

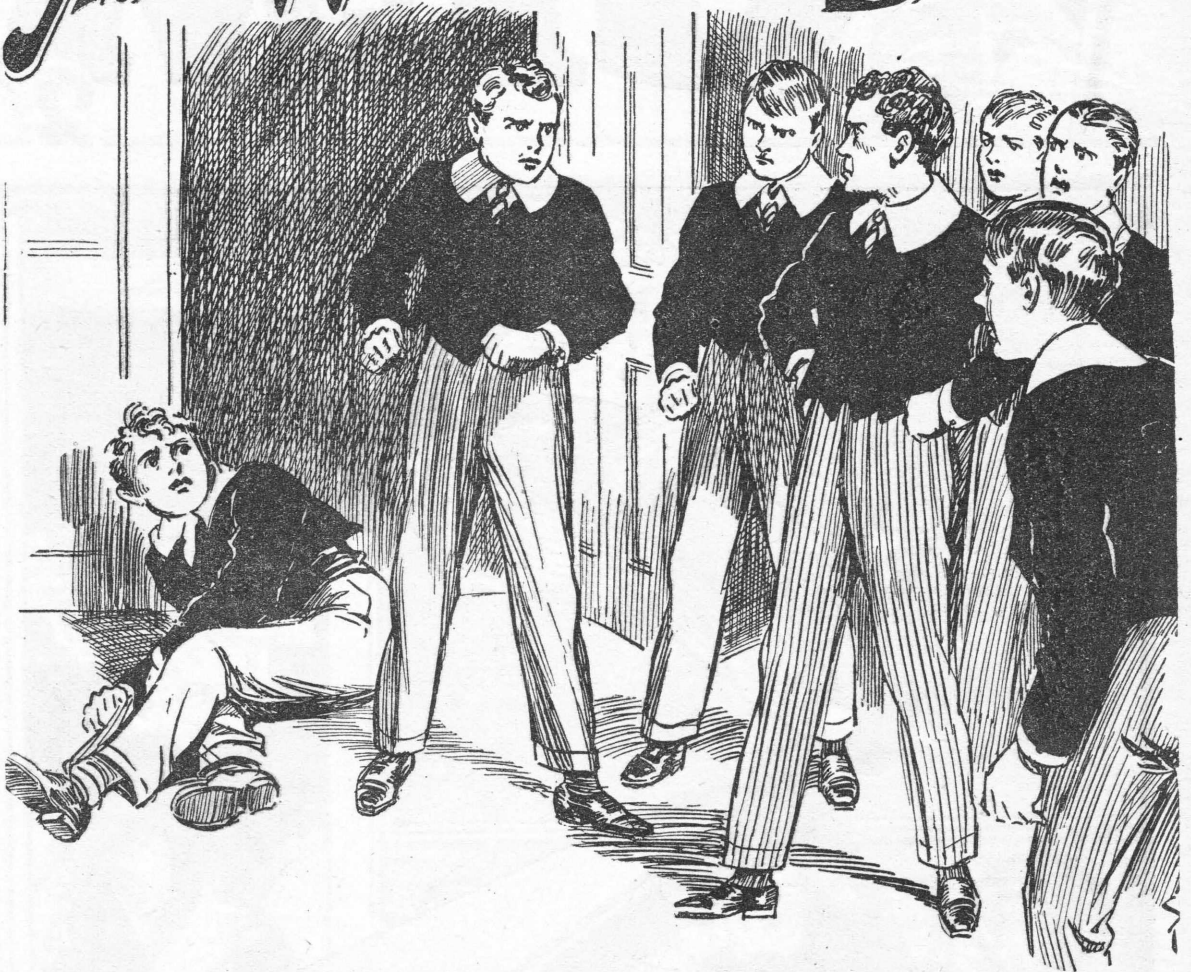
"THE WORST BOY AT ST. JIM'S!" Great School Story of Tom Merry & Co. WITHIN!

