat dangerous scheme, had he only realised it, especially after what had already happened. After all, Tom Merry & Co. could scarcely be blamed for taking that view of his peculiar behaviour since he had arrived. But Desmond Kildare—being rather a cocksure and thoughtless youth—did not see that.

He got his opportunity to “play up” sooner than he had expected. Some movement of the curtains suddenly attracted Blake's attention, and, with the sudden suspicion that Grammarians were in the inner room, he sprang to the curtain and dragged it aside.

There was a roar as the new fellow was revealed, a cool grin on his rather cheeky features.

“It's Kildare!”
 “It's that blessed new chap!”
 “Listening to us, the cheeky rotter!”
 “Yaas, wathah!”

“Collar him!” yelled Herries wrathfully.
 “Leggo!” yelled the new fellow, struggling now. “Leggo, or I'll tell—I'll tell my cousin!”
 “Pass me that full siphon there, Blake, and those tarts!”
 “What-ho!”
 “Look here, hold on!” shrieked Kildare, in sudden alarm.
 “I was only— Stop, you asses! I tell you— Grooogh!”

Siz-z-z-z-zzz!
 A stream of lemonade brought his protests to a spluttering end. Tom Merry & Co. were astounded, little dreaming that the new fellow was merely pulling their legs. They



Desmond Kildare butted Blake in the waistcoat with his handbag and made a bolt for it!

proceeded to give the new fellow his first lesson by sousing him in lemonade, and rubbing jam-tarts over his features and down the back of his neck.

He yelled and struggled, but he yelled and struggled in vain.

“That'll do for a beginning,” panted Tom Merry at last. “Now he's got something to tell his giddy cousin! Out with him! Pitch the rotten worm out on his neck!”
 “Heah, heah!”

In a struggling, drenched heap the hapless practical joker was hustled through the little shop and flung out into the street. He landed in a heap on the pavement, and Tom Merry & Co. left him there and went back into the shop to settle the damages with the alarmed Dame Murphy.

A small, closed car happened to be passing along the High Street at the time, and a tall young man, seated by the driver, witnessed the eviction, and stared, with frowning brow, back at the figure grovelling in the gutter.

It was Eric Kildare, the skipper of St. Jim's, as a matter of fact. But young Desmond did not see him, nor would he have known him for his cousin had he done so. The car sped on, and Desmond staggered to his feet, a trifle dizzily.

“Ow, ow, ow!” he gurgled. “Oh, my hat! What a— what an ass I was! Grooogh! Never mind! I'm keeping this up, and I'll pay those merchants out by pulling their lofty legs no end. Then I'll let the joke out, and make them look awful asses!”

As he grabbed his bag, which the enraged Tom Merry & Co. had flung out after him, Desmond Kildare

chuckled feebly, and started off in search of St. Jim's. So far he had not had much of a laugh out of his leg-pulling of Tom Merry & Co. But he meant to keep it up, little dreaming what a risky game he was playing, and how he was storing up trouble for himself. All of which showed that the "lesson" Tom Merry & Co. had administered had not done him much good so far.

CHAPTER 3. Asking for It!

"A REGULAR little sweep!" sniffed Monty Lowther, as the Terrible Three sat down to tea in Study No. 10. "Who'd have thought it?"

"Blessed if I can understand it!" confessed Tom Merry, frowning. "He looks a decent enough chap! But—"

"He doesn't jolly well speak or act like one, anyway!" snorted Manners. "I bet he tells old Kildare how we handled him—if he hasn't done so already!"

"You bet he will!" assented Lowther. "If he does—"
"I hope he won't!" said Tom seriously. "I'm thumping disappointed in the chap, but I'm ready to give him every chance of proving it was just a bit of swank, and that he'll improve."

It was a forlorn hope. Scarcely had Tom spoken when a tap came to the door and Kildare looked in, his face grim.

"I asked you kids to meet my cousin at the station, Merry!" he said, coming to the point at once. "I dropped on you for the job because I believed you would make the kid welcome and do what you could for him!"

"We were quite ready to do that, Kildare!" said Tom briefly.

"Yet instead of being decent to the kid, you knocked him about, and acted like hooligans towards him in Rylcombe!" said Kildare curtly. "I must say I never expected it from you, Merry!"

"He asked for it!" said Tom.
"Fairly begged for it!" assented Manners. "The kid—"
"You might have made allowances for the kid being new, anyway!" said Kildare sharply. "I can't punish you for being rude and ill-natured to my cousin—as you apparently were—but I can punish you for behaving like hooligans in a public street. You'll each do me a hundred lines for that. If you've anything to say—"

Tom Merry & Co. had nothing to say. They were not the fellows to put the blame on the new fellow's shoulders, had they wanted to. In any case, a hundred lines was a light punishment for brawling in Rylcombe High Street.

Kildare waited a moment, and then with a nod he went out, closing the door behind him with unnecessary violence. Apparently he was "rattled" at the reception given to his cousin by the juniors. The Terrible Three looked at each other eloquently as he went.

"Well, that's torn it!" gasped Lowther. "The kid's sneaked!"

"No doubt about that!" said Manners. "Oh, my hat!"

Tom merry nodded, his face dark. So busy had the juniors been at the job of "chucking out" the new fellow from Mother Murphy's shop that none of them had seen the car passing—nor did they dream that Kildare himself had seen them. They naturally jumped at once to the conclusion that Desmond Kildare had, as he himself had put it, "told his cousin!"

"And to think he's coming in the Shell!" groaned Tom Merry. "That little beast Mellish in the Fourth is bad enough at times. But this new chap licks him!"

"Rotten!" sniffed Lowther gloomily. "Still, we'll soon knock it out of him. Hallo, come in, Blake! You chaps heard the latest?"

Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus marched into the study, all of them looking very serious and more than a little wrathful.

"If you mean about that snivelling little sneak, Kildare—yes, we have!" snapped Blake. "Old Kildare's just been to see us—gave us a hundred each for larking in Rylcombe, and slanged us for being unblooming kind to his thumping cousin. That it?"

"On the nail!" said Tom Merry, nodding. "Nice, isn't it? The kid must have peached, of course! What'd you fellows think about it?"

"We want to know what you're going to do about it?" said Herries heatedly. "We're not standing that sort of thing at St. Jim's!"

"Blessed if I know what we can do, though—except bar the chap," said Tom Merry uneasily. "Anyway, let the chap rip, I say. After all, there's some excuse for him—he's

been abroad and doesn't understand! Is any case, no'll soon learn it doesn't pay—"

Tom broke off as another tap came to the door. This time it proved to be Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House. Behind him was Desmond Kildare.

"Am I interrupting a committee meeting?" said Mr. Railton in his pleasant, cheery way. "This is Kildare, the new fellow, Merry!"

"We've already met him, sir!" said Tom.
"Oh, indeed!" said the Housemaster, raising his eyebrows a trifle at the tone Tom used. "Then a formal introduction is not necessary! I am placing Kildare in this study for a short time Merry—until he can be accommodated elsewhere."

"In—in this study!" ejaculated Tom, utterly taken aback, while Lowther and Manners fairly jumped. "But—but—"

"I know the quarters are already somewhat cramped," said the master with a smile. "But you must make room for him for a time, my boys. I trust you will pull along together."

And with a nod the Housemaster withdrew, leaving the new fellow with them.

There was a silence as the door closed.
Desmond Kildare was smiling coolly, and he appeared to be quite unconcerned and unaware of the general hostility. The Terrible Three were eyeing him almost wolfishly. It had seemed bad enough to have the new fellow in the Shell Form. But in Study No. 10—

"Well, you chaps are not very eloquent with your words of welcome," remarked the new fellow at length. "It's rather rough luck for me, being shoved in here, of course. But I'm ready to stand it, and make the best of it."

"Oh, great pip!" gasped Digby. "He—he's ready to stand it and make the best of it. Talk about cheek!"

Lowther almost exploded.
"You—you cheeky rotter!" he hooted. "Think we're going to stand it, though? Not likely! We're not having a blessed sneak is here with us."

"Why not clear out, then, and leave the study to me!" suggested Kildare pleasantly. "Much nicer for me, of course!"

"You—you—" spluttered Lowther.
"You—you—" gasped Manners. "Smash the cheeky cad! Kick him out, you fellows!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, keeping his own temper in check with an effort. "Now, listen to me, new kid—"

"Cut it short, then, if you must wag your chin!" said Kildare with a sigh. "And don't forget my cousin's skipper here—"

"You—your cousin—"
"Yes, old bean! I don't want to have to complain to him about being bored as well as bullied, you know!"

"Bai Jove!"
Tom Merry looked suddenly and suspiciously at the new fellow. His face was quite serious, but, for the moment, Tom had the sudden suspicion that he was pulling their legs, after all. The thought of his having "sneaked" to Kildare, however, swept the brief suspicion away, and Tom's eyes glinted.

"I've stood enough cheek from you!" he snapped. "That's quite enough—I'm warning you! Now listen; the fact that Eric Kildare is your cousin cuts no ice with us. We're prepared to treat you decently if you behave decently. But any more sneaking and tale-bearing to your cousin, and you're for it. The fellows here won't stand it. Got that?"

"Quite!"
"You've sneaked to him once—"

"Have I?" ejaculated Desmond Kildare.
"Of course! You know jolly well that you have! Kildare's punished us all for that rumpus in Rylcombe this afternoon!"

"And you think I've told him?" exclaimed Desmond, flushing.

"We know you have—you must have done!"

"I jolly well haven't!" said the new fellow warmly. "I've only seen him for a couple of minutes, and I never mentioned a word of it, you silly owls! Think I'm a rotten sneak—"

He paused, suddenly realising that he himself had purposely led them to suppose that he was a sneak.

"Oh, my hat!" he went on. "You think—"
"We don't only think—we know!" said Blake, his lip curling.

"I tell you I didn't!"
"You jolly well did!" hooted Manners. "Who the thump did, if you didn't? You needn't add lies—"

"Add what?" asked Desmond Kildare, his eyes glinting dangerously.

"Lies!" snapped Manners heatedly.

(Continued on page 8.)

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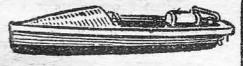
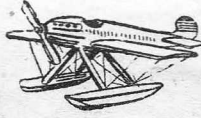
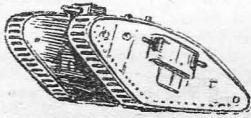
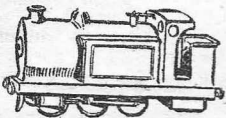
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'Dizzy' Desmond-Daredevil!

(Continued from page 6.)

"You'll take that back!" said Kildare. "I don't mind you calling me a sneak—it makes me smile. But if you call me a liar—"

"Well, I'll take it back!" snorted Manners. "If you say you didn't sneak—"

"I do!"

"Well, I don't believe you. You threatened to sneak, and you kept your word," said Manners deliberately. "If you deny it, you're a rotten liar as well as a sneak! That's that!"

"And that's that!" answered the new fellow calmly; and he struck Manners across the face with his flat hand.

It was more than enough. The next moment they were scrapping furiously.

"Let 'em go it!" said Blake quickly, as Tom Merry looked like interfering. "A jolly good hiding will teach him a lesson!"

Tom nodded grimly, and the fight went on, the others jumping out of the way. All agreed that a good licking would do the bumptious new fellow a world of good. They took it for granted that a sneak would never put up much of a scrap. But they got a surprise. It was Manners who got the hiding.

At the end of a wild, whirling fight, Harry Manners lay flat on his back, staring dizzily at the ceiling. One eye was bunged up, his nose was streaming red, and he looked what he was—thoroughly beaten. The new fellow appeared to be scarcely touched, and he was still quite cool as he waited for Manners to rise.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Chuck it, Harry! You've had enough, old chap!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"

"I—I'm licked!" panted Manners, scarcely realising the bitter truth. "Oh crumbs! Ow, ow! He—he's licked me, that rotten sneak!"

"You asked for it," said Kildare, looking somewhat troubled now. "I didn't want to scrap with anyone. I—I've been acting the goat, I'm afraid," he added, looking abruptly at Tom Merry. "I'll explain now—"

"You've no need to explain everything!" snapped Tom Merry, pointing to the door. "No explanation is necessary. You've already shown us the kind of worm you are. Get out! We can't pitch you out altogether, I suppose. But if you're wise you'll clear out now."

"You won't hear—"

"Get out!" said Lowther, looking ugly. "You've licked Manners, but I'm ready to start on you!"

Desmond Kildare shrugged.

"Any time you like!" he said, with rather bitter curtness. "And one at a time, please. As for getting out: I've been shown in here by a Beak, and I'm staying!"

"Are you?" yelled Lowther excitedly. "We'll see about that!"

And he rushed in, eager to avenge Manners' defeat—if he could. But Tom Merry felt it time to interfere.

"Hold on, Lowther! That's enough! No more fights in here! Now, you cocky new fellow, are you going out, or not?"

"Not!"

"Then we'll put you out!" snapped Tom, his eyes glinting. "If you don't like it, you can go and sneak again to your cousin, you sweep! Out with him, chaps!"

In the circumstances the wisest course for the new fellow was to go. But he was an obstinate youth, and wisdom was not his strong point. He showed fight at once, and a whirling struggle followed, ending as it could only end.

Against seven fellows his defence was hopeless, and he went out with a rush at last, and fell like a sack of coke in the passage. The door closed, and he sat up dazedly and stared at it. And it was then that it began to dawn in upon the mind of Desmond Kildare that his leg-pulling pretence of being a sneak was not going to be so funny as it had at first seemed—for him.

Some of Desmond's baggage had already been carted to Study No. 10, and he himself had brought his books along. But obstinate as he had been before, he had no intention of staying now where he knew he was not wanted.

Remembering that he had seen an empty room higher up the passage, he carted his belongings there, and coolly made himself at home. It was a room known by the juniors as "Nobody's Study," and it had been untenanted

for several terms. The apartment was almost bare, save for a table and a couple of chairs, and was a very cheerless place indeed.

CHAPTER 4.

Gagged and Bound!

IN the long, dark passage that led to Nobody's Study, Trimble paused to devour a cake. It was a very big cake, and a scrumptious cake. But it did not take Baggy long to travel through it. He had just finished it, and was contemplating the question of a visit to the new fellow when the door of Nobody's Study opened, and Kildare came out.

He grinned and nodded to Baggy, and disappeared towards the Shell studies.

"Oh, good!" murmured Baggy, as he vanished. "The beast's gone down to the Common-room, I bet! Here goes!"

He scuttled into Nobody's Study. The next moment the new fellow's tuckbox was at his mercy.

Desmond Kildare had been proud of the contents of that tuckbox. Whoever had packed it had done so without stint, and with good taste. The new boy had looked forward to sharing the good things with Tom Merry & Co., or decent fellows like them. In that he had been disappointed. Now it looked as if Baggy Trimble was about to relieve him of the chance to share them with anybody.

Baggy's eyes glistened as he blinked into the tuckbox. He licked his fat lips in anticipation. But that was as far as he got towards realisation.

Just then a footstep sounded out in the passage. Trimble knew who it must be, of course. It was that new beast returning, after all.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Baggy.

There was no way of escape. The passage ended at Nobody's Study. It was shut off away from the rest of the studies. But there was the lower cupboard door standing invitingly half open, and into this scuttled Baggy, with a gasp.

Crouching down, he dragged the door almost shut, holding it by his fingers. It was a fairly roomy cupboard, and there was nothing in it but dust—heaps and heaps of dust. Baggy nearly filled it, however. Crouched almost double, Baggy blinked out through the crack into the room.

It was Desmond Kildare who entered the next moment—just what the beast would do, thought Baggy. What an awful sneak the fellow was! Then Baggy noted the pile of books under his arm, and realised that he had only left the room to finish his unpacking.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Baggy. "He may stick in here all the blessed night!"

The new fellow certainly seemed like staying. He finished his books and went across to the window, his hands jammed disconsolately into his pockets. But the window only looked out on to blank walls, and after looking out glumly for some moments, Desmond seated himself on a chair, and began to look through a magazine he took from his bag.

"Blow!" murmured Baggy.

He felt quite indignant about it. There the box of ripping grub stood, so near and yet so far. But a moment later thoughts of the grub were banished from Baggy's mind by a strange, rustling sound.

It came from the open window, and Desmond Kildare also heard it, and glanced towards the window. The next instant he gave a jump as again there came the rustling of ivy, and then a figure swarmed over the low window-sill and dropped down into the room.

The figure was followed by another, and then another, until six fellows were standing by the window in Nobody's Study.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Desmond Kildare, somewhat astonished. "What's this game? Do you fellows always enter other fellows' rooms at St. Jim's like this?"