The GEM

2d



The Worst Boy



All sorts of new boys have entered St. Jim's at various times, but never such a thorough-going scamp and bully as Albert Clyne proves to be. Yet not for the first time does the newcomer learn that the way of the transgressor is hard!

CHAPTER 1. The New Boy!

"I SHALL wefuse to stand it!"

"But—"

"Pway don't argue about the mattah, Blake. I shall wefuse to stand it!"

"But—"

"It is quite useless to talk about it, Dig. I wepeat that I shall wefuse to stand it!"

"But—"

"Pway don't pursue the topic, Hewwies, deah boy. For the last time, I shall uttably wefuse to stand it!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House at St. Jim's, jammed his monocle into his eye and screwed up his brow into an expression of determination worthy of Ajax when engaged in defying the lightning.

"But it can't be helped, ass," said Jack Blake. "We don't like it any more than you do. It's rough on us—"

"I wegard it as uttably wuff, and I wefuse—"

"Not much good refusing," said Herries. "You see, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,354.

Railton's Housemaster, and he's got old-fashioned notions about having his own way without consulting the juniors."

"Pway don't attempt to be funny, Hewwies. We get enough of that fwom Lowthah. I shall wefuse to stand anythin' of the sort!"

"Then you'd better go and tell Mr. Railton so!" grinned Digby.

"Vewy well!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Jack Blake, in alarm, as the swell of St. Jim's turned towards the door, with the evident intention of going direct to the Housemaster's study. "Don't be an ass, you know!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass, Blake! I am goin' to Mr. Wailton's study—"

"You can't go to Railton. He would sling you out, or give you a hundred lines for your cheek. Now, don't be an ass, Gussy, if you can help it!"

"I wepeat that I am not goin' to stand it, and there is no wesource but to wemonstwate with Mr. Wailton."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy marched out of Study No. 6, very much on his dignity.

Blake & Co. looked at one another helplessly.

-STARRING TOM MERRY & CO. AND A NEWCOMER TO ST. JIM'S!

AT ST. JIM'S!

By
**MARTIN
CLIFFORD.**

"I suppose it's no good arguing with him!" grunted Herries. "It'll mean a hundred lines!"
"Serve him right!" growled Digby. "Of all the obstinate asses—"

"Come on!" said Blake. "We'll follow him, anyway."
The chums of the Fourth left the study after D'Arcy. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was going down the corridor with long strides. He was in deadly earnest. Tom Merry of the Shell called to him on the stairs, but he did not even hear. He marched on towards the study of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry, staring at Blake as he came by. "Anything wrong with Gussy?"

Blake grinned.
"Yes, he's going to lecture Railton, and we're going to bring the pieces away when Railton has done with him!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake, Digby, and Herries hurried on. Arthur Augustus had reached the door of the Housemaster's study, and raised his hand to tap.

"Stop it, you shrieking ass!" said Blake, in a shrill whisper. "I tell you—"

"I decline to stop it!"

Tap!

"Come in!"

Arthur Augustus opened the door and marched in. Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, was sitting at his table. A lad of between fourteen and fifteen was standing on the hearthrug, and the Housemaster had been speaking to him when the tap came at the door.

He was a slim—or, rather, thin—boy, with a thin face and prominent cheekbones, dark, keen eyes, and curly hair. He was a stranger to St. Jim's, and this was evidently his first interview with the School House master, but there was no lack of self-possession in his manner.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, however, was too preoccupied to notice the presence of the stranger.

He walked up to the Housemaster's table, and Mr. Railton viewed the signs of excitement in his face with some astonishment.

"What is it, D'Arcy? You are interrupting me."

"I am extremely sorry, sir, to interrupt you."

"Well, state your business, please."

"I have taken the liberty, sir, of comin' to see you to wemonstwate—"

"Eh?"

"To wemonstwate, sir," said D'Arcy firmly. "I have just heard ffrom Blake, sir, that there is a new fellow comin' into the Fourth Form at St. Jim's—"

"That is correct."

"And he is put into the School House—"

"Quite so."

"And Blake informs me—I could scarcely ccredit my yahs, sir—that he is to be shoved into Study No. 6, sir!"

"Exactly."

"May I point out to you, sir, that we are four there already, and the quartahs are vewy ccrowded with four?"

"Really, D'Arcy—"

"Yaas, wathah, sir. Now here comes a new boundah—"

"D'Arcy!"

"And he is to be put into Study No. 6. I appeal to you, sir, as a sportsman—oughtn't some of the other studies to be given a turn first?"

"D'Arcy!"

"I am quite awah, sir, that Study No. 6 is the largest study in the Fourth, but there are four chaps in it already, and Hewwies is a big one. The new fellow could be put into Mellish's study. Mellish is wathah a wottah, but there's woom in his study. Weally, Mr. Wailton, I am quite awah that this shovin' of an outsiders into our study is an ovah-sight. But I appeal to you to have it set wight."

"D'Arcy, you will take a hundred lines—"

"Bai Jove!"

"For impertinence!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "And if you say another word I will double it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Two hundred lines!" said the Housemaster. "Now, you may go!"

"Yaas, sir; but—"

Mr. Railton glanced at the door. Blake, Herries, and Digby were lookers-on at the scene. Mr. Railton signed to Blake to come in. Blake entered.

"Blake, I have already informed you that a new boy in the Fourth Form would share Study No. 6 with you—"

"Yes, sir," said Blake meekly.

"This is the new boy. Clyne, this is Blake, the head boy in your study."

The new boy looked at Blake coolly.

There was none of the shyness of the average new boy about him, and there was something in his extreme self-confidence that irritated Blake.

"Will you take Clyne to Study No. 6," said Mr. Railton, without looking at the crestfallen D'Arcy, "and show him about the House, Blake? I have told him that you will look after him at first."

"Yes, sir!" murmured Blake.

"You may go, boys! Go with Blake, Clyne. He will show you your quarters, and tell you anything you wish to know."

"Thank you, sir!" said Clyne.

The juniors left the Housemaster's study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy lingered behind.

"You may go, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Railton, very distinctly.

"Yaas, sir. But—"

"One word more, sir, and I shall cane you."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Mr. Railton, rising to his feet.

"Weally, sir—"

But the Housemaster looked so dangerous that Arthur Augustus thought he had better hold out his hand. He received a severe cut that made him wish he had reflected a little more before coming to remonstrate with Mr. Railton.

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's nose was very high in the air as he followed his chums down the passage.

CHAPTER 2.

The Mystery of Clyne!

"THIS is a bit thick!" growled Jack Blake, looking round for sympathy. "Blessed if they don't seem to take me for a blessed dry nurse in this school! Why should I have this helpless duffer dropped on

my hands?"
"It's rough," said Herries. "But the worst of it is that he's coming into the study. I don't see how we can stand it."

"It's hard cheese," said Digby.

They made these remarks with the charming candour of schoolboys, regardless of the new boy who stood listening to them.

But Albert Clyne did not seem at all discomposd.

He only grinned, and appeared to be amused by the situation more than anything else. His grin was very irritating to the deeply injured chums of the Fourth. They had had Study No. 6 to themselves for so long that they had come to look upon the place as their own private property.

"It wouldn't be so bad," went on Blake, much incensed, "if it were a decent chap coming into the study, instead of a grinning monkey with a face like a kite."

"Just so!" agreed Digby. "Still, if he grins at us, we'll jolly soon change his face for him!"

SPECIAL NEW ST. FRANK'S STORY STARTS NEXT WEEK!

(See Page 27.)