The six intruders did not answer for the moment. They were obviously quite startled, and had not expected the room to be occupied. In the cupboard Baggy Trimble gave a fat grin. He had recognised the intruders as Figgins & Co., and Redfern & Co. of the New House, and he guessed it was a New House raid on the School House. Knowing the window of Nobody's Study looked out on to blank walls, the crafty New House raiders were making an unexpected raid on their enemies of the School House.

But they had not expected to find Nobody's Study occupied.

"M-my hat!" gasped Figgins, finding his voice at last. "Who the— Oh, I see! Great pip! It must be that new chap—Kildare!"



Over Mr. Ratcliff's head there swept a cascade of feathers, followed by a flood of weird-looking black mixture!

"That's my name," grinned Kildare cheerfully. "You chaps looked in to pay a call, or what?"

"Exactly!" agreed Figgins, winking at his startled chums. "But not on you, old bean. We've already heard about you. Collar the merchant, chaps!"

"What-ho!"

"Look here——"

That was as far as the new fellow got. George Figgins leaped to the door and closed it, while his followers jumped on the astonished new fellow as one man. They bumped him back into his chair, and gagged him with his own handkerchief. After which they took the cord from one of his boxes, and secured him to the chair by his arms and ankles.

"G-gug-gug!" gurgled Desmond Kildare.

"Sorry, old bean!" remarked Figgins coolly. "But you're a School House man, and must expect to be treated as an enemy. In any case, we've heard you're rather a lad for wagging your tongue a little more than is necessary—especially to the Beaks."

"A rotten sneak, I believe!" assented Redfern, eyeing the new fellow curiously. "I heard some School House men talking about him."

"Well, if he does sneak about this, it can't be helped," grinned Figgins. "Come on, sharp's the word! The enemy will be in the Common-room, I bet, and the giddy studies will be at our mercy."

Leaving the gagged and bound junior in the chair, the New House raiders departed through the doorway to do their fell work in the Shell studies, which were almost certain to be deserted at that hour in the evening. The daring raiders had chosen their time well, and it was certainly a clever move to enter the School House by the open window of Nobody's Study.

"M-mum-my hat!" mumbled Trimble, in the cupboard. "It's a raid, and all the chaps will be out of their studies! Oh, my hat!"

The thought of revealing himself, releasing the prisoner, and giving the alarm to Tom Merry & Co. did occur to Baggy, but on second thoughts he decided to lie low. Even yet a chance might come to have another go at the new fellow's tuckbox. The risk of missing a chance was too great.

He lay low. The dust by this time was making itself felt, and Baggy had more than his work cut out to prevent himself sneezing, and thus revealing himself to Desmond Kildare. That amazed youth did not understand it all yet. He had never seen any of the New House raiders before, but from their remarks he was beginning to get a glimmering of the truth. He struggled and wriggled desperately; but Figgy & Co. had taken no chances, and he struggled and wriggled in vain.

Then, quite suddenly, a firm footstep sounded outside, and the door opened and a tall senior entered the room.

It was Eric Kildare, captain of St. Jim's, and he jumped, and then stared in petrified amazement as his eyes fell upon the bound and gagged junior.

CHAPTER 5. Unfortunate!

"G-GOOD gad!" gasped Kildare.

He recognised his cousin at once, and with a few slashes of his pocket-knife, he released him, and tore the gag from his mouth.

"Gagged and bound!" exclaimed the skipper grimly. "Who did this, kid?"

Desmond Kildare said nothing.

"I went to your study to speak to you, Desmond!" said Kildare. "You weren't there, but Talbot said something

about you carting your stuff along here. But—but I didn't expect to find you like this. Who did it, kid?"

"You can't expect me to answer that!" said Desmond coolly. "It was only a lark—a bit uncomfy; but I don't mind much!"

"You don't seem to have hit it with the fellows here, so far, Desmond!" said Kildare, eyeing his cousin sharply. "Why is it, kid? I know nothing officially, of course. But I've noticed a few things, and it seems to me—"

"A-tish-hoo!"

It was a terrific sneeze, and it came from the lower cupboard.

Both Kildare and his youthful cousin almost leaped out of their skins.

"What—what—" began Kildare.

He strode to the cupboard, and wrenched open the doors, nearly dragging the startled Trimble out on his fat nose on the floor.

"Yarcoop!" howled Trimble. "Oh, crikey! I say—Leggo! It's not me! Yow!"

He yelped as Kildare's strong hand closed on his collar and he was yanked to his feet.

"What on earth were you doing in there, you fat little ass?" snorted Kildare. "Did you know he was there, Desmond?"

"Not a bit!" said Desmond, with a chuckle. "I fancy he's got his eye on my tuckbox, though!"

"Nothing of the kind!" gasped Trimble, in alarm. "I—I wasn't after your tuck at all, Kildare—wouldn't dream of such a thing! I didn't come in when you were out—I wouldn't! The—fact is, I was—was scouting!"

"What?"

"Scouting round, and keeping an eye on those New House chaps!" gasped Trimble, jumping at such a brilliant excuse.

"You—you see, I happened to know they were raiding us to-night, and so I—I slipped in there to—to track them, you know. I wasn't after the grub at all!"

"You fat young idiot, what d'you mean?" snapped Kildare, with a sharp glance at his cousin. "Trimble, did you have a hand in tying up this new fellow like this?"

"Me?" Trimble jumped. "Certainly not, Kildare! I wouldn't dare!" he gasped, in greater alarm than ever.

"If Figgy and his pals try to put it on to me—"

"Figgins—" began Kildare grimly.

"It's all right, Eric!" said Desmond Kildare hastily.

"This fat chap had nothing to do with it. In any case, it was only—"

"You ring off, young 'un!" snapped Kildare. "So it was Figgins and some New House fellows who did this, Trimble?"

"Eh? Oh, nothing of the kind, Kildare!" gasped Trimble.

"Mind, I didn't tell you that! I hope I'm not a sneak! Besides, I should get licked by Figgy if he knew I'd told, and by Tom Merry, too, even if the cheeky bounders did rag their studies. I said nothing of the kind, you know. It—it was like this. I—I just came in to speak to—to—"

"I've no time to listen to your wonderful yarns, Trimble!" said the skipper grimly, his eyes fixed on the open window.

"I fancy I can guess what has happened here, now you've mentioned those New House kids—"

"I didn't— Oh dear! I say, I didn't even mention Figgy!" gasped Trimble. "What I meant was—was—"

"Dry up, and clear, before I put my ashplant about you!"

"Oh, really, Kildare! Mind, it wasn't me that told—"

"Get out!" roared Kildare, and Trimble hurriedly got out and scuttled away, only too glad to get off so cheaply, though he had an uncomfortable feeling that he had somehow given Figgy & Co. away, and that he would not get off so cheaply if the fellows knew.

Without another glance at Desmond Kildare, the skipper of St. Jim's marched out after Trimble, and made his way to the Shell studies. He knocked sharply on the door of Study No. 10, and then twisted the knob. The door was locked on the inside, but from within came sundry bangs and crashes, and subdued chuckles.

Kildare knocked again—harder this time. A silence fell then.

"Open this door at once!" called Kildare sharply. "Figgins, if you are inside there, open this door! You hear me?"

"Oh, my hat!"

There was a startled exclamation within the study. Obviously Kildare's voice was enough, however, for the next moment the door-lock clicked, and Kildare thrust the door wide and marched in.

Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen of the New House were there. Their faces were flushed and startled, and they looked utterly dismayed as Kildare eyed them grimly.

The room was upside-down, and had been thoroughly ragged. The table was upset, with the chairs, fireirons, and many other things piled on top of it. Figgins was just in the act of tipping coal from the scuttle into the table-drawer, while Patty Wynn was busy at the study cupboard—apparently doctoring the foodstuffs there, for mustard was in one hand and the pepper-pot in another.

What Figgins & Co. were doing there did not need much working out.

"Very nice!" was Kildare's sarcastic comment. "So this is why I found a School House fellow bound and gagged in Nobody's Study. I guessed this was the game the moment I knew you were on the job, Figgins!"

"Oh dear! Only—only a lark, Kildare!"

"Quite so! But I think juniors are not allowed out of their Houses after lock-up unless by special permission of their Housemaster, Figgins. Did you—er—did you ask Mr. Rateliff his permission to leave your House, break into the School House, gag and bind a School House fellow, and then come and rag a junior study?" asked Kildare pleasantly.

"Ahem! Nunno! You—you see—"

"I do see!" said Kildare. "You'll now set to work to put this room to rights, Figgins. Afterwards, you'll accompany me back to the New House, and we'll see what Mr. Rateliff has to say to this. Get busy!"

Figgins & Co. groaned and got busy. They finished at last, and by that time a crowd of grinning School House men were round the doorway, looking on with great interest.

"That'll do!" said Kildare at last. "I'll give you five minutes to get back to the New House, my lads!"

He walked away, evidently to make his report to Mr. Rateliff.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came up just then, and pushed into the study, their faces full of wrath.

"Well, you—you cheeky rotters!" gasped Tom Merry, glaring round the study, which still showed signs of the

THE MISADVENTURES OF THE WIGGA-WIGGA BOYS



upheaval. "My hat! Won't we just make you sit up for this, Figgy!"

"Old Ratty will do that!" groaned Figgins, too dismal even to grin. "Don't talk about getting your own back! Won't Ratty do enough? Besides, we've put things a bit right again!"

"A bit right!" gasped Manners. "Look at the state of the study even now, you awful sweeps! Why, you—you—you—"

"Look at the ink and soot!" snorted Lowther. "Oh, you—you rotters! I suppose Kildare came along and caught you at it!"

"Kildare! Oh!" gasped Figgins, suddenly remembering. "It was that new chap—his blessed cousin! He gave us away, the rotten toad!"

"That new chap gave you away?" gasped Tom Merry, startled.

Figgins nodded, his face suddenly flushing with anger. The warfare between the two Houses at St. Jim's was always good-natured warfare, and whatever either side did, they never dreamed of giving the game away. They would suffer any jape, or even outrage, without complaining—and certainly without dreaming of sneaking.

"That—that new chap sneaked!" said Blake, chipping in. "Oh, my hat! What d'you mean, Figgy?"

Figgins explained how they had left the new fellow gagged and bound in Nobody's Study, and told what Kildare had said.

"He must have done," said Kerr grimly. "Kildare found him, and he must have told. Kildare as much as said so!"

"Bai Jove!"

"The—the frightful cad!"

"The awful sneak!"

"Thank goodness we haven't a chap like him over in the New House, anyway!" finished Figgins wrathfully. "We—we'd boil him in oil, the sweep! Anyway, our number's up! Come on, chaps—no good keeping Kildare waiting!"

The New House raiders tramped out without a hand raised to stop them. Their game was up—they had been caught in the act, and the School House fellows let them go. Revenge for the raid could wait. At the moment the raiders were likely to get enough punishment from their own Housemaster. Breaking bounds after lock-up was alone a serious offence. Figgy & Co. were undoubtedly "for it."

And a School House fellow had given them away—had sneaked on them. That was the galling point with the School House fellows. They knew they would never hear the last of it from their New House rivals. They would rather the raiders had escaped a thousand times than that. Certainly Desmond Kildare was a new fellow. None the less, he had disgraced the House. In sneaking, the new fellow had committed the unforgivable offence.

That evening the School House—and the New House, for that matter—buzzed with the news.

Trimble soon heard it, and, having heard it, Trimble became curiously silent—a remarkable thing for Trimble, who usually liked to hear his own voice!

But Trimble was silent now. Much better for the new fellow to stand the blame than Baggy Trimble—that was Trimble's view. Had he not been involved in the matter Baggy would have been making his views known in no uncertain manner. But as he was involved the fat youth showed a curious reluctance to discuss the subject. If the new fellow wanted to take the blame, then Baggy had no

objection whatever. After all, it was the new fellow's fault. He should not have been in Nobody's Study at all and then it wouldn't have happened.

That was Baggy's considered view of the situation. He did not intend to change that view if he could help it.

Meanwhile, Desmond Kildare was not given an opportunity of denying the charge, having remained in Nobody's Study until bed-time. But when he was going up to bed Tom Merry sighted him.

"We'll give the chap the chance to deny it, anyway!" said Tom. "Fair play's a jewel!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

They stopped Desmond Kildare.

"You know what happened this evening, Kildare?" said Tom Merry quietly. "Some New House chaps raided our study. I believe they tied you up and gagged you."

"That's so!" assented Desmond curtly. "They took me by surprise. If I'd known who they were and what they were up to, I should have had a go at them!"

"Never mind that!" said Tom. "The point is, did you give them away to Kildare, our skipper?"

"Eh? Did I sneak, you mean?"

"Just that! Kildare released you, I believe! Did you tell him then who had done it and where they were?"

Desmond Kildare started. Quite suddenly he understood the black looks he was being subjected to on all sides. He had imagined it was owing to the earlier happenings. But now—

It was the fat chap who had told, of course. But—Kildare's eyes glinted as he grasped the position. Once again Tom Merry and his friends had jumped to the conclusion that he was the sneak.

"You think I've told my cousin about those fellows?" he asked, in a calm tone.

"Of course! It's pretty clear! But you've not had the chance to deny it yet, I believe!" said Tom.

"I haven't. You're giving me the chance now, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"You gave me the chance before, I think!" said Desmond coolly. "And when I denied it you refused to believe me. If I trouble to deny it now, will you believe me?"

Tom Merry coloured.

"In the circumstances I don't suppose we should!" he admitted hesitatingly.

"Then what's the good of asking me to deny it?" asked Desmond Kildare airily. "Why waste your valuable time, old beans?"

And he went on up the stairs, Tom Merry & Co. fairly blinking after him.

"Cheek!" gasped Blake.

"Swank! The conceited rotter!" said Herries heatedly. "The cad doesn't care twopence what anyone thinks of him. He ought to be taught a thumping lesson, though!"

"He will get his lesson before we've done with him!" said Tom Merry grimly. "But—but there's old Kildare, and the kid's his cousin! We'll give him enough rope, anyway. To pot with the chap!"

That was the general view of the situation. Though it was Desmond's first night at St. Jim's he would undoubtedly have been dealt with in the dormitory by the angry juniors. But he was Kildare's cousin, and for the sake of the skipper it was generally agreed to leave the new chap severely alone—for the present. It was a

SHARING THE REWARD!



punishment that hurt the proud new fellow far more than a ragging, however, and his airy unconcern was, had they only known it, merely a stubborn pretence.

CHAPTER 6. The Return Raid!

"QUIET!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Shut up, Gussy! Quiet, you born idiot!"

"I was merely wemarkin'—"

"Then don't! Keep your giddy remarks for the daytime, not the giddy middle of the night!" said Blake, in sulphurous accents. "Your thumping voice is like the cracked clapper of a bell!"

"Bai Jove! I uttahly wefuse to admit that my voice—"

"Oh, gag him, someone!" groaned Blake. "Talk about the running brook—"

"Weally, Blake, you are gassin' far more than anyone else!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "I was merely wemarkin'—"

"Will you dry up?" hissed Blake.

"But—"

"Shurrup, or we'll tie you to your bed and leave you!"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus relapsed into sulky silence, and followed with the rest as Blake led the way out of the dark dormitory. Actually silence was very necessary indeed, for the hour was late, and the young gentlemen of the Fourth at St. Jim's should have been fast asleep, instead of just starting out on a raiding expedition on the New House.

"All serene, you chaps!"

From the dark doorway of the Shell dormitory a crowd of dim figures emerged and joined them. Tom Merry showed up and answered Jack Blake.

"All serene! Trimble and Mellish asleep?"

"Yes. What about that new chap? Hope to goodness you haven't wakened him, or we're done!" said Blake anxiously.

"He's awake!" said Tom, with a grunt. "Woke up a moment ago, but he hasn't got wind of the game—can't have done! We shall have to risk his letting anything out, anyway!"

"Oh, blow!" snorted Blake. "Just like you Shell-fish to wake the rotter up! Anyway, let's get on! We'll smash him this time if he does sneak!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The raiding party moved off almost silently, making for the lower box-room window. They went with the greatest caution, for breaking out of one's House in the middle of the night was a very serious matter indeed. The authorities of St. Jim's would take a far more serious view of the breaking-out than they did of the rivalry between the two Houses.

In the Fourth dormitory Mellish and Trimble slumbered on, but in the Shel dormitory one fellow only was left, and he was wide awake. It was Desmond Kildare, and he sat up in his bed, hugging his knees and wondering. He had awakened to find dim figures dressing all about him and his surprised questioning had met with no response. He was not surprised at that. Since his first day scarcely a Lower School fellow had exchanged a dozen words with him. It was not pleasant—and it was growing more and more unpleasant. Yet he still kept a stiff upper lip—and he refused to plead or attempt to explain. He knew he was a fool for not attempting to right himself with his fellows. Resentment and stubborn pride only prevented him doing that.

But he wondered what was on now.