"Better bump him to start with, just to teach him manners," remarked Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, coming up. "I have just weccived a vewy severe blow fwom Waitton, and it is all through this new beast! I wegard it as the pwopah capah to bump the wottah."

The new boy retreated a pace.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "Pax, my sons! You are not going to bump me! As for your old study, I don't want to come to it."

"You've been to school before?" exclaimed Blake immediately.

The new boy nodded.

"Yes, rather!"

"And why did you leave your old school?"

A faint trace of red came into the new boy's cheeks.

"It didn't suit me," he answered, "and my guardian took me away. That's why I've come here—"

"Well, you won't find this school suit you if you don't mind your 'p's' and 'q's,'" said Blake warningly. "As head of the Fourth Form, I have to look after you youngsters. I don't stand any cheek from any member of the Form. If you're going to be in our study you'll have to be quiet and civil—awfully civil—and make yourself useful. This is Study No. 6. Come in!"

They entered that famous apartment.

A junior was sitting on the corner of the table, swinging his legs. He looked round and grinned as the chums came in.

But Jack Blake did not return the grin. He did not like Mellish of the Fourth, and he stared at him with grim inquiry.

"What do you want here?" he demanded.

"Yaas, wathah, Mellish, deah boy! We bar boundahs in this study, you know."

"Oh, rats!" said Mellish. "I hear you've got a new chap coming into this study—chap named Clyne—Albert Clyne."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I wanted to see him. I used to know a chap of that name, and—"

"Well, here he is," said Digby.

Clyne followed the chums into the study. He started as he saw Mellish, and the colour came into his cheeks.

"By Jove! Clyne!"

"So you know him?" said Blake. "Blessed if I see why you shouldn't have your very friend in your study! If you ask Railton, he would likely give you permission."

"Yaas, wathah! And we would back you up, deah boy. We object to havin' this stwangah thwust in upon us, you know. It isn't only that the study isn't large enough for five, but the pwesence of a stwangah distwacts me in my studies—"

"Blessed if I know what you're talking about!" said Clyne, who was looking very uneasy. "I've never met that chap before."

Mellish laughed unpleasantly.

"Haven't you? I can recall the circumstances to your memory if you like. I had a cousin at Redclyffe when you were there."

Clyne turned scarlet. Mellish's shot seemed to strike home, and the chums of the Fourth looked on in wonder. It was clear that Mellish knew something about the new boy which the latter was far from willing should become public.

"Bai Jove! There seems to be a mystewy here," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, looking from one to another through his eyeglass. "I weally considah—"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Mellish airily. "I know this chap, that's all. I had a cousin at his old school, and when I visited my cousin one day I happened to find out that—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Clyne.

"All right! I say, I'll have a stroll round with you if you like," said Mellish. "I'll show you round St. Jim's."

"Good!"

And the two left the study together.

Blake & Co. looked at one another in amazement.

"Bai Jove, deah boys! I hardly know what to make of that, you know," remarked Arthur Augustus. "There seems to be some secwet between Mellish and that new kid."

"Something that won't bear the daylight, I expect," grunted Blake. "Clyne looked nervous when he saw Mellish. Still, it's no business of ours."

"No, wathah not, but—"

"If we can manage to shift off the new chap into Mellish's study it will be all O.K.!" said Blake. "We'll try, at any rate."

"Yaas, wathah! The pwesence of a stwangah distwacts me in the pwactice of my singin'—"

"Your which?"

"I have already told you, Blake, that I have a good voice. I have a weamarkably sweet and cleah tenah, and I

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have decided to sing at the opewah when I gwow up. Meanwhile, I am goin' to twain."

"You're not going to train in this study," said Herries. "Why, you objected to my bulldog here because you said he was noisy."

"Weally, Hewwies, I twust that you do not mean to institute a compawison between my tenah voice and the gwowl of your wotten bulldog. I wegard it as a duty to cultivate my gift. It is difficult to pwactise without a musical instwument—"

"Oh, if you mean you'd like me to accompany you on my cornet, I don't know that I should mind!"

"I don't mean anythin' of the kind, Hewwies. I shall twy to obtain Mr. Waitton's permish to use his piano, and in the meantime, I have purchased a tuning-fork."

"What on earth are you going to do with a tuning-fork?" demanded Blake.

D'Arcy smiled the smile of superior knowledge.

"That will enable me always to sing in tune, deah boy. F'winstance, I am takin' up Waltah's song in the first act of the 'Meistersingers' as a start—"

"My hat! Why don't you try something like 'Stormy Weather'?"

"I should uttably wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I should wefuse even to considah the suggestion!" said D'Arcy frigidly. "I like Wagner's music, and I considah Waltah's songs quite up to my abilities—"

"Ye-es, but are your abilities up to the songs?"

"As I have a weamarkable tenah voice, I wathah think so, deah boy. Now, I have a tunin'-fork that gives the 'A.' Waltah's song is in 'D,' so I have only to go up the scale fwom 'A' to 'D' to get into the wight key. See?"

"Yes; it's as clear as mud."

"I'll show you." D'Arcy jerked a tuning-fork out of his waistcoat pocket and struck it on the nearest article, and the fork gave forth a deep-tone "A." "That's 'A.' Now I am goin' to 'C'—"

"I believe I've got an appointment in Tom Merry's study—"

"Pway wait a minute, deah boy—"

But Blake was gone.

"Now, you see, I'm in 'D,'" said D'Arcy to Herries and Digby. "That's my key. Now, for my first note I want the mediant—that's 'F.' I just wun up fwom 'D' to 'F'— Where are you goin', Hewwies?"

"I am going to run, too."

"Pway don't wun away, Hewwies!"

But Hewwies had "wun away."

"After all, Dig, you are a much more musical chap than those silly asses," said D'Arcy, placing himself between the unfortunate Digby and the door. "Now, listen, and you will see that I am in the cowwect key."

And Arthur Augustus sang:

"Am stillen Herd, in Winterzeit,
Wann Burg und Hoff mir eingeschnit—"

"Pway don't buzz off, Dig. I will sing it in English, if you pwefer it.

"By silent hearth, in winter-time,
When town and hall in snow were hid—"

Arthur Augustus ceased singing all of a sudden. Digby had made a rush to escape, and Arthur Augustus received a charge that bowled him over. He sat down on the carpet then, and his tuning-fork flew into the grate. It struck the fender and sent forth a musical "A" unheeded.

Arthur Augustus looked round him rather dazedly. Digby was gone, and the musical junior had the study to himself. He rose to his feet and brushed the dust from his trousers.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured. "It's vewy hard on a chap to have to live among a lot of feahfully unmusical duffahs. But I weally think I had bettah cultivate my voice as a mattah of duty."