He had heard whispering and stealthy confabulation all day, and had suspected some move against himself, for he was not blind, of course, to the general enmity. But they had cleared out and left him alone in the dormitory. Was it a raid on the New House? How he would have enjoyed taking part in one—a chum of Tom Merry & Co. He gritted his teeth as he realised why they had kept him out of it. They were afraid of him sneaking to his cousin, of course! Then it occurred to him that it was quite likely they had gone to rag Nobody's Study as a mark of their objection to him!

He could scarcely believe that, but the thought made him slip out of bed and creep to the door. All was silent out in the passage as he stepped out and looked towards the stairs, hesitating. And just then, as luck would have it, a candle flashed and a tall form appeared before him.

The new fellow shot back into the dormitory on the instant, and slipped swiftly back into bed, not daring to close the door again after him. It was a slip that caused his undoing. For it was a prefect—Darrell of the Sixth, in

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fact, and he already fancied he had sighted a white figure as he came along, and then—his eyes fell on the partly opened door.

It was enough. Being a prefect, Darrell stopped to investigate. He was tired, having been working late for an exam, but he was not too tired to do his duty.

He entered the dormitory, flashed his light around, and saw the rows of empty beds at once.

Desmond Kildare lay still, almost trembling with anxiety. If the game was up, it was all his fault. The game proved to be up. Darrell sighted the new fellow.

"You can sit up, kid!" he said grimly. "I knew I spotted someone shooting into this dorm! Up you get!"

Kildare sat up, overcome with dismay.

"Where are the rest?" demanded Darrell.

"Eh? The—the rest?" gasped Kildare, looking round him. "My hat! Aren't they here?"

"You know thundering well they aren't!" snapped the prefect. "Out with it—where are they?"

"Goodness knows!" said the new boy. "Perhaps sleeping under the beds for a change. There's no accounting for tastes!"

"I want no cheek!" said Darrell grimly. "This wants looking into! We'll see what the skipper has to say to this, my pippin!"

And he hurried from the room. Instantly Desmond Kildare leaped out of bed and hurried cautiously in his wake. He was just in time to see Darrell disappear inside the captain's room, and the next second the new fellow had reached the spot.

Inside he heard Darrell calling softly to his cousin, obviously trying to awaken him, and Desmond Kildare acted swiftly.

The door was ajar a few inches and without making a sound he tiptoed up to it and slipped a hand round, feeling for the key. His hand closed upon it, and the scrape of the key as it was withdrawn caused Darrell to make an exclamation and whirl round from the bed.

But the new fellow was too quick for him.

In a flash the key had been changed from the inside to the outside, and then the door closed sharply, and the key clicked home in the lock.

"Done it!" breathed Desmond Kildare. "That'll give the chaps time to get back to bed, anyway. Phew! I have it! They've gone to raid the New House!"

And, feeling thankful, indeed, that he had acted on that sudden impulse, Desmond Kildare scuttled back to bed. Had his Form-fellows gone out of the House to raid their rivals of the New House—as he felt sure now they had done—then they would not be caught out of the House by Kildare and Darrell. Of that he was assured.

But he was mistaken, unfortunately.

CHAPTER 7. The Traitor!

"WELL, I'm thumped!"

Darrell was across at the door in a flash, but he was a second too late. He rattled the door-knob angrily, but he rattled it in vain. He had just glimpsed a vague form at the door—that was all. But it was obviously a junior, and he was gone now. And he had actually had the astounding nerve to lock him in a fellow prefect's study!

Darrell was raging at the thought.

It did not occur to him for one moment that the new fellow had done it. He could only think then that the fellows who were out of their dormitory had spotted him, and had acted thus to give them the chance to get back to bed.

But the rattling of the door-knob had awakened Kildare now, and he was already out of bed.

"That you, Darrell? What the thump is the matter, man?"

Darrell told him quickly enough.

"And someone's locked the door?" asked Kildare incredulously.

"Yes—the cheeky young sweeps!"

"Good gad!" said Kildare.

Like Darrell, he was raging now—only more so. That he, the captain of St. Jim's, had been locked in his own room was something unheard of—it was astounding. It was time for the skies to fall when the skipper of St. Jim's was treated thus. Obviously something had to be done—and done quickly. The captain of St. Jim's could not be expected to take such a situation lying down. Moreover, there was Darrell, a prefect and a great man of the Sixth. Darrell was vice-captain, and a very big man in the school. And here, he was—locked in with his skipper, probably for the rest of the night—unless something was done.

Something obviously had to be done. By this time the young scoundrels of the Shell were safely tucked up in bed, no doubt giggling in a scared sort of way at what they had accomplished and the way they had "done" the prefects.

Kildare and Darrell could imagine the grins on the faces of the juniors next day.

They must get out of the humiliating situation at all costs.

The door was hopeless. Kildare was just contemplating kicking up a row to attract someone's attention, when he paused as a better idea occurred to him. The last thing he wanted to do was to awaken the school—if it could be avoided.

The moment the idea came to Kildare he acted upon it, and went to the window. He remembered that there was a wide coping that ran under the window of his room and under the windows of the other prefects' rooms. Rushden of the Sixth, a fellow prefect and one who could be trusted to keep his mouth shut, slept in the room next door. It would be an easy matter to awaken him by rapping on the window.

The next moment Kildare had raised the sash softly, and was leaning out. By sheer chance he happened to look downwards into the moonlit quad, and it was then that he saw it—a string of dim figures just making their way alongside the wall below him, and in the shadows.

Kildare nearly jumped out of his skin, so startled was he. And then he understood—or believed he did.

"Look, Darrell!" he breathed. "Down below—quick!" Darrell peered out and looked. He started violently, and then he likewise understood.

"So that's it!" he breathed, his eyes glimmering. "Well, the daring young scamps! They've been out—raiding those young villains in the New House, I bet! It's serious, Kildare!"

Kildare nodded. It was serious—very serious from their point of view. It was likely to be serious from the raiders' point of view also now the game was known!

For an instant Kildare waited, watching, until the last dim form had disappeared round the corner below, and then he slipped out of the window, and dropped carefully on to the foot-wide parapet below. It took him only a couple of seconds to reach the next door window, and he rapped sharply upon it.

Rushden was not long in answering the summons, and the moment he was awake and understood the position, he ran out into the passage in his pyjamas.

Fortunately the key was in the lock—Desmond had not troubled to take it away—and in an instant the amazed and startled Rushden had released his fellow prefects.

Both Kildare and Darrell were fairly seething with wrath as they hurriedly explained more fully to Rushden.

"Phew! The daring young rascals!" ejaculated Rushden. "Going to rouse Railton?"

"No need!" said Kildare. "We'll take names, and report in the morning. We'll just look in both Shell and Fourth dorms to see who's there and who's absent first, though. Then I fancy I know the way they'll come in."

He led the way to the Shell dormitory, and the prefects got a shock when they discovered that the Fourth dormitory was also almost unoccupied.

"That new chap in the Shell, and Trimble, and Mellish of the Fourth!" said Darrell grimly. "No need to take names! This means a terrific row!"

"Come on!" snapped the skipper.

He led the way to the lower box-room. As they expected, they found the window slightly open, and the three prefects seated themselves on boxes and waited grimly in the darkness.

They had not to wait long. Quite suddenly Darrell gave an exclamation and pointed out through the window. Across in the New House lights could be seen twinkling. The three prefects had intended to visit the New House if the raiders did not return soon. That course was not now necessary—the alarm had obviously been given.

As a matter of fact, it was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who had given the alarm—not intentionally, of course. That unfortunate youth had tripped on the stairs and fallen headlong in the darkness, his involuntary howl soon bringing Monteith, a New House prefect, on the scene.

Fortunately, the swell of the Fourth was not seriously hurt. But the harm was done—instant flight was the only possible course for the disgusted raiders. They were seething with wrath against the clumsy Arthur Augustus as they came scudding up to the outhouse and swarmed on to the leads.

The raid had been a fiasco. They soon learned that it was far worse than a fiasco; it was a tragedy!

Blake was the first to swarm through the window, and he nearly fainted as Kildare's strong grip closed on his arm.

"All right, come along!" called Kildare to the next

fellow, who naturally hung back at the window in sudden fear. "Don't be shy and modest, Lowther! We know exactly how many fellows are out, so it's no good being retiring, my lad! The game's up!"

"Oh, my hat!" The word was passed out to the swarm outside, and it was in a very dismal state that the raiders entered the box-room one by one. The game was up—they knew it was useless to hang back. There was no escape!

"Back to bed the lot of you!" said Kildare grimly. "You've made a nice haul, Darrell, practically every fellow in the Shell and Fourth!"

"Sheer chance!" said Darrell, with a grim chuckle. "But for that new kid I should have known nothing about it. I only wish I knew who it was—"

He halted. It would be just as well not to mention further about the locking of Kildare and himself in the former's room—unless they wished to be laughed at. They had their dignity to consider, and, after all, the raiders had been caught—the ruse had failed.

A moment later the disgusted Fourth and Shell were being shepherded back to their dormitories. In the Shell dormitory Desmond Kildare was sitting up in bed, and he eyed the dismal crowd somewhat anxiously as they trooped in.

"What's happened?" he asked. "Were you fellows caught?"

"Shut up!" snapped Manners. "The less you have to say, the better for you, you howling cad!"

"You rotten sneak!" hissed George Alfred Grundy, who was almost beside himself with rage. "You wait, my pippin—just you wait! Why, I'll—"

"Silence there!" called Rushden from the doorway. "Grundy, get into bed, sharp! Another word and I'll bring my ashplant. You'll find quite enough trouble waiting for you in the morning, without asking for a bit to be going on with now. Light out in one minute from now!"

In grim silence the juniors disrobed and got into bed. The light was put out and the door closed behind the prefects. Grundy shot upright in bed again. He, at all events, was not disposed to allow the matter to rest until morning.

(Continued on next page.)

Picking 'em up all round the dial

Can you get them all on your three-valver? London Regional, Midland Regional, Cardiff, Swansea, Radio Paris, Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Vienna, Barcelona, Langenburg, Berlin, and the rest—are they all waiting on your 'speaker? It can be darned annoying to know that the folk next door are enjoying a rattling good programme which no amount of tuning will bring in to you. Bring your set up to scratch. POPULAR WIRELESS will show you how to get all the long-wave stations with perfect clarity. This excellent paper has a staff of expert contributors who will give you week by week particulars of the newest and latest developments in the world of Radio. Let POPULAR WIRELESS help you.

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"Light that candle, Tom Merry," he said, in a voice that thrilled with angry indignation. "I'm going to knock the stuffing out of that beastly new chap! You heard what Darrell said—that it was through him he tumbled to the game. Just what we might have expected. The cad's sneaked again!"

There was a deep murmur of agreement. Desmond Kildare felt suddenly the tense atmosphere of the room.

"Leave it for to-night, Grundy!" snapped Tom Merry. "We'll settle with Kildare in the morning—never fear about that!"

"I'm settling with him now!" hooted Grundy, always a very impatient fellow. "Come on, you fellows—this has gone on long enough! If Tom Merry's going to allow that cad to go on playing the traitor like this, I'm not! He'll not want to sneak again after I've done with him!"

And Grundy leaped out of bed. His example was followed by nearly every fellow in the room. Like Grundy, they could not wait. Seething with rage and disgust as they were, they wanted satisfaction now. The candle was lighted, and it had scarcely been lit when the door opened and Jack Blake, followed by a swarm of Fourth Form fellows, came into the room.

"Hallo! What's this game, Blake?" demanded Tom Merry, though he had a good idea. "Asking for more trouble?"

"Beggins for it!" snapped Blake. "But it's trouble for that new chap. We're for it, and may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. But we mean to square accounts with Kildare—here and now!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Scrag the cad!"

Tom Merry climbed out of bed. He saw that it was useless to attempt to protest. The fellows were not in the state to listen to reason. In any case Tom was as furious as any of them at what he believed to have been an act of treachery on the new fellow's part.

"Very well!" said Tom quietly. "You'd better get out of bed, Kildare!"

"I'll see to that!" said Grundy.

He caught hold of the bedclothes, and the startled, dumb-founded new fellow found himself flung out of bed, to alight with a terrific bump on the floor amidst a medley of sheets.

"Now get up and put your rotten fists up!" snorted Grundy, fairly dancing with anger. "Put 'em up, and I'll show you what's what!"

"Hold on, Grundy!" exclaimed Tom Merry sharply.

"Give the fellow a chance to speak first!"

"That's it!" said Talbot. "Fair play's a jewel! Let the chap have his say!"

Desmond Kildare staggered to his feet. His face was white, but he showed no fear. But inwardly he was raging. He understood, of course, what he was charged with. In the circumstances he could scarcely expect anything else—he saw how black things looked against him. Yet he was bitterly angry at the charge. Once again his school-fellows had jumped to conclusions without hearing a word from him.

Kildare eyed them defiantly, seemingly undisturbed by the circle of furious, hostile faces in the dim candle-light.

"Let him come on!" he said bitterly. "Still, I'm glad to see some of you have a sense of fair play, anyway! I'm ready for Grundy—or any of you for that matter!"

"You know what you're charged with, Kildare!" snapped Tom Merry. "We want an answer to it from you! You were awake when we left the dormitory—I saw you sitting up in bed myself. Did you give us away to Darrell or Kildare? Was it owing to you that we were collared?"

The new fellow did not answer for a moment. Actually it was owing to him that they had been caught—though it was certainly not by his intention, and he had done his best to save them afterwards.

"We heard what Darrell said!" went on Tom, eyeing him with growing anger. "He said that but for you they would have known nothing about it. That is enough for us—Darrell never talks through his hat! But we're giving you a chance to explain, Kildare!"

"It—it was through me right enough!" muttered Kildare, at last. "But—"

"Bai Jove!"

"He's admitting it! The rotter!"

"I did not sneak, though!" went on Kildare angrily. "It was just sheer bad luck. After you'd gone I went to the door and looked out, wondering what you were up to and where you were going. Darrell happened to come along and must have spotted me. He entered the dorm and saw the empty beds."

"And you expect us to believe that yarn?" hooted Grundy.

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"I don't care twopence whether you believe it or not!" said the new fellow defiantly. "If you refuse to take my word you can go to pot—the lot of you! I did my best afterwards to save you—I locked Darrell and Kildare in Kildare's room!"

"You what? My hat! What a yarn!"

"You locked Darrell and Kildare in a room?" said Tom Merry derisively. "What bosh! How did they get out, then? There isn't a scrap of ivy on the wall just there, and—"

"Goodness knows how they got out—I simply can't understand it!" stammered the new fellow. "But—I didn't sneak!"

"Yet you admitted that it was your fault?"

"Yes, I admit that. But I did my best—"

"That's enough!" said Tom grimly. "We know what to think, after what's already happened!"

"You don't believe me?" asked Desmond.

"Absolutely not!" snapped Tom. "If you didn't actually



Grundy ran right into a mighty punch!

sneak—if it did happen as you say, then, in my view, you purposely allowed Darrell to spot you. You were vengeful for the way we cut you, and you were savage at being left out of it. You've proved yourself to be a sneak and a sulky, swanky, conceited cad! If Grundy wants a go at you he's welcome to do it, and I hope he thrashes you as you deserve!"

"Let me get at him!" bawled Grundy.

He rushed up; but Blake interposed and thrust him aside.

"Shut up, Grundy!" snapped Blake. "This is not a personal affair; it's a matter for both Forms to deal with. The Fourth want a say in the matter. In our view, the cad ought to be punished by all—something that'll make him see what he ought to have seen before this—that we're not standing a sneak in the School House. I vote he's made to run the gauntlet and sent to Coventry by the House!"

"Hear, hear!"

It was a subdued buzz of agreement on all sides. Even Tom Merry nodded agreement. But Grundy was thirsting for vengeance, and, as usual, he wanted it to be a one-man settlement, with himself as judge, jury, and executioner.

"Rot! A jolly good hiding is what he wants!" he

exclaimed hotly. "Lemme have a go at him, and then you fellows can do as you like. I'll show him!"

He dashed aside Blake's arm and rushed in, with whirling fists.

Desmond Kildare was prepared for anything now, though. He jumped back with the agility of a cat, and coolly planted a hefty right full in Grundy's way as he charged. Grundy ran right into it, and he went down as if he had been pole-axed.

"Great pip!"



down as though he had been poleaxed!

It was a mighty punch, and the crowd stared; while Grundy lay on his back and blinked up dizzily at the ceiling.

But Grundy was soon up again, and he charged in, badly shaken, but as full of fight as ever.

"Go it, Grundy!" called Herries excitedly. "Let Grundy handle the cad, you fellows!"

"Yaas, wathah! Go it, Gwunday!"

Evidently the general desire now was to let Grundy "have a go." Grundy was a mighty man with his fists, and a scrap with Grundy—especially when in a towering rage as he was now—was no joking matter—far from it. The new fellow was likely to get more punishment that way than by being forced to run the gauntlet, at all events.

So the crowd thought, quite forgetting Manners' experience at the new fellow's hands.

After that first blow Grundy did, however, have it more or less all his own way. He was raging, and when Grundy was raging he was a terrific warrior. For several thrilling moments he knocked Desmond Kildare all round the dormitory.

Then he began to tire, and the new fellow got a look in. Desmond Kildare was also in a rage. Fierce resentment

and a feeling of bitter injustice filled him, and he fought like a tiger, heedless of blows which came thick and fast.

There was no thought of rounds, of time, or any other ceremonies. Several candles were lighted now, and in the subdued light from them the fight went on. In the general excitement the danger of being heard was forgotten, and the sentries at the door left their posts to watch the Titanic scrap. It was a marvel that the noise went on unheard by anyone in authority; but obviously Kildare and his fellow-prefects did not anticipate further disturbance, and had gone to sleep by this time.

The fight ended at last—as Tom Merry and several other judges had soon seen that it would end—with the great George Alfred Grundy flat on his back for the last time, whacked to the world.

But the victor was in a sorry plight himself. He could scarcely stand, and he dropped down on his bed, panting and exhausted, his features showing the punishment he had received.

"Kildare wins!" said Tom Merry. "Never mind, Grundy! It was a good scrap. But—but, my hat! That chap isn't a funk!"

"Yaas, wathah! But—but—"

Arthur Augustus frowned.

It was a disappointment for the onlookers. They had hoped that Grundy would give the new fellow the thrashing they felt he deserved. But he had not done so. None the less, he had taken terrific punishment; and when Gore suggested the gauntlet again Tom Merry squashed the suggestion promptly.

"Not after what he's gone through, you ass!" he snapped. "He's had enough, if he has won the scrap. But he's sent to Coventry, for all that. Hands up, all in agreement!"

Every hand went up, excepting Kildare's own and the hand of Grundy. That youth was beyond raising a hand just then. And Tom Merry nodded.

"Right! That's settled, then," he said grimly. "The new chap's sent to Coventry by order of the Lower School—or the School House, at all events. Any chap caught speaking to him will be punished by his Form. We'll let him out of Coventry when he begins to show that he's sorry and can play the game. That's that!"

And Tom Merry climbed into bed, while Grundy was helped into his, though he showed more than an inclination to resume the scrap again. The Fourth-Formers went back to their own dormitory, and the light was put out.

Desmond Kildare had climbed into his bed without speaking a word. It was useless to complain or protest, had he wanted to. It was his own fault chiefly. He had brought it on himself, in the first place, by his own peculiar sense of humour, and a series of unfortunate circumstances had finished him. It was too late to attempt to right himself in his schoolfellows' eyes now. The damage was done. On the morrow practically the whole School House Fourth and Shell were booked for serious trouble. It was no wonder they were angry, and he felt he could scarcely blame them in the circumstances. They were booked for severe punishment, and he would have to stand his—alone. But he was used to that; he was already shunned by all. It was merely that the barring was official now. He was in Coventry!

CHAPTER 8.

The Wrong Victim!

THERE were dismal faces in the School House the next morning at breakfast, and there was subdued excitement.

The Shell and Fourth realised they were "for it." Nothing could save them from severe punishment. They had broken bounds at night. They had actually had the audacity to leave their beds, their dormitories, and their House in order to carry out an unlawful raid on another House. It was an unheard-of crime. In bated breaths the culprits discussed what their fate was likely to be. Expulsion was spoken of, and flogging was freely anticipated. Certainly there was a large number to flog, and whoever carried out the floggings was booked for plenty of exercise. None the less, it was not a joking matter. The chopper was booked to come down on the Fourth and Shell, and it was bound to come down hard.

By nine o'clock both Forms had learned their fate. It was less than they had expected, but it was bad enough. Six apiece was the Head's verdict, with heavy imposts, and gating for a month.

The verdict caused a sensation, and much despair in the School House.

That morning the canings were carried out in the Fourth and Shell, the Head dealing with the Shell and Mr. Railton dealing with the Fourth. In this the Shell considered

themselves lucky, while the Fourth considered themselves the reverse. The head was elderly, and not as athletic as he once was, while Mr. Railton was a young man, and still athletic. None the less, the Shell soon found that the Head could handle a cane still, and for the rest of that morning both the Shell and Fourth, with the exception of Kildare, Trimble, and Mellish, wriggled and groaned, and nursed their tingling hands whenever they got the chance.

Meanwhile, Desmond Kildare did not experience a happy time.

Nobody spoke to him. Black looks became blacker as the morning wore on. As the pain decreased the anger of the victims seemed to increase. They felt that Grundy's fists and the sentence of Coventry was much too light for the cause of their woes. The fact that the new fellow did not seem to care did not serve to lessen their fury. Had Grundy only licked him, it would have made a big difference, perhaps.

But Desmond Kildare did care, had they only known it. He was not the fellow to show his feelings, and he pretended to be unconcerned merely to hide his bitter resentment and unhappiness.

Just after dinner his cousin stopped him.

"Just a word with you, kid," said Kildare, eyeing him steadily. "I think I've told you already that I've noticed what's going on. The fellows are barring you, Desmond. Why?"

"Ask them!" said the new fellow.

"I have done—I've asked Merry and Blake," said Kildare. "They refuse to say a word, of course. I'm asking you now, Desmond. You've not hit it with the chaps here, somehow. I want to know what the trouble is, kid. If I can help—"

"You can't help, but you can easily make matters worse," said the new junior. "It'll blow over in time."

"That won't do for me!" said Kildare, setting his lips. "You can't go on like this, Desmond. You won't tell me what the matter is?"

"Sorry—no!"

"Very well. But—well, I was hoping things would improve, kid. But they haven't—I can see that. So this morning I decided you are to have another chance with another set of fellows."

"What—what do you mean?"

"Just this—I've spoken to Railton, and he's agreed to my request to have you shifted across to the New House. It's all fixed up now, and you'll have the chance to make good there, I hope. You're a New House man from today, Desmond, and you can shift your things across there as soon as you like—certainly before this evening. That's all!"

And, with a nod, Eric Kildare walked away. It was only too clear that he was both puzzled and disappointed with his cousin—more than disappointed, in fact. His face showed keen annoyance.

The new fellow stared after him, his face flushed. But he knew it was of no use to appeal against the transfer. In any case, it might be for the best—although, as he thought of Figgins & Co., he very much doubted it. It couldn't be helped, however, and all he could do was to keep a stiff upper lip—which he determined to do.

Tom Merry & Co. heard the news after afternoon classes, and they were astonished.

"Old Kildare's doing, I bet!" commented Tom Merry, uneasiness showing on his face. "Well, we shan't miss him, though—"

The fact was that Tom Merry, despite what seemed to him clear evidence, could not help feeling slight doubts about the new fellow. He was no funk, and a sneak was generally a funk.

"Miss him, eh?" snorted Monty Lowther. "We shall fairly weep—I don't think! Figgy's welcome to him, and I bet Figgy's jolly pleased about it! I feel like scragging the chap every time I see him."

"He ought to have been jolly well made to sit up!" said Manners hotly. "He got off far too easily for my liking. Still, I bet Figgy and his pals will make him sit up if he starts his games there."

"Here's Kerr now!" said Lowther.

Francis Kerr came up to the Terrible Three as they stood in the quadrangle.

"Seen that new merchant anywhere?" inquired Kerr.

"No—and we don't want to!" said Tom. "You've heard the news, of course—that he's transferred over to your casual ward?"

"Oh, yes—quite!" smiled Kerr. "We're awfully pleased about it—delighted, in fact. We're so delighted that we're going to take special pains to welcome him. That's why I'm hunting for him now."

"Eh? Oh!" said Tom, grinning faintly. "You're going to rag him—"

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"I said a welcome, and I mean a welcome!" said Kerr. "He may not like the sort of welcome we've prepared for him—there's no accounting for tastes. Still, the chap may like being tarred and feathered; you never know!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Is—is that the game?" gasped Tom. "You're going to tar and feather the chap?"

"A mixture of ink, gum, treacle, soapy water, and feathers, to be exact!" said Kerr cheerfully. "We got the feathers from old Taggy's hen-roosts. Quite a decent amount! We want that new chap to realise just how welcome he is over in the New House!"

"Oh, good!" grinned Manners.

"Ripping!" said Lowther. "Just what we ought to have done before this. The chap will have to learn decent behaviour!"

"We're going to teach him!" explained Kerr. "We've not forgotten how he gave us away over our raid the other evening! We each got detention and a thumping fierce licking from Ratty for that. We want to discourage the chap from doing it again when he's in the New House. Now, if you can tell a chap where to find him—"

"Look here, Kerr, we're in this!" said Lowther eagerly. "Let it be a Lower School affair—we still feel the chap got off too lightly for what he's done. We'll lend a hand!"

"Won't we just!" said Manners, his eyes glinting. "Where—"

"Right-ho! You'll find Figgy ready under the old archway leading to the ruins!" said Kerr. "I've got to find the chap and bring him along!"

Lowther and Manners scudded off, without waiting to hear what Tom Merry thought of the scheme. Kerr hurried away in search of Desmond Kildare. And after a moment's reflection, Tom Merry set his lips and hurried after his chums. After all, the fellow did deserve it, and it might do him good. He certainly appeared to have derived no lesson from the sentence of Coventry. He was not even sullen and sulky now—he showed no sign of being hurt or miserable. The chap simply did not seem to care twopence for any of them, whether they spoke to him or not. He was as conceited and cocksure as ever. So Tom went—to lend a hand if one was wanted.

Desmond Kildare was walking out of the School House when Francis Kerr sighted him. Under the new boy's arm was a pile of books, and he was busy removing his belongings over to the New House.

That he would not be welcome there he was quite assured. But he felt he did not care. He had to keep a stiff upper lip and fight it down—somehow. He was not the fellow to whine, or to quit, if he could help it. He was somewhat surprised when Kerr stopped before him, recognising him as a New House man.

"Well?" he asked coolly.

For answer Kerr handed him a note. On it was written: "You are wanted under the old archway leading to the ruins!"

"Will you come into my parlour?" said the spider to the fly!" murmured the new fellow. "Right! I'll be there!"

Kerr pointed across to the old archway at the far end of the school buildings, nodded, and walked away. He was not likely to disobey the order by speaking to the new fellow. Desmond Kildare looked at the note again, a faint smile on his face.

"Something unpleasant for me, I bet!" he murmured. "Perhaps a bit of a ragging, and perhaps someone wants to damage my features in a scrap. Well, I'll show 'em I'm not afraid of what's coming, anyway."

He started towards the small archway, which was half-covered with ivy, and really belonged to the ancient part of the school. It led to the Cloisters and ruins, which were out of bounds to juniors. He felt quite certain that it meant trouble of some sort for him—possibly a trap. But he inclined to the view that someone wanted to scrap with him—someone like George Alfred Grundy, whose anger seemed to grow with the hours. Perhaps Grundy wanted to avenge his defeat in a second encounter. If so, he was welcome to the chance. Desmond Kildare still felt the effects of last night's gruelling encounter, but he was feeling like hitting someone again just now. Bitter hostility, resentment, and anger against the fellows who misjudged him was bottled up inside him, and he felt he wanted to let himself go.

The new fellow neared the gloomy old archway, which ran for some feet under the massive, broken wall that separated the old part of the school from the new.

He could only see dark shadows under the archway, which was really more of a short, low tunnel, with

clinging, drooping ivy hanging down from the roof in festoons, almost shutting out the light.

The fact that nobody seemed to be about made the new fellow's suspicions almost a certainty. Under that gloomy archway—or beyond it, at all events—enemies crouched in waiting, he felt sure.

He paused a few yards away. Then he smiled. Coming along the mossy path alongside the wall was an angular figure in cap and gown. He was scanning a book as he ambled along, with his nose close down to the pages. It was an acid, unpleasant face, and Desmond recognised Mr. Ratcliff, his new Housemaster.

"Now we'll see!" murmured Desmond.

He waited while the master neared the archway. Mr. Ratcliff was walking slowly, his footsteps scarcely sounding at all on the moss and grass. He did not look up, or see the junior.

But would he walk past the archway, or would he enter under it? That was the great and thrilling question in the mind of the new fellow.

He knew that hidden eyes were watching him—he felt certain of that. And the hidden eyes were not likely to have seen the softly-approaching form of Mr. Horace Ratcliff!

Desmond Kildare judged the distance carefully; and then, at the exact moment, he started forward for the archway as if he had banished all fears and suspicions and had decided to take the risk.

He landed at the entrance to the archway just two seconds after Mr. Ratcliff, whose nose was still glued to his volume.

The tortoise beat the hare, so to speak. Mr. Ratcliff, merely meandering along, as it were, went under the archway before Desmond—and got the prize!

Just in time the new fellow leaped back. He had expected, had suspected. And now, as the thing happened,

he realised his expectations and suspicions had not been without grounds.

It was a booby-trap—the real thing! Barely had Mr. Ratcliff taken two steps into the archway when down upon his head there swept a cascade of feathers—feathers of all shapes and sizes. Next came a flood of a weird-looking black mixture that flowed over the master's mortar-board, his shoulders, and his clothes.

From the unfortunate master came first a startled yelp, and then a terrific explosive gurgling.

Mr. Horace Ratcliff's acid, startled features vanished from sight beneath that larva-like, surging flow of mingled treacle, soapsuds, ink, gum, and soot, out of which stuck feathers at all angles.

From the rear of the archway sounded sudden gasps—gasps of utter horror. Then came a sudden scuffle, followed by scudding feet. Figgins & Co., and Tom Merry & Co., were going while the going was good!

CHAPTER 9. Coals of Fire!

"H O O K it!"

"Oh crikey!"

Unfortunately, Baker and Rushden of the Sixth had just come into view, and were gazing spellbound at Mr. Ratcliff.

It was a time for action, and not for words.

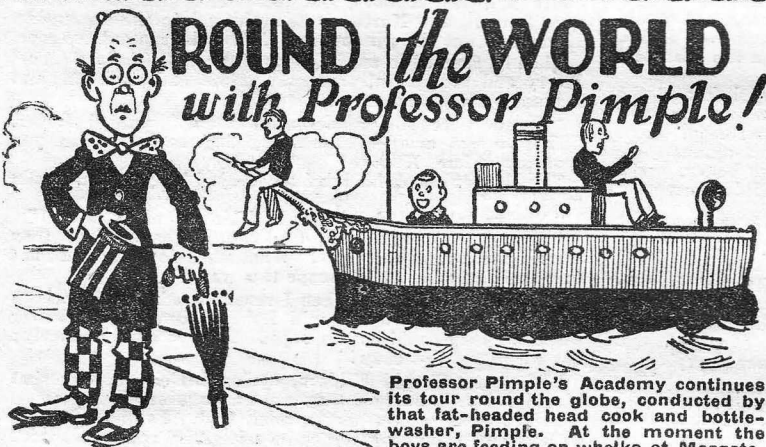
Tom Merry had a brainwave.

"This way, chaps! They haven't spotted us! Quick!"

They followed him instantly, hoping desperately that Tom was right. Tom scudded past a high pile of shattered masonry, and dived through the open, arched doorway of the old tower. The last of the six rammed the door shut.

Had they been spotted? The conspirators soon knew that they had. Through the crack of the door Tom Merry

(Continued on next page.)



Professor Pimple's Academy continues its tour round the globe, conducted by that fat-headed head cook and bottle-washer, Pimple. At the moment the boys are feeding on whelks at Margate.

WHEN we got to the High Street Pimple took us into a shop filled with tables and bottles of vinegar, and a man came up with a white apron on, and Pimple ordered some whelks. The man said it would take some time to get them ready, so we passed the time drawing pictures of Pimple on the tables, which were suitable for that purpose, as they had no cloths on them.

Presently two ladies came in and sat near us. They had very red faces, and ordered whelks as well, and when our whelks appeared, Pimple said:

"Boys, I want this trip round the world to be instructive as well as enjoyable, so before we start, let us consider the nature of the whelk for a few moments. The whelk is a gastropod mollusc, and has a solid, spiral shell. The whelk is remarkable for its carnivorous and aggressive habits."

The two ladies sitting near us said they thought the old gent must be barmy, going on like that, and Buster, who had started on his at once, left off eating and turned very white at the professor's words.

"There are hard whelks, rock whelks,

and dog whelks," said the professor, looking sternly at us. "These molluscs are a sub-order of the streptoneurous gastropoda, and the eggs are deposited in capsules—"

Slogger Brooks interrupted then, and said he didn't feel like eating anything like that, and he thought he was going to be sick again. I found I didn't like them either, so I slipped my plate of whelks into Sniffy's pocket, while Pimple began to shake vinegar on his without taking the cork out of the bottle. I asked the professor how whelks were caught, and he told us that they were caught in wicker crab-pots or by dredging, and sometimes on lines with crabs tied together as bait. This method was called "trotting."