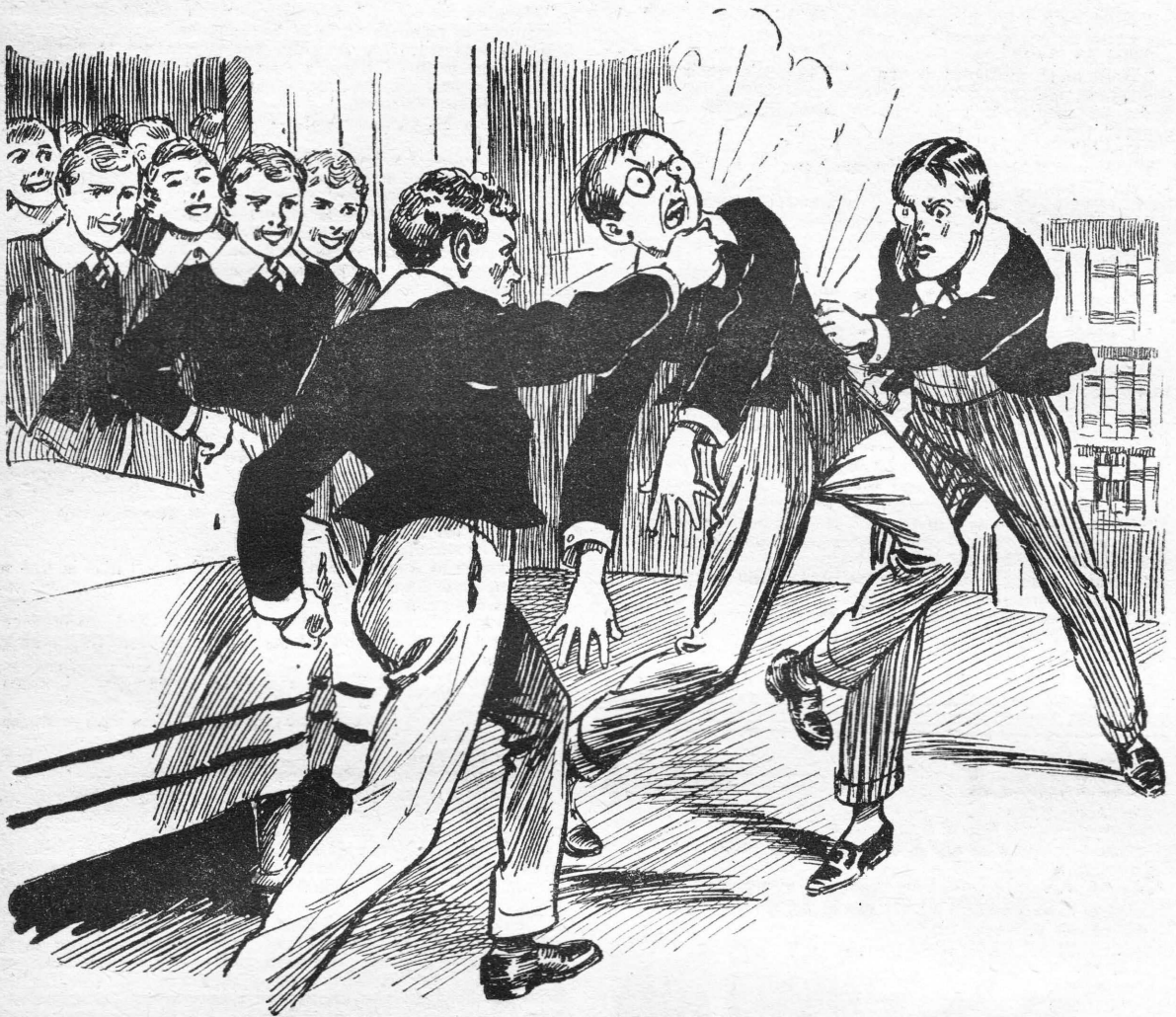
And comforted by the reflection, the amateur tenor picked up his tuning-fork and resumed practice.

CHAPTER 3.

A Leader in Evil!

WALLY D'ARCY, the younger brother of the one and only Augustus, came along the Fourth Form passage whistling shrilly. Wally was in his usual state—untidy hair and soiled collar and inky fingers. The contrast between Wally and his major was always painful. Once or twice D'Arcy minor had attempted to reform, and had been seen, for the space of two or three hours, in a clean collar. But then there was certain to be a backsliding.

Wally's shrill whistle rang through the passage, and a



"Companions and schoolmates," exclaimed Skimpole, rushing between the fighting Gussy and Clyne, **"I entreat you to cease this brutal display!"** But the combatants took no heed of Skimpole, and in a moment the peacemaker caught an uppercut from Clyne and a body blow from Gussy!

group of juniors standing at the corner turned angrily to look at him. They were of the Fourth Form and the Shell, and the cheek of a Third Former, in sauntering along the passage with his hands in his pockets and whistling like a locomotive, naturally raised their ire.