I thought this was very instructive; but one of the ladies said she thought she would be trotting too, and she didn't think it right for such nice lads to be out with a man like that, meaning Pimple.

Then Pimple said we weren't nice lads at all, but the laziest lot of scamps he'd ever had in his academy, and he was going to make things hot for us. Sniffy started blubbing when he

heard this, and we started throwing bread at him, and presently he was howling so much that one of the ladies took him on her lap and asked him if he hadn't got a handkerchief. Sniffy didn't know, so she put her hand in Sniffy's pocket to find one, and caught hold of the whelks instead.

When the lady found her hand full of whelks she screamed and rushed out of the shop, after throwing them away in terror. The whelks went all over Pimple's head, and he ordered us back to the ship at once.

Pimple looked wild, and so did the captain when we got back. He said the ship couldn't start because the crew was in irons. At least, we thought he said they were in irons, and we got excited, and the kids said there had been a mutiny, and Pimple had made them miss it; but it appeared the captain had said that his crew were "in Lyons," and that was why he was angry.

Presently the crew came back and apologised to the captain for being late. They had brought a big box of chocolates back with them, and they gave the captain some, so soon things were smoothed over.

When the kids had been sent down to bed, us prefects got together, and Buster and some of the others asked me if I thought we could throw Sniffy overboard; but I said I didn't think so, because he might get rescued, and then we would all be sent back to Canum Daley with ink-pots for the rest of the hols.

I said to the captain that we seemed to be going very fast, as the lights in Margate were disappearing; but he said that that was because it was closing-time, and we weren't going as fast as he would like, and he wanted to make Yarmouth by four bells.

I said politely that I hoped he would, though I didn't understand what he meant in the least. I wish I had swotted up about ships and things now, before we came on this voyage.

There's a lot more to tell you yet, so we'll meet again next week.

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lighted the two prefects suddenly turn off from the mossy path and walk towards the tower.

He gave a hollow groan.

"We've been seen, after all!" he panted. "Oh, what rotten, putrid luck! Look here! We're not done yet! Fasten the dashed door—quick!"

The door was jammed shut, and while four of them leaned their weight against it, the other two hunted round for wedges—anything. Small stones were piled against the bottom in the hope that they would prevent the door opening. A big beam of wood was found at last, and this was jammed into place, proving much more effective than the stones.

By this time the prefects were hammering on the door and raising their voices.

"Open this door, you cheeky young scamps!" bawled Baker angrily. "We spotted you."

"But you didn't recognise us, old beans!" murmured Tom Merry. "Don't answer, you fellows—creep up after me! They'll not shift that beam in a hurry!"

They crept up the shattered stone stairway to the chamber above. Tom Merry hurried over to the little broken window at the far wall of the old tower, and glanced out.

He soon drew back, his face showing deep dismay.

"No good!" he said glumly. "A blessed fly could scarcely crawl down without breaking its neck. We're done!"

It seemed so. The other five glanced downwards at the jagged, broken wall of the tower. Time had not been kind to it. The stonework was crumbling. There was scarcely a root of ivy that would stand a pull on it. And it was a sheer thirty feet to the ground—with ugly-looking boulders to receive them if they fell.

It was not worth the risk. Not one of them dared to chance it.

"Sheer suicide!" groaned Figgy. "What idiots we were not to bolt, instead of popping in here! The beggars didn't recognise us—they'd be calling our names if they had! We've hopped out of the frying-pan into the fire!"

"My fault!" admitted Tom Merry, looking out again glumly. "Hark at 'em knocking below, and—Hallo, that's Kildare's voice! More of them are on the job now! Ratty's been found!"

They listened to the voices and hammering below at the front of the tower. They were trapped; sooner or later they would have to give way and give themselves up.

Figgy looked out of the gap in the wall again. He started as he suddenly sighted a figure down below. His face darkened as he recognised Desmond Kildare carrying a coil of rope.

"Here's that cad now!" he hissed. "Come to have the laugh of us, the sneaking worm! I feel like—Why, what the thump!"

To the surprise of the prisoners at the little window he slung the rope over his shoulder. Then—to their greater surprise and alarm—he started to climb up the steep wall of the tower.

It was a desperate, dangerous attempt. Tom Merry's face went white, and he almost shouted down:

"Stop that! Go back, you fool! You'll be smashed! The stonework's crumbling! Go back! For Heaven's sake go back!"

The new fellow kept on climbing.

With teeth hard set, he stuck to the job, fingers and toes feeling for grip, and holding on desperately when they did grip. Again and again hands and feet slipped, and those above at the window shuddered as chunks of crumbling stone fell beneath him.

But he did not fall, though the scared juniors above felt it must come every second. Tom was silent now—he dared not call, dared not speak, for fear of causing the daring climber to lose grip and fall. Like a cat, the climber came scratching, clutching upwards—his white, set face was close to them now. His heavy, gasping breathing could be heard as he fought his way up those last few feet of stonework. Tom's horrified glance noted that his fingers were bleeding.

"And—and that's the chap we were going to tar and feather for being a sneaking worm!" panted Tom. "Help him over, chaps—quick!"

The new fellow's head and shoulders heaved into view at the window. They got a grip of him somehow, and hauled him over the wide, sloping sill. From below came a dull thudding, as if made by a battering-ram. But they did not heed it.

He was safe inside at last. He dropped, panting and exhausted, on the flagged floor.

"Grab the rope!" he gasped. "Fasten it somewhere—that iron ring there! Go—go while the going's good, you fools! D'you want the sack?"

None of them did. But they hesitated—until Figgy grabbed at the rope, unslung it from Kildare's shoulders, and rapidly tied it to the iron ring.

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"No good this chap taking all that risk for nothing!" he snapped. "You first, Kildare! Coventry's off so far as I'm concerned!"

"I'm not fit to tackle the job yet!" panted the new fellow hoarsely. "I'm about whacked! I'll be game by the time you chaps are down! Go it, and don't waste time arguing, for goodness' sake!"

It certainly was not the time to argue as to who should go first or last. Figgy took the lead, clambering out of the narrow aperture, and shinning down the rope.

The task was not an easy one, and it was painful both to hands and body. But Figgy landed safely, and the others followed one by one. Tom Merry, the last but one, hesitated.

"You next, Kildare! Quick! They'll have that door down soon!"

"After you, old bean! I'm not up to it yet!"

Tom Merry nodded grimly, and the next moment he was over the sloping sill and shinning down the rope. Desmond jumped up, showing that he was not quite so "whacked" as he had appeared to be. And as he did so, a resounding crash came from below. It was followed by loud voices, and then heavy footsteps on the stone staircase.

The new chap scrambled on to the sill. But Tom Merry had scarcely reached the boulders below yet, and he hesitated. It was a fatal hesitation. Next moment a burly senior appeared above the shattered staircase.

It was Baker, and his face was flushed with anger and exertion.

He seemed to grasp the position in a flash, and in a couple of desperate leaps he was across the room, and his hand had closed on the would-be fugitive's arm.

"Got you, my lad! No, you don't!"

Desmond began to struggle. Escape now was perfectly hopeless, but his one desire was to keep the senior from the window until Tom Merry and the rest had got clear.

He succeeded in this. More footsteps sounded on the stairs, and then Kildare, followed after a moment by Rushden, Darrell, and North, came rushing into the apartment. Kildare was at the window in a flash as he spotted the rope.

Then he snorted in angry disappointment. Obviously Tom Merry and the rest of the conspirators had vanished, and Desmond ceased the unequal struggle.

"There were half a dozen of them!" panted Baker. "They've got away—the crafty young sweeps! Can you spot any of 'em, Kildare?"

The skipper shook his head as he eyed his youthful cousin grimly.

"You've got one!" he snapped. "He was one of them?"

"Must have been!" said Rushden. "Though how they came by this rope beats me! What utter fools we were not to suspect an attempt to escape this way!"

"I did think of it, and then I remembered it was too high and far too dangerous!" said Baker, frowning. "I never suspected they could have a rope! They've done us nicely; but we've got this chap!"

"It's queer!" said Kildare, eyeing his cousin somewhat blankly. "I—I thought they were up against this new kid. Yet it seems— But never mind that. Yank him along to Railton! There's going to be a frightful row about this! Tarring and feathering a Housemaster, eh? Paw! Fairly begging for the sack, the young fools! Well, someone's going to get it over this! Quick march, kid!"

And Desmond Kildare marched—there was nothing else to do. Someone was booked for the sack—and so far it looked as if he might easily be that someone. He could not help but grin, as he reflected on the irony of the situation. But Eric Kildare, his cousin, did not grin.

CHAPTER 10.

The Only Thing To Do!

"WELL?"

"They've got him!"

"We know that. But what's to be done?"

The whole school was buzzing with the news. It was causing a terrific sensation. A Housemaster of St. Jim's was not tarred and feathered every day. It was unprecedented. The fellows spoke about it almost in whispers. The juniors were scared. The seniors were amazed, and talked of expulsions and floggings.

It was known that Mr. Horace Ratcliff had spent half an hour already in the bath-room, and was likely to spend another hour or so there. It was known also that he had given an ultimatum to the Head. Either the culprits would be sacked, or else he would hand in his resignation.

Whether that threat upset the Head was not known. The general view was that the Head would be glad if Mr. Ratcliff did carry out his threat.

At all events, the affair had certainly caused a tremendous sensation. But the biggest sensation of all was caused when it became generally known that Desmond Kildare, the new fellow, was the fellow that had been caught.

Why the new chap, of all people, should want to tar and feather Mr. Horace Ratcliff was a mystery! It was nearly as big a mystery to the juniors why he had had a hand in it at all, and certainly why a fellow in Coventry should be one of the conspirators. Who were the others then? Who was there at all likely to be on such friendly terms with the outcast of the school? It was a mystery to all, with the exception of Figgins & Co. and Tom Merry & Co.

The conspirators had vanished their separate ways after escaping from the tower—they knew better than to be discovered together. Moreover, their hands and clothes bore some evidence of their connection with the affair. So for the next half-hour they were busy removing that evidence. This done, Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manners went in search of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn.

They had heard the news, of course—Desmond Kildare had been caught. He was now before the Head. But why they had not been sent for yet was the biggest mystery of all to the conspirators.

"Yes, we've heard," said Figgins, as Tom Merry & Co. came up to them. "And what is to be done—that's just what we want to know!"

"It—it beats cock-fighting!" "Licks it to a frazzle!" asserted Figgy, gloomily, his youthful brows puckered in deep thought. "Why did that new fellow act like he did? Not one fellow in a thousand would have risked such a dangerous climb. But why the thump should he help us?"

"And he must have known that trap was set for him," added Kerr. "It beats me! But—but the chap's not the chap I thought he was. He's got heaps of pluck; he's no coward, whatever else he is. And—and he stood back to allow us the chance to escape, even after helping us like that! It—it was decent of him!"

"We've got to do something," said Figgy glumly. "No doubt about that," said Tom, setting his lips. "It's up to us to go and own up, Figgy! You chaps game? It means the sack, perhaps!"

"Only thing to do, though!" said Lowther, wincing. "Come on—let's get it over!"

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry. "There's Kildare now—no good rushing it until we know. I'll ask him!"

They hurried over to Kildare, who had stopped in the quad to speak to North. He looked at them very keenly as they came up.

"Well?" "We—we're rather wondering about that new chap, Kildare!" said Tom. "We're rather anxious—"

"Yes, I bet you are," said Kildare, with sarcasm. "You think such a heap of him, don't you? And now he's booked for the sack—"

"The—the sack?" "Yes—unless the chaps who really played that trick on Ratcliff have a spark of decency in them," said Kildare deliberately. "I do not believe the new chap did it, or helped to do it—not because he's my cousin, but because there was no earthly reason why he should, so far as I can see!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "Is—is that the fact, Kildare? Is he to be sacked—"

"He's to be sacked to-morrow unless he gives the names of the fellows who took a hand in it," said Kildare quietly. "The Head's given him until nine to-morrow morning."

"And—and he's refused to give them away?" "Absolutely! The Head's stormed and raved at him, but he won't speak a word," said Kildare. "If—if you kids know anything—"

"We know quite enough—too much, in fact!" groaned Tom. "That settles it! Will you take us before the Head, Kildare?"

"Then—then you know something?" said Kildare eagerly. "It was we who did it!" said Tom coolly. "The new chap had nothing whatever to do with it—excepting that the booby-trap was meant for him and Ratty got it by mistake!"

"This way, then," said Kildare grimly. Within three minutes they were before the Head. Mr. Railton was there, and so was the new fellow. He actually gave Tom Merry a wink as they marched in dismally. Kildare rapidly explained what he now knew.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes, peering severely over his glasses at the six conspirators. "Then—then it was not intended to be an abominable and outrageous assault upon a master of this school! It—it was a mistake—merely intended as a lawless yet a foolish joke?"

"Obviously, sir," said Kildare; while the Head's stern features relaxed greatly. "These young—these juniors prepared the booby-trap for this new boy! Unfortunately, Mr. Ratcliff came along and got it in mistake."

"We—we hadn't the faintest idea that Mr. Ratcliff was anywhere near, sir!" gasped Tom Merry. "He—he came along the wall, I think. It—it all happened in a moment, and—"

"I think I understand," said the Head sternly. "I am exceedingly relieved to know that it was intended as a joke, and not as an assault upon a master. This alters the whole matter, of course. None the less, it is serious enough. But why should you play such a trick upon a school fellow—and especially upon a new boy—a relative of your captain also?"

The juniors remained silent. Kildare spoke after a moment.

"He—he seems to have offended in some way, sir," said Kildare. "I wish I knew why the fellows have made such a dead set against him. I cannot understand it!"

"Merry, I must ask you to explain this matter?" said the Head.

Tom remained silent. "There is some misunderstanding, I am certain," said Kildare. "In fairness to my cousin I think Merry or someone should explain. May I ask him a few questions, sir?"

"Certainly, Kildare," said the Head, his eyes upon the crimsoning Desmond Kildare. "This matter must be thrashed out, of course. Merry, I order you to answer Kildare's questions!"

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Tom. "I—I'm beginning to think there must be something wrong myself," he went on quietly.

"Why are you all up against my cousin?" asked Kildare. "We—we thought he had been sneaking—that is, telling tales to you, Kildare!"

Kildare started. "I thought it must be something like that!" he said, eyeing his cousin in great astonishment. "But my cousin has never once made any complaint, or even told me anything about any other fellow. In fact, I have scarcely been able to get anything at all out of him!"

He looked at Tom again. "I must ask you when were the occasions my cousin was supposed to have sneaked to me, Merry!" he said curtly. "You must see that it is only fair to him—"

"I—I see that!" stammered Tom Merry. "The first time was when we went to the station to meet him. We—we thought he'd told you about us throwing him out of the village tuckshop!"

"Ah!" said Kildare grimly. "He did nothing of the kind, Merry! I saw the whole affair myself!"

"You—you did?" ejaculated Tom, while his chums stared.

"Yes. I was passing in Dr. White's car; he was giving me a lift from Wayland! I could not ask him to stop, of course. But I saw you evict Kildare here from the shop."

"Oh, my hat!" mumbled Lowther involuntarily. "I asked him about it afterwards, and he refused to say one word!" resumed Kildare grimly. "Well, what other occasion, Merry?"

"When—when the New House fellows raided us!" stammered Tom, his cheeks red. "Who—who else could have told about that but your cousin?"

"None the less, he did not tell me!" said Kildare calmly. "It seems to me that you have been remarkably swift at jumping to conclusions, Merry. It was Trimble who told me! He was hiding in the cupboard at the time—he had been surprised while helping himself to my cousin's tuck-box, apparently. He was there when the New House fellows tied up my cousin. I caught him there—he sneezed and gave the game away. When I cross-questioned him he told me quite enough to set me on the trail of the raiders."

"Oh!" "Anything else?"

There was a slight hint of sarcasm in Kildare's tone now. Tom Merry flushed crimson. Yet he felt glad—thankful that the truth was coming to light at last.

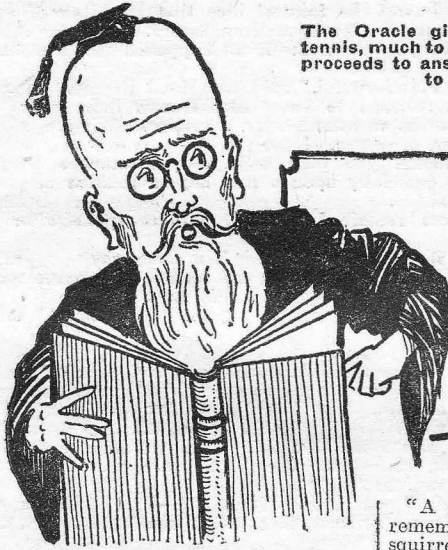
"Yes; about our raid the other night!" went on Tom, with a scared glance at the Head. "We—we naturally thought he gave us away then. Darrell as good as said he did!"

"There was something in that!" said Kildare. "The new chap did, but by pure accident. Darrell happened to spot him out of bed, and went to investigate. He came for me, but someone locked my room door—"

"Then—then that was true!" breathed Tom. "We wouldn't believe that! But how did you get out—?" "Through the window and along the coping," said Kildare. "I knocked up Rusden, and he let us out. It was when I was at the window that I saw you fellows in the quadrangle. That is all—excepting that I am certain it was my cousin who locked us in my room—solely to aid you fellows to escape us!"

(Continued on page 28.)

The Oracle gives the Editor an exhibition of tennis, much to the Editor's discomfort—and then proceeds to answer a few more readers' queries, to his own satisfaction!



HOW MANY BEANS MAKE FIVE ?



WHEN I fell into the Editor's sanctum the other morning I found the Editor wearing a gleeful grin and a new suit, and banging a ball of paper round the room with a tennis racket.

"Ha, my lad," exclaimed he, "you're just the chap I'm looking for. I'm taking up tennis, and I want to learn the strokes."

"Right-ho!" said I, and taking the racket I proceeded to show him the technique of the game. "The strokes in tennis," I told him, "can roughly be divided into five classes. First of all, there's the service. This is usually executed by swinging the racket from behind over the head, so, finishing with a downward sweep in front of the body."

"Which body?" said the Editor.

"Your body, of course, if it happens to be there. Then there's the forehand stroke, used to keep the ball in play after it has been served."

"Served? Served with what?"

"Served to you, of course. Then there's the volley—that's a stroke made close to the net before the ball has bounced, and then there's the smash. This looks simple, but isn't it!"

"I've often thought the same about you, my lad," said the Editor.

"I'll give you an illustration," I said. "If the ball has been 'lobbed' by your opponent, that is, hit high in the air, it has to be struck overhead and brought down, like that!"

Well, chums, it wasn't my fault that the Editor chose to sit in an adjacent chair just as I was giving this demonstration, but he did, and that racket descended with a resounding thwack on his upper crust.

"You bewhiskered bundle of clumsiness," roared the Editor, "why ever I keep you here I don't know. Bring me those letters off my desk from GEM readers. If you can't answer all the questions this morning, you're fired!"

I gave him the letters and waited while he glanced fiercely through them.

"Now then," said he, "a Cardiff reader wants to know what a gopher is? Out with it! What's a gopher?"

"A gopher? Why, everybody knows that," I said. "You don't need to ask me. You must know what a gopher is, sir!"

"You don't know!" chortled the Editor. "You don't know!"

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"A gopher's an animal, sir!" I said, remembering all at once. "It's a squirrel-like rodent, found in North America, and is very destructive to crops."

"You only just saved your bacon," the Editor told me. "If you hadn't answered that, you would have had to go."

"How long would I have to gopher?" I asked him.

"You're all impudence and whiskers!" he retorted, picking up another letter. "What's an ounce?"

"The sixteenth part of a pound, sir, or the twelfth, it depends on the kind of pound."

"You're an old idiot!" said the Editor. "A Plaistow reader wants to

the leopard, but its fur is longer, grey in colour, and marked with large dark rosettes. The head and body are about four feet long, and the tail three feet. It lives in the high mountainous regions of Central Asia, and preys on goats and sheep. It will sometimes kill ponies."

"Now," said the Editor, "William Lumley, of Slough, wants to know what the Gobi is?"

"The Gobi is a desert," I said, "measuring 600 miles from north to south, and a thousand from east to west, stretching across the Mongolian plateau in Eastern Asia. I've never been across it myself, sir; when I was travelling in Asia I gave it the Gobi."

I don't think the dear old Editor spotted that one, he was busy rubbing the bump on the top of his venerable headpiece.

"Sportsman," of Beckenham wants to know how tall W. G. Grace, the famous cricketer, was, and how many times he scored over a hundred runs?"

"That's an easy one, Ed.," said I, "because I often watched Grace at the Oval. He was 6 ft. 2 ins. in height, and he scored over a hundred runs on no less than 121 occasions."

"Dick Withers, of Willesden, wants to know what lampblack is made from, and what it's used for?"

"Lampblack is procured from the combustion of various articles that are rich in carbon, such as resin, pitch refuse, inferior oils and fats, and from the oils obtained in the distillation of coal-tar. It is extensively used in the manufacture of printing ink, also as a pigment for oil painting, and in the waxing and lacquering of leather."

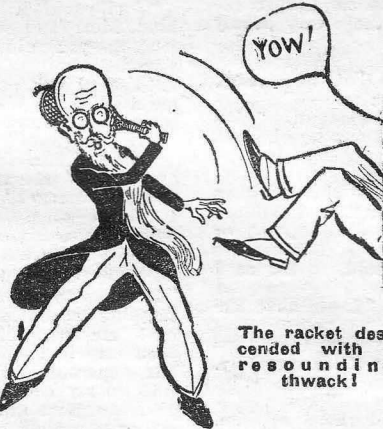
"A GEM reader in Jamaica would like us to explain how unbreakable glass is made?"

"The glass that is commonly called unbreakable, like Triplex, is made from two thin sheets of glass with a cellulose sheet between, a kind of sandwich. The glass and the cellulose are joined together under a pressure of a hundred tons. When glass so treated is struck, the cracks will radiate from the centre of the blow, but the splinters, instead of flying about, remain firmly fixed to the intermediate celluloid layer. Talking of blows, is your head better, sir?" I asked.

"You hairy noodle!" he shouted. "Get out of here! I'd forgotten all about it."

"That's all the thanks I get, chums, for being kind and considerate.

(Meet you all again next week.)



The racket descended with a resounding thwack!

know how many ounces there are in the Zoo?"

"D'you mind if I have a piece of paper and a pencil, sir, to work that out," I said. "You see, sir, there are all the elephants, they weigh millions of ounces each, and there's the buns in the refreshment-room, they weigh a bit, too!"

"You fungus-covered old gargoyle!" roared the Editor, looking frightfully cross. "The ounce is an animal, according to this reader's letter. Now, how many animal ounces, I mean, ounces that are animals, that is, animals called ounces—"

I really thought the dear old Ed. was going to throw a fit on the floor, or else an inkpot at my head, so I drew a deep breath, and said:

"The ounce, sir, is a large member of the cat family, and is sometimes called the snow-leopard. It resembles

ANOTHER SPOT OF BOTHER FROM THE PEN (cross-nibbed) OF JOHNNY CARTER OF BROKEN B RANCH!



ONE TON WILLY

IN

“The WRIGGLING
DOOK!”

CHAPTER 1.

A Bath for One-Ton.

THERE sure was some excitement when old Sam Dawson, who had been having a gay old time in Noo York City, came home to his ranch in the mesa, about ten miles south o' Hammertoe Gulch. While he had been away getting rid of a whole heap of jack, Sam had put Clem Smith, the brother of Hank, to manage his ranch, so you can guess as how Clem was sorry the old man had done come back home.

But Clem was the only sorrowful cow-waddy in them parts. Not that any of us fell on old Sam Dawson's wrinkled neck and kissed him. No, sir. If Sam Dawson had never come back at all we wouldn't have shed a tear. But when he done came back he brought with him his daughter, who had finished her time at college.

And was Peggy Dawson welcome in Hammertoe Gulch? And how? Peggy was as welcome as water in the desert—as welcome to us tired out cow-waddies as a garbage can to a coyote, if you know what I mean. And as soon as she blew into town there wasn't a puncher for miles around but what had sudden business in town.

It wasn't long, howsoever, before old Sam Dawson was plumb sorry about it. Every evening after tea he stood on his veranda and saw the cow-waddies riding in to the Double X Ranch, kicking up the dust and trying to race each other, and Peggy sat in a cane rocker, and handed out smiles like a bar-tender hands out rat poison, only a sight quicker. The whole bunch of us would scowl at each other and grin at Miss Peggy, we would, and clutter up the yard and the steps and the veranda, until old Sam Dawson's home wasn't his'n at all, and he was sure glad to light out from there and settle down comfortable in the saloon, ten miles away.

All of this wasn't surprising, because Miss Peggy sure was as pretty as a picture, and us cow-waddies, who never were lost for a word in the ord'nary way, sure was tonguetied as soon as she looked at us. We'd go all hot under the collar, we would, we'd colour up and stammer and fiddle with our hats, until every man had dirty marks round the brim of his Stetson.

But it couldn't last. No, sir. We was all head over heels in love with Miss Peggy—every man jack of us. And it wouldn't be long before we was shooting it out to find the best man. Old Sam's temper got worse, because he couldn't step across his veranda but what he fell over the legs of some love-sick cow-puncher, who looked like a calf what something had disagreed with.

Sam's temper always had been, what you might say, oncertain, and there sure was reasons for that. Seeing as how Hank Smith was my particular buddy and Hank's brother Clem had been managing the Double X for Sam

during his vacation, I was in a position to appreciate matters.

It was this way, at the Double X, though pretty Miss Peggy never knew it at the time. Old Sam had done spent so many dollars way back in Noo York City that he didn't quite know what was to happen along in the near future. I sorter guessed how it was before Hank done unloose his tongue about it. I saw that Sam wasn't looking after his water-holes, and the rails at his corrals sure were in need of attention. His shack was leaking in places, and the bunkhouse was likely to fall down come winter.

All of these things was public property along of everybody being able to see for themselves, but whereas most folks in them parts said it was because Sam was a miser, I knew, because Hank told me, and Clem told him, it was because Sam jest hadn't got the dollars. He'd spent 'em all on fast living in Noo York, which was a plumb foolish thing to ha' done. It didn't improve his temper, neether.

Every evening, when the boys congregated on his doorstep to grin at Miss Peggy he would come out rampaging like a mad hoss.

“You durned critters!” he'd bawl. “What for you cluttering up my ranch? One o' these times I'm liable to run amok with a shot-gun, and blow the pack of you from hereabouts to Utah

City, you lot o' dolled-up dummies!”

We didn't care about him. There was two dozen of us, and even old Sam Dawson couldn't tackle us, and he knew it. But One-Ton Willy blew along just then. One-Ton, as maybe you know, was our sheriff at that time. One-Ton was called One-Ton because he was, which statement, gents, goes as it lays. There sure was one ton of One-Ton, and if you doubt the avoirdupois jest ax his hoss, what had a permanent curve in his spine which wasn't by the weight of the saddle.

One-Ton Willy Wood wasn't very tall, but lengthways he was about as thin as a haystack, and as broad as the same. And the flesh that hombre carried about with him would ha' kept the animiles in Noo York Zoo in fresh meat for a Leap Year. I'll tell the world! Why, that guy could suffer with chronic consumption for ten years without anyone knowing a thing about it.

He wasn't what you'd call a good sheriff. If a dog howled at him after dark he was liable to run for miles, and swear it was the ghost o' Sitting Bull what was mistaking him for Buffalo Bill, or something like that. But he was born lucky, was One-Ton. No matter what happened along, or what us cow-waddies did to test him, sort of, he generally managed to come out of the ordeal holding the proper end of the stick, if you follow me.

And I ought to know. There was me—Johnny Carter, Hank Smith, Long Lane, and Red Ryan, what had tried

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“Once bitten, twice shy—” said the “Dook”
when he wriggled on the Ant Hill!

to take a rise out o' One-Ton, and we was still smarting a trifle over what happened, and, therefore, we was lying low for a bit. We had wondered why One-Ton hadn't come along to say howdy to Miss Peggy, but when he did blow in at the Double X we understood. He wanted to make an impression, which wasn't very hard seeing how plumb heavy he was.

Old Sam Dawson was rip-roaring and bally-hooing on his veranda about how he was going to let daylight through the hull gang of us when One-Ton comes plomping up the path, looking important, and with his badge of office shining till it sure dazzled you.

"Mister Dawson," says he, pompous like, "air these carrier annoying you any?"

"Annoying me?" howled old Dawson. "These hombres sure air as welcome as a pack o' rats, and ef they don't quit cluttering up my doorstep, I'm li'ble to p'ison 'em wi' lead."

"I can't have violence on my location," says One-Ton, sticking out his fat chest. "And, further, old-timer," says he, "there'll be no need f'r violence. I'll see about this." Then he turns to us. "Now then, boys, jest clear off out o' this afore I lets loose amongst you."

Natcherally, we don't move, and hands him a whole heap o' merry guffaws that kicked up such a shindy that Miss Peggy herself came out to take a look-see at the cause of the merriment. As soon as One-Ton sets eyes on her he sticks his chest out some more, and is plumb determined to advertise his importance.

"Whar's Hank Smith?" he asks.

"I'm right here, mountain," says Hank.

"Waal, that's sure lucky," says One-Ton. "For why? I done appoint you as my deputy, and I'll thank you to order these boys off'n this yer ranch, and ef any son of

a gun won't go, then arrest him and throw him in the coop!"

"Apple sauce!" snarls Hank. "A deputy only has to butt in when the sheriff can't tackle a job single-handed. And air you a-telling me, you suety pudden, that you is plumb oncapable—"

"Me!" howled One-Ton. "Oncapable! I'll show you, you—"

He pulls out a gun, but Miss Peggy grabs his arm. "Stop!" she says. "And put that shooter away. Drawing a gun in the presence of ladies. Is that how you was brought up?"

One-Ton looks sick.

"I got me duty to do, ma'am," he says, sheepish like. "Father," cries Miss Peggy, "air you responsible f'r this shenanigan?"

And right there we see that old Sam Dawson is plumb scared of his daughter. Maybe it's her quick tongue. I don't know. Anyway, he grins and shakes his head, with all the fire and murder gone out of him.

"No, my dear," says he. "I never done sent for the sheriff. He jest happened here, sort of, my dear. But I'll allow these punchers is plumb in my way and cluttering up the scenery some!"

"And so," she says, glaring at him, "you let this bloated, over-eating excuse for a sheriff insult my friends what have come calling on me, neighbourly like!"

"You've done got it all wrong, ma'am," said One-Ton.

"I'm not talking to you!" snaps Miss Peggy. "In any case, if my friends air annoying anybody here, I'll entertain 'em elsewhere! This way, boys!"

And she comes down the steps as light as a fairy, and leads the way to the corrals where our horses is tethered. She is dressed in riding kit, and pretty as a picture she was. One-Ton walks beside her, trying to put right the mistake he's made.

"Howsomever onpleasant, ma'am," he bleats; "duty is duty."

"I don't want to discuss the matter," she argues, with her pretty nose in the air.

"You done ought to see my side of it," says One-Ton.

"I hate to upset you, ma'am, but—"

"Oh, go away!" snaps Miss Peggy. And she puts one little hand on his fat chest and gives him a push.

He staggers back a little, and I'm not saying how it happened, but my foot sure got in the way. One-Ton tripped over it. He lets out a shrill yelp, like a puppy dog under a horse's hoof, and he sits plumb and squarely in the horse-trough.

Whoopee! You done ought to see the splash he made! For a bit I done thought Niagara had backfired, or something. The water shot up in the air, and when it settled down again there was One-Ton, more or less sodden, sitting in a trough what hadn't a drop o' water in it. No, gents, there wasn't room in that trough for water and One-Ton, and, natcherally, we guffawed a bit while Miss Peggy laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks.

One-Ton went red in the face getting out of that trough, and what he said made Miss Peggy walk away quickly. So Red Ryan goes up to One-Ton and tweaks his fat nose.

"Behave yourself, sheriff!" says he. "That's no way to talk before ladies!"

We all guffaw some more, and One-Ton is ripe and ready for murder.

"Alright," he bleats, "you wait! I'll make you laugh a different way. I'll even up with you scum f'r this!"

We'd ha' put more water in the trough and ducked him again, only Miss Peggy was on her mustang and was calling to us.

"Come on, boys! Fork yore cayuses, and we'll see who has the best horseflesh!"

You can bet your hides we was on it like birds, and away we went galloping over the mesa like we was hitting out for the frontier with a price on our heads, and we plumb forgot all about One-Ton and old man Dawson.

And for a few days both of them critters wasn't over prominent in them parts. They was lying low and growling, while we jest carried on calling on Miss Peggy and generally enjoying her sunny company.

Then one day old man Dawson gets out his old motycar and drives over the trail to Mesa City, which is the nearest point the railway comes to Hammertoe Gulch. And he comes back about noon with the funniest-looking guy a-setting beside him as ever I clapped eyes on. He had a moustache and a pointed beard, while his black clothes looked like nothing I'd ever seen.

That evening this here strange and wonderful spectacle was a-setting out on old Dawson's veranda in a cane chair beside Miss Peggy, but I'll allow he seemed to like it a whole heap better than Miss Peggy did. We all got bunched together and came a-crawling up to the veranda, sheepish like, and Miss Peggy smiled at us and shrugged her pretty shoulders.