"Shut up!" yelled out Gore of the Shell.

Wally glanced at him, cocked one eye mockingly, and whistled.

If Gore had asked him civilly, Wally might have left off—possibly; but anything in the shape of bullying always, as D'Arcy minor expressed it, put his back up.

The group of juniors glared at him. They were Gore's set—Sharpe and Mellish, of the Fourth, and Crofton, and the new boy, Albert Clyne. Clyne, though his first meeting with Mellish had not been exactly friendly, seemed to have chummed up with him and his friends very quickly. It was only his second day at St. Jim's, and he was already admitted to the full honours of a member of Gore & Co.

Clyne, in fact, had made his mark already in the lower Forms.

According to his own account, he had been what he called a "coughdrop" at his old school, and had carried on pretty much as he liked there.

The St. Jim's juniors believed as much as they chose of his narratives. But if half of them were true, it was clear that Clyne was an accomplished young blackguard for his age.

What good there might be in the boy it was not easy to see. He had no scruples about lying, and he was addicted to all the petty vices of the worst class of fags, such as smoking in secret, washing only the parts of his person that met the public eye, and playing ill-natured tricks, on which he usually contrived that the blame should fall upon innocent parties.

His influence was wholly bad on others. But thoroughness is always a quality that appeals to boys, and Clyne was such a thorough young rascal that he was certain to have an admiring following.

Mellish and Gore were the two worst boys in the School House, probably; but they seemed only bunglers in the arts in which the new boy was a master.

Clyne looked at Wally now, and then at his companions. "When I was at my old school," he remarked, "we didn't stand cheek from a fag in the Third Form."

"Oh, didn't you?" growled Gore, feeling that his dignity as a Shell fellow was assailed. "Well, I don't, either."

"We should have rocked him," said Clyne.

"What do you mean by rocked him?" asked Gore, eager to learn something new in the noble art of bullying. "That's new here."

"Collar the young cad, and I'll show you!"

"Right-ho!"

Wally was surrounded in a moment, and Gore and Mellish collared him. Wally was only in the Third, but he was a pugilist of dreaded skill among the "Infants," and he had a left-hander that was known and feared. Clyne had the pleasure of making its acquaintance now, Wally's left catching him on the point of the chin and sending him with a crash against the wall. He bumped on the wall and slid down to a sitting posture, looking somewhat dazed.

Wally struggled furiously as the others grasped him, but he had no chance against the odds.

He was pinioned by Gore and Mellish and Crofton, and Clyne staggered to his feet with a face like a demon.

"Hold the young cad!" he panted.

"We've got him!"

"Now we'll rock him to sleep! Sit him down, and tie his wrists to his ankles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold on!" muttered Sharp. "You can't work that in the open passage. You'll have a prefect down on you when he begins to yelp. Bring him along to the box-room!"

"Good!"

Wally was dragged along the passage, his boots scraping on the linoleum. He was too proud to call for help, and he was not given much time. The Lower Form bullies had him in the box-room in a few seconds, and the door was shut.

"Now then," said Clyne, his eyes gleaming. "Tie him up! His necktie and hanky will do."

"Look here——" began Wally.

"Shut up!"

"I won't shut up! I'll make you sit up for this, you cads!"

"Give us a kicking all round, won't you?" sneered Gore, as he proceeded to carry out Clyne's instructions.

The new boy lent him aid. He was evidently an old hand at the game. Wally was forced into a cramped sitting position, and his arms were crossed, his right wrist being secured to his left ankle, and his left wrist to his right ankle. A more helpless and uncomfortable position could hardly be imagined. He set his teeth grimly to endure it. He knew that he was "in for it," but the hero of the Third Form was not "soft." He was tough enough to take a great deal.

"Good!" said Clyne. "Now we'll rock him to sleep."

"What's the game?" said Gore.

"You stand round him and shove him over, and shove him back, and keep it up as long as you like," grinned Clyne. "Not your hands, duffer, your feet!"

"I see! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rocking to sleep" was evidently a name applied in irony to this peculiar form of amusement.

Wally was certainly rocking, but it was not to sleep.

The first push of Clyne's foot sent him over helplessly backwards, and his head bumped on the floor with a crack that made him see stars.

The gasp he gave brought a yell of laughter from the bullies.

Clyne hooked his boot behind the fag's neck and righted him with a skilful twist. And so the game proceeded.

Every time Wally went over backwards, he knocked the back of his head, and so he soon learned to remain upright, as far as his confinement allowed him.

Then the real fun commenced.

Every time Wally went over backwards he kneed the shove would send him back, so that he was "rocked" in every possible direction, till every bone was aching, and his senses were swimming.

It was bullying—the real thing, common enough in some Public schools, though to this extent little known at St. Jim's.

Wally hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. He had been bullied before by Gore and his set, by Knox the prefect, by Sefton the bully of the New House. He had been kicked and cuffed, and pinched and knuckled. But this was quite a new experience to him. He had started with the determination not to yell; but after five minutes of the rocking process his determination faded away. He yelled, not for mercy, but for help.

Clyne chuckled.

"Thought he'd soon start," he remarked. "This is where you jam your hanky into his mouth."

And Gore promptly did so.

Wally's yells were muffled now, and died away into gasps and squeaks. And all the time that dreadful rocking went mercilessly on.

"My word!" said Sharp, at last, as he saw two big tears roll down Wally's cheeks—cheeks that had not been so wetted since he came to St. Jim's. "He's had enough. Let him off now."

Clyne sneered.

"If you're going to be a mollycoddle, Sharp——"

The junior flushed red.

"I'm not. You can go on if you like. After all, the young cad deserves it. Give him some more!"

And Sharp, by way of showing that he was not a mollycoddle, gave Wally an extra shove with his boot, and the junior of the Third crashed over backwards, and his head bumped on the floor.

"That's enough!" said Gore uneasily.

"Oh, all right!" said Clyne, with a grin. "You ain't thorough-going here. We used to make 'em squirm at my old school. We've kept it up with a fag like this for an hour in the gym, you know, and then we used to make 'em sing 'Rule Britannia' at the finish. We'll make this young cad sing!"

He jerked the crammed handkerchief from Wally's mouth.

"Now, you young whelp, are you sorry you were cheeky?"

"No!" howled Wally.

"Oh! Not had enough yet! Will you sing 'Rule Britannia'?"

"No, I won't!"

"Give him some more!"

"Here, hold on!" said Sharp.

"You shut up!" said Mellish. "We're teaching this cub a lesson. Rock him!"

And Wally was rocked.

He yelled in good earnest, and the handkerchief was thrust back into his mouth. His efforts to eject it, and his gasps and squeaks, were greatly diverting to Gore & Co. They yelled with laughter, as they prodded the unfortunate Third Former with their boots, and sent him spinning to and fro.

The handle of the door suddenly turned, and the laughter stopped. The handsome, cheerful face of Tom Merry of the Shell looked into the room.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Tom Merry.

Then, as his glance took in the scene, his expression changed.

His eyes blazed as he strode forward.

CHAPTER 4:

Catching It—Hot!

GORE and his friends looked at one another, and at Tom Merry.

Wally lay on his side, dusty and dishevelled, and gasping for breath.

There was a painful silence in the box-room.

Tom Merry's eyes seemed to be on fire.

There was not one of the bullies who did not shrink uncomfortably from the anger and scorn in his glance.

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"You—you cads!" said Tom, in measured tones. "What are you doing to Wally?"

"Mind your own business!" said Gore.

"Who the dickens are you to interfere?" said Clyne, who did not yet know Tom Merry. "Clear out, can't you!"

Tom Merry looked at him.

Then, without