PAT takes his exercise

Here's Pat, the Chimpanzee, taking a turn with the dumbbells. He is immensely strong and very intelligent. You can read about him in the NEW NATURE BOOK, which contains a wonderfully interesting chapter on those always amusing imps of mischief—monkeys. Every boy who loves animals—and who doesn't?—will revel in the many fascinating photographs and articles in

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One-Ton came down plomp-kerwallop a-top of the Dook guy!

"Boys," she said, "I'm plumb sorry I can't entertain you any this evening along of us, having a visitor from France. Meet the Dook of Calais, boys!"

Natcherally, we gaped, never having set eyes on a real live Dook before. We claws off our hats and says howdy. The Dook gets up and bows again and again, like he'd got hinges on his waist, and he spouts a lot of funny talk about "Bonsoir and being vairree pleased to meet us!"

He sets down again and turns to Miss Peggy, as if we was so much dirt, or something the dog has been eating; and there sure was nothing else for us to do but fade out of the picture and hit the grit into town and foregather in the saloon to growl about it. Us cow-waddies ain't 'Varsity professors, but we done have brains, more or less, and we figured it out this way. Old man Dawson had met this Dook of Calais in Noo York, and, having spent all his own money, he was aiming to marry Miss Peggy to the Dook, and so get his gnarled hands on the doocal dollars.

CHAPTER 2.

One-Ton Beats it!

WHILE we is saying hard things about it in walks One-Ton, and as we natcherally hankers for something to amuse ourselves, we is sure glad to see him.

"Howdy, sheriff?" bellows Long Lane. "And 'ow d'you like yer bath?"

"I ain't axing you f'r no sass!" bawls One-Ton. "You good-f'r-nothing punchers thinks you is the big noise round hereabouts, but mebbe the laugh'll stay with me."

"How come?" I axes.

"You get round on the Double X," he bawls, "and pester an innocent lady with your attentions which ain't wanted, and you has an idea I'm a dumb-bell! But catch this lot," he says, in a temper. "Mebbe I'll be marryin' Miss Peggy, and when that time comes her daddy'll have something to crow about, which is mor'n he'd have ef the girl is so misguided as to marry one of you penniless waddies!"

Well, can you beat it? The idea of One-Ton waddling to church with pretty Peggy Dawson sent us into fits. Then, when we had recovered from the said mirth, Hank Smith gets up on his hind legs and says his piece.

"Snap out of it, fatness!" he says. "Ef you ax me, Miss Peggy is a sight too good f'r any of us hombres. In any case, 'tis a pore chanst f'r any of us with a life-size Dook from Frenchy-land a-setting in the cane chair aside her."

"A Dook?" says One-Ton, going ghastly white with jealousy.

"Sure. He's the Dook of Calais," I says. "And I reckons old Dawson wants Peggy to be the Duchess. And what d'you know about that?"

One-Ton thinks it out for a long time, and, like the rest of us, he sees he's got about as much chance of marrying Peggy Dawson as a gila monster has of becoming President of the U.S.A. Then he snaps his fingers and his beady eyes flash so hard it makes him blink.

"A Dook, is he, from France?" he says. "That means the hombre is sure a bona fide alien. And I'm sheriff of Hammetoe Gulch, ain't I?"

"You air," says Hank Smith.

"Very well, then," says One-Ton in that squeaky voice of his'n. "This Dook fellow is an alien, and I don't care if he's the biggest Citrate o' Magnesia as ever walked, I'm going right over to the Double X and demand to take a look-see at his immigration papers. You get me?"

He sure never waited to see ef we did get him. He just left the saloon in a hurry, and us waddies went out after him, because we wanted to glimpse the fun, if any. It was plain as a bull steer's horns that One-Ton was ripe for mischief, ef you understand me. We'd luffed at him. Miss Peggy had taken a rise out of the fat idjit. He reckoned he was in love with her; he'd made up his mind to marry her, and the arrival of the Dook hombre was making him mad with jealousy. So what with one thing and two or three more, we sure figured it out there'd be things a-popping that way mighty soon. So we forked our cayuses and cantered over close behind One-Ton, who never could ride, very fast, along of being afraid of breaking his horse's back every time he flopped in the saddle.

We all arrived at the Double X together, and there was Miss Peggy looking bored a-setting in the cane rocker on the veranda, and the oily Dook of Calais was a-setting beside her, gazing at her pretty face in a way that made me fair itch to punch his dial right through to the back of his head. There was no sign of old man Dawson just then, and One-Ton wasn't worrying none, anyway. He plumps up the step and strikes a pompous attitude on the veranda, tapping his star of office.

"Sir Dook," says he, "I'm the Sheriff o' Hammetoe Gulch."

The Dook looks mad at being interrupted like; but he has to be polite, so he jumps up off his chair and bows up and down like a pump-handle.

"Bon soir, bon soir, bon soir, m'soo!" says he, or something like that. "I am so vairree glad to see you, is it not?"

"Can the apple-sass," says One-Ton, high and mighty. "You air an alien, and a foreign alien at that, mister," says he. "So come across with yore identity papers pronto."

The Dook guy stares at him, then turns to Miss Peggy. "I no understand," he says. "Why should I do this thing?"

Miss Peggy glares at One-Ton. "What's biting you?" she axes him. "Air you insultin' our guest?"

But One-Ton sure has a hide like a rhino. "Duty is duty, ma'am," says he. "I wants to lamp his papers, and lamp 'em I will!"

"Be your age!" sneers Miss Peggy. "When the Dook has been living in Noo York," she says, "for mor'n a year, why should you lose sleep over his papers?"

It looks like there's going to be a row, when Hank Smith nudges me, and, turning, I see old man Dawson riding up. He's all dolled up in his best Sunday "go-to-meeting" clothes—black jacket and breeches, black leggings, and best black Stetson, and fixed on his heels are gleaming spurs! He sure seems pleased with himself until he glimpses One-

Ton on the veranda. Then he drops from his horse and comes striding across towards the house.

"Now, what's this shenanigan?" he wants to know. "Sure, it's nothing," says Long Lane innocently. "Only the sheriff's so all-fired keen on his duty that he wants to make the Dook show his papers."

"What!" raves old Dawson. "Treat me honoured guest like a dirty crook! I'll learn him to—"
"Steady, old-timer," puts in Clem Smith. "One-Ton sure has the right to do what he is doing, even if he needn't do it. Better go slow."

"You're right," says old man Dawson. "Guess I'll go up and hint to One-Ton to shift his carcass off my step."
So up he goes, and One-Ton is laying down the law in his bleating voice.

"You're an alien, mister," he's saying; "and you sure have got to show yore papers on demand by an official of the law—which is me!"

"But, m'soo," says the Dook, "my papers are at the bottom of the trunk of me. I get them for you to-morrow."
Just then old man Dawson taps One-Ton on the shoulder.

"Sheriff," he snaps tactfully, "git!"
One-Ton hates being tapped on the shoulder, and he sort o' wriggles violently. His back crashes against old man Dawson, who is nearly knocked off his own veranda. He slips and he throws up his arms, because One-Ton knocking against anyone is sure like a side-slip on a mountain. And One-Ton goes on talking big.

"I ain't goin' to git," he says. "And I ain't being put off me stride by any doggoned foreign alien. No, sir. I axes f'r them papers, and I wants them papers!"

"You're insulting," says Miss Peggy curtly. "I guess I knows me duty," says One-Ton. "And, further, the point is—"

But old man Dawson had turned round to glare at us. He didn't want to defy the sheriff, being respectful of the law, but he sure wanted to hint to One-Ton to go away and come back some other time. And to do that he stood with his back to One-Ton's broad back, and he lifted his foot, intending to prod the seat o' One-Ton's pants with his heel, but he done clean forgot he'd got spurs on, and when he prodded he prodded hard. That spur sank deep into One-Ton!

Jumping rattlers, gents, you did ought to have seen—and heard—what happened about then! One-Ton lets rip a shriek like someone had knifed him, and he shot up in the air, he did, with a look of fatty agony on his bloated face. Right up in the air he went, and he came down again.

He had to. A lump of meat like One-Ton won't float in the air like a balloon. He came down—plomp, ker-wallop!—and he came down a-top of the Dook guy.

It wasn't no joke for the Dook; I'll allow that. One-Ton was some weight on his feet, and he weighed more on your neck, which was where he hit the Dook first. And the cane chair gave way under the strain and flattened out, so that the three of 'em—One-Ton, the Dook, and the chair—was just sprawling on the veranda, with One-Ton bawling like a calf at its first branding.

Old man Dawson goes mad at the way his guest is being entertained, and he sets one foot in One-Ton's ribs and rolls him off the Dook.

"You clomsy lump o' meat!" he bawls. "What's the big idea?" Then he helps the Dook to his feet, brushes him down, and pats his back, so's he could get back the wind One-Ton had squashed clean out of him. "Is you all right, Dook?" he asks.

The Dook takes one, two deep breaths, and he glares at One-Ton, who is scrambling to his feet and moaning.

"I demand satisfaction!" croaks the Dook. "I have been so vairree insulted, is it not?"

"I'll insult you!" howls One-Ton. "Somebody knifed

me, and I'll put the inhuman critter in the coop, I will I'll—"

"Threaten me?" bawled old man Dawson. "Guess I've had enough o' this. Git off my ground, you rampagin' balloon!"

And he pulls out his six-shooter and puts a hole through One-Ton's hat. Then another bullet sends splinters from the floor all up One-Ton's fat legs.

After that One-Ton got scared, and he jumped once and ran for it. He gets on his horse and gallops off toward town, while us hombres jest doubled up with laughing until old man Dawson starts shooting at us, and then we figured it was safer to head for the skyline, which we did.

CHAPTER 3.

The Wriggling Duke!

WHEN we got to town One-Ton was at the store buying a barrel of vaseline, along of him so sore where old Dawson had spurred him, and we hadn't been there long before there's the sound of a moty-car coming up the trail, and in it old man Dawson and the Dook. When they see One-Ton they stop and the Dook gets out, walks right up to One-Ton and slaps his face.

"Dog!" he says. "And pig! I demand the satisfaction, is it not. You fight me—eh?"

One-Ton is sore in more ways than one and he reaches for his gun.

"I'll doggoned blow you back whar you done come from," he snarls.

But old Dawson had him covered with a six-shooter. "Hands off yore gun, sheriff," he says. "The Dook is a gent back in his own country, and I aim to show him we're gents here. You'll fight the Dook in the Dook's way, if you ain't plumb yellow through and through."

"And what sort o' fightin' is that?" axes One-Ton. "You fight me wid swords," says the Dook.

"It's what they call a jewel," says old Dawson. "Meaning a duel," puts in Red Ryan.

"Waal," draws One-Ton. "Think again, old timer; I never did understand how you pull the trigger of a sword."

"Ah, no," says the Dook. "I show you, ain't it." He goes to the car and gets a sword. "You thrust—so," he says. "And I stick it through your body till she sticks out behind your back, is it not?"

"It is not," says One-Ton, going green and ghasly. "The idea of that sword tickling me, viduals makes me think it ain't right f'r a sheriff to fight jewels."

"Yellow!" hisses old Dawson, who is plumb anxious to stand in well with the Dook.

"Coward!" snarls the Dook.

And then Miss Peggy rides up on her pony, and when One-Ton sees her staring at him he knows he can't back out—or, if he does back out she'd never look at him again, let alone smile at him.

"All right," he says. "I ain't hiding behind me badge of office. I'll fight the jewel, and I'll carve that alien foreigner into so many bits the vultures'll think he's porridge."

"Guess we'll go out on the mesa," says old Dawson. "More room out there."

And we all trooped off with 'em jest to see fair play. The Dook talks to Dawson, and Dawson talks to One-Ton.

"You stands six feet apart," he says. "No—three yards. And when I drops me handkerchief you sets to, and may the bestest man win."

You can see One-Ton don't relish the idea, and I ain't blaming him none. I wouldn't like that sword puncturing me manly bosom, so I sort o' sides up to One-Ton and whispers in his off-side ear.

THIS IS THE CLAIM COUPON YOU MUST SIGN AND SEND IN IF YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS APPEARS ON PAGE 7 OF THIS ISSUE.

CLAIM COUPON No. 8

"GEM" FREE GIFT SCHEME.

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Ask two chums, to whom you have shown your name in this list, to sign in the space provided below.

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Witnesses automatically become eligible for a Free Gift.

"Cain't you speak to the Dook guy and make him see you never meant to squash him?" I says.

One-Ton gulps like something sticking in his throat.

"I'll try it," he says. So he draws the Dook aside. "Jest a minute, mister," he says. "I wants a word in private. I ain't afraid of you none, and if you must fight, then I fights. But it sure is a pity f'r you to be killed when there ain't no reason why you should git bumped off. I never meant to squash you. It was all an accident."

"Ah, no no!" says the Dook guy, rolling his eyes. "It is too late in the time. You insult me and it must be washed out in the blood of you!"

"Cain't you take a honest man's apo—apo—so sorry?" axed One-Ton.

"I demand satisfaction in blood!" hissed the Dook. "I fight you. I challenge you. So!" And—plop!—he slapped One-Ton's fat face again.

"Skunk!" howled One-Ton, knocking him flat on his back, where he lay for a minute or two.

When he got up he was mad with rage.

"The swords!" he howled. "I will kill him so dead he won't live no more! The swords!"

Well, we humoured him, but already Long Lane was beginning to grin like he'd seen something funny. We got One-Ton and the Dook facing each other, each with a sword in his right mitt. Old man Dawson stood by holding up a dirty handkerchief.

"Air you ready?" he bawls.

"Yep!" says One-Ton, wriggling his shoulders.

"One," counts old Dawson—

"two—"

And the Dook is wriggling and squirming about like he'd got the itch something bad.

"Three!" howls Dawson. And we gaped. One-Ton didn't know what to do, and stopped where he was waiting for the Dook to rush at him.

But did the Dook rush? No, sir. He was too busy wriggling. He humped his shoulders and clawed at his legs. There was agony on his face. He made one lunge at One-Ton, who stepped back so's he missed. Then he was squirming, was the Dook, and shaking himself, and scratching, and dancing round and rubbing his body, and howling like mad. Then he rolls on the ground like a dog.

Natcherally we all gape, and we was all so worked up we never noticed a high-powered car zooming up from the direction of Mesa City.

The Dook springs to his feet, slices his sword away, and starts running. As he runs his shoulders are humping up and down, and every few steps he gives a jump, then he falls down and rolls a bit, then up he gets again and goes on running. One-Ton goes after him blazing away with his gun. The Dook claws off his jacket, then his weskit, then his shirt, so that Miss Peggy, who is crying with laughing, turns her pretty head away.

But that high-powered car has stopped, and four husky men has got out. The Dook runs slap into 'em, and they collar him and hold him. We all rushes up to see what's happening, and One-Ton arrives on the scene with his gun in his hand, and his badge of office still on his shirt. One of the husky strangers starts talking.

"Good for you, Sheriff," he says. "I see you done got him for us!"

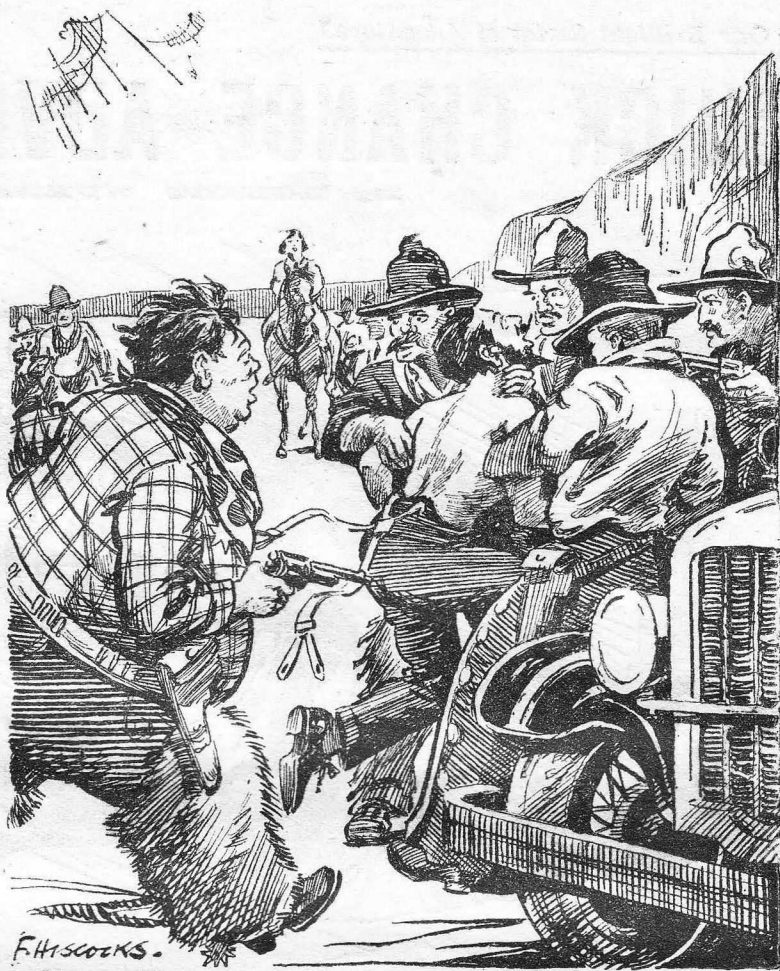
One-Ton stops dead and stares at 'em.

"Yep," says another stranger. "It was lucky we sent you that note about this yer French crook being wanted for fraud way back in New York City," says he. "But we figured he might slip through yore fingers, him being purty slick. You was on his trail only jest in time, Sheriff, and we'll see you gets the reward pronto."

One-Ton swallows at a gulp, then grins at 'em.

"Oh, yep," says he. "I done got him. But I done had to chase him some!"

The Dook talks a lot in French, which I don't understand, and maybe it's lucky I didn't understand because it sure must ha' been bad language. They don't put hand-



The Dook runs slap into the four husky men and they collar him and hold him!

cuffs on him at first along of him being too busy picking ants off himself.

Yes, gents—would you believe him—One-Ton had knocked him flat on that anthill and them ants was getting a bit of their own back off the Dook, biting chunks out of him, which was what saved One-Ton from being prodded with a sword. It's a fact!

What d'you know about that, eh? One-Ton was born lucky that way, and the way he strutted about Hammertoe after that made us want to shoot him on sight, only we never gave him away or it 'ud get our burg a bad name with the authorities for allowing such a fat idjit to be our Sheriff. The Dook was taken away and put in quod, which sure came as a blow to old man Dawson, who was wanting him to marry Peggy and sink money in the ranch. Of course, the Dook thought old Dawson was rich, and wanted to marry Peggy so's he could get hold of the ranch. Which shows you how you cain't believe all you see in this world.

But Long Lane allowed he wasn't surprised altogether.

"Nunno, buddies," he said. "I knew what was coming. I saw that Dook guy start wriggling, and I saw a big buck ant going for a look-see in his off-side ear. I guessed what 'ud happen after that."

But what happened later on was more'n anybody guessed. Old man Dawson had no money left, and had to sell his ranch, and he went back to Noo York taking Miss Peggy with him, so none of us ever married her, and I don't know who did. But it was a sure enough loss to Hammer-toe Gulch when she left us, and there wasn't a cow-puncher for miles around but what had a broken heart and went plumb off his grub for six hours, while One-Ton strutted around the place saying what an all-fired, gold-plated, smart sheriff he was, which sure got our goat, and then some.

THE END.

(Next week's GEM will contain another amusing yarn of One-Ton Willy. Note the title: "THE GHOST OF THE GULCH!")

Our Brilliant Serial of Adventure!

CHICK CHANCE—ADVENTURER!

By ROBERT MURRAY.



HOW THE STORY STARTED.

CHICK CHANCE, R.A.F., V.C., D.S.O., in company with his two chums, Herbert and Horace, late air-mechanic and pilot-sergeant of Chick's own squadron, agree to fly to Central Africa to look for a Professor Latimer, who has come into a fortune of half a million pounds, but does not know it. If Latimer is not found within three months the money is to go to Burk Roscoe, an arrant scoundrel. After an unsuccessful attempt to murder Lobula, a native guide who alone knows where Latimer is, the cunning Roscoe joins up with the party by clinging to the undercarriage of the plane. A substantial bribe to give up the hunt fails to tempt Chick, and the airmen continue their journey until they reach the Mountain of the Lion where, according to Lobula, the professor was taken captive by the giant warriors of the Amazeli. A series of exciting adventures with pigmies, lions, and giants follow, after which Chick and his chums make the startling discovery that Lobula is missing. Seizing his opportunity, during the excitement which prevails, the treacherous Roscoe, armed with a loaded gun in each hand, orders the airmen from the plane and leaves them stranded in the heart of unknown Africa without food, weapons, or the slightest chance of finding their way back to civilisation.

(Now read on.)

THE BLACK CITY!

ONCE Chick Chance paused, and glanced back over his shoulder, still scarcely able to credit that Roscoe really intended to abandon them to the certain death that lurked within the surrounding forest, jungle, and fever swamps.

But Roscoe was still on the alert, standing by the plane with his guns poised one in each hand.

"Walk, you dogs!" he snarled again, and fired a warning shot that sang viciously past Horace's head. "And keep on walking until you're out of range!"

"The skunk! The filthy, murdering hound!" gulped Horace. "He might just as well put a bullet in us and have done with it. And to think as Herbert, here, saved him from getting chewed up by them crocodiles yesterday!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,164.

That's all the thanks you get for giving a bloke a square deal!"

"We haven't finished with Roscoe!" vowed Chick. "We're not beaten yet, Horace. I'll have a settlement with that treacherous snake if it takes me ten years to do it!"

Braving a second shot, Chick halted, and threw another glance over his shoulder. Roscoe had turned his back, and was in the act of clambering up into the monoplane. At the same instant a black figure reared up from a clump of grass ten yards away, and covered the intervening space in one gigantic bound.

"My gosh—look!" gasped Horace. "What's that?"

The black figure swooped through the air and landed squarely on Burk Roscoe's shoulders. A wild yell rang out, followed by the crash of a gun.

"Help, help!" Roscoe's voice died away in a strangled gurgle as he toppled to the ground, with his mysterious assailant on top of him. There was a whirling of arms and legs, and a thud of mighty blows.

Then one figure stood erect with a ringing shout of triumph. It was the white man who remained sprawling in an inert heap, while his conqueror turned towards the distant airmen, waving his hands above his head, and jumping excitedly from one foot to the other.

Chick Chance was the first to realise the astonishing truth. "By thunder, it's Lobula!"

Still carrying the limp figure of Herbert slung over one shoulder, Chick turned and pounded back towards the monoplane.

"Lobula, you old son of a gun! By James, I'm glad to see you again!" Chick's voice was a trifle husky as he seized the faithful native's hand and pumped it gratefully up and down. "If this isn't the greatest bit of good luck I've ever known! You couldn't have turned up at a more timely moment!"

"I am glad," said the big black simply. "I was hiding over there in the jungle, wondering what had become of my masters, the white men, when I heard and saw the little house that has wings flying through the air. When it landed I ran towards it, but hid again when I saw that the man who is our enemy was pointing at you with the guns that speak quickly, and many times."

"He put one over on us, Lobula," Chick explained as best he could. "He was going to do a guy with the plane, and leave us stranded here. We should have been gone coons if it hadn't been for you, old son. You—you haven't killed him?"

"No; but perhaps it would be better if I did!" suggested the black gravely. "Why should he live to bring more trouble upon you, as certainly he will do?"

"He won't get another chance!" declared Chick grimly. "Get some rope out of the plane and tie the rat's hands and feet, Horace."

Horace performed this agreeable task with extreme pleasure, and a thoroughness that left nothing to be desired. Neither a Hercules nor a Houdini could have escaped from

the cunningly knotted cords with which he pinioned Burk Roscoe's limbs.

Herbert, who had recovered his senses, and had been duly informed of all that had occurred during his period of oblivion, viewed the proceedings with earnest approval.

"Only took me eye off the polecat for half a minute," he declared in mitigation of his lack of caution. "Socked me over the head when I wasn't looking! There's gratitude for you. But what about old Lobula, here? How did he come to leave the back door open last night for all them pigmies to get in and disturb our sleep?"

Lobula displayed a ragged gash on the back of his woolly head, and explained somewhat sheepishly and vaguely that it must have been a deftly-thrown spear that had caught him napping. The pigmies had dragged him some distance into the forest, and left him for dead, stuffed head-first into a hollow tree.

It was morning, and the plane had gone by the time he had managed to find his way back. But he had been just in time to see the troop of black warriors with the leopard-skin garments and the feathered head-dresses, marching back towards the Mountain of the Lion.

"Yes, they were indeed the Amazeli," he said gravely in answer to Chick's question. "There are many thousands of them living in the Black City, beyond the mountains, and it is there that we shall find the white man, Latimer, if he is still alive."

"Then we've got to find him pretty quick," declared Chick, with a serious nod of his head. "We've already used over a third of our supply of petrol. What sort of a crowd are these Amazeli, Lobula?"

"They must be one of the oldest tribes in Africa," informed the native. "They are great warriors; but they do not seek to fight unless they are first attacked or strangers attempt to enter their country beyond the Mountain of the Lion, where it is said that there is much of the yellow metal that you white men call gold, and many of the hard, white stones you dig out of the clay far to the east."

"Diamonds, you mean?" jerked Chick. "But if these Amazeli are such a mind-their-own-business sort of a bunch, why did they attack Latimer and his daughter, and make prisoners of them? If that is what did happen."

"Because Master Latimer was the only white man who has ever gazed down upon the Black City," explained Lobula. "And the Amazeli are wise enough to know that where one white man has been, many others will follow. Possibly they made Latimer a prisoner in order to prevent him returning to tell others of what he had seen."

"You mean that you and Latimer actually visited the Black City?"

Lobula shook his head, and pointed towards the distant range of mountains.

"There is a gateway through those mountains which is known only to the Amazeli, and which is carefully guarded. As we could not find it, we climbed to the crest of one of those peaks and gazed down upon the Black City. That same night we were attacked, and I was the only one who managed to get away. It took us a year to get this far; it took me just nine moons to make my way back to Lakola!"

"And we could do the journey in under twenty-four hours!" mused Chick. "Y'know, somehow I can't help sympathising with these Amazeli. I can understand there not wanting their country over-run by a lot of white men. But all the same, our job is to try to find out what has become of Latimer and his daughter, and take them back to England if they are still alive. The question is—how?"

"Let the white men listen to me," suggested Lobula wisely. "You are but three against thousands, and more might be accomplished by friendly words than by the use of the big and little guns whose voice is death."

"Sure thing. We don't want any bloodshed if we can help it," agreed Chick. "I'd rather arbitrate than exterminate."

"The house that has wings and can fly is bound to bring much wonder and fear to the Amazeli," declared Lobula. "Let the white men fly boldly to the Black City, and demand speech with the King of the Amazeli. Tell him that you come in peace, and you seek only the two white people whom he took prisoners many moons ago. If he will release them, you will return in peace from whence you came. If you fail to return, make it clear to him that many other houses that fly will drop from the clouds and land hundreds of white men with chattering guns to make war on the Amazeli."

Chick lit a cigarette as he sat in the shade beneath the wing of the monoplane, and stared thoughtfully towards the distant Mountain of the Lion. None noticed that Burk Roscoe had recovered consciousness, and was listening with all ears, though his eyes were still closed.

"That's a pretty sound scheme, Lobby, old son," said Chick slowly. "But supposing the boss fellow of the Amazeli calls our bluff? He might refuse to be impressed and sling the whole bunch of us into the local clink. And he'd be dead right. I don't suppose another white man'll visit the Black City in the next hundred years."

The young airman suddenly jumped to his feet, his eyes gleaming with excitement as he clapped Lobula approvingly on the back.

"All the same, I think you've given me the right idea," he cried enthusiastically. "But it'll have to be worked in a certain way. The first thing to do is to fly over the Black City and see how the land lies."

Lobula picked Roscoe up as though he was a roll of old carpet, and stowed him away in the tail-end of the fuselage. A few minutes later the big monoplane leaped from the ground, and soared up into the clear blue sky. The motor was working as sweetly as a sewing-machine, and a glance at the indicators satisfied Chick that there was ample petrol left for another twenty-four hours' flight.

"Our luck's changed!" he mused, as he circled for altitude before heading towards the distant range of mountains that formed a natural barrier between them and their destination. "We've got Lobula back again, and I'll take jolly good care that Roscoe doesn't get the chance to spring any more surprises on us. And now for the Black City!"

Chick knew that the biggest part of their job still lay in front of them. First, they had to ascertain if Eustace Latimer and his daughter were still alive, and then remained the task of rescuing them from the Amazeli.

The engine commenced to labour slightly in the rarefied atmosphere, and he levelled out when the needle of the altimeter registered twelve thousand feet. Lobula pointed downward to a ribbon of water that wound across the landscape and seemed to disappear at the foot of the mountains.

"River Tambaze," he informed them. "Him go down into big hole in ground, and come out again other side of mountains. That's what's called place of Roaring Waters."

Ten thousand feet below loomed a huge, circular depression, like a gigantic basin that was ringed on all sides by the towering mountains. It was at least ten miles in diameter, and was bisected by the waters of the River Tambaze, that poured forth from a cleft in the hills and disappeared through another opening at the farther side of the deep valley.

It was from the very centre of this granite-walled crater that a tapering column of rugged black rock towered sheer into the sky and culminated in the rough-hewn semblance of a crouching lion—a colossal piece of natural sculpture that the hand of man could never have achieved.

"I don't see anything of no Black City!" declared Horace, as he peered over the edge of the cockpit. "But there's certainly some niggers moving about down there. Looks peaceful enough to me from here."

Chick dived the plane to four thousand feet. The roar of the powerful motor was flung back in a thousand echoes as he circled around the gigantic pillar of rock that was known as the Mountain of the Lion. At the base, where it was ringed by the waters of the river, he could glimpse signs of commotion and excitement; see the glint of spear-heads, and hear a furious blowing of ox-horns.

"By gosh! Look at that!" exclaimed Herbert. He was pointing excitedly towards the huge rock that formed the lion's head. It in itself was as big as a house, and from the gaping jaws there was now ascending a thin column of black smoke.

(Chick and his chums are getting near their goal now. Don't miss next week's thrilling instalment whatever you do.)

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'DIZZY' DESMOND—DAREDEVIL!

(Continued from page 19.)

"Oh! Then—then he never told at all!" gasped Tom. "Oh dear!"

"He has told me nothing, and has refused to speak when I have asked him—as he refuses to speak now," said Kildare quietly. "Anything else, Merry?"

"I—I— Oh, no!" gasped Tom, almost wishing the floor would open and swallow him. "We—we've been awful asses, Kildare! I'm sorry—"

He turned to Desmond Kildare.

"Nothing to be sorry about!" said that youth coolly. "It was my own fault from the beginning! I was a conceited fool! I—I overheard you saying that you expected I might turn out a sneak, and so like an idiot I played up—pretended I was going to sneak, and that I was an awful cad! I thought it funny at the time, and afterwards—well, it was too late to explain. That's all!"

"Ahem!" It was a cough from the Head—a dignified cough. Evidently the conversation was getting too frivolous for the august headmaster of St. Jim's. As a matter of fact even Kildare had forgotten his presence for the moment. "Ahem! I—I think that is quite enough—all that is necessary to explain this matter, Kildare! Obviously your cousin has acted somewhat foolishly, while these other boys have been far too rash at jumping to conclusions! It seems to me that this matter would be better settled among themselves. With regard to the—ahem!—outrage on Mr. Ratchiff, I will discuss with Mr. Railton what punishment is to be inflicted. For the time being you may go!"

And the juniors went, taking Desmond Kildare with them.

The matter was explained and discussed in greater detail over tea in Study No. 10 that evening. Desmond Kildare was Tom Merry and Co.'s guest, and with them also were Figgis & Co. and Blake & Co.—quite a big crowd, in fact. Desmond had confessed his folly in attempting to pull the august legs of Tom Merry & Co., and they, in turn, had confessed to being awful asses for having ever suspected such a chap as Desmond Kildare at all.

During the proceedings Grundy came in to ask the new chap to shake hands, and he also stayed to tea—in rather a condescending sort of way, of course.

Over tea Desmond Kildare modestly admitted that he could play cricket and handle an oar, and that quite settled the matter for Tom Merry.

That evening Tom visited Kildare, who visited Mr. Railton, with the result that Desmond's transfer to the New House was cancelled—greatly to the disgust and wrath of Figgis & Co. when they knew.

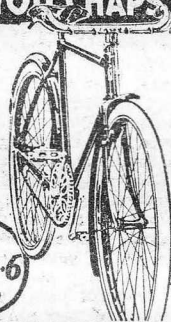
The Head discussed the punishments, and the following day they were duly carried out—six a-piece and a severe lecture from the Head! That was all; the Head, evidently taking into consideration the recent punishments for the raid, letting them down far more lightly than they had expected. But the punishments soon wore off, and for the rest of Desmond Kildare's temporary stay at St. Jim's he was a close chum of Tom Merry & Co.—the fellows who once called him "sneak"!

THE END.

(There will be another rousing, complete story of Tom Merry & Co. in next week's GEM, entitled: "THE SCHOOLBOY AIRMEN!" Chums, you're on a real treat here, believe me.—Ed.)

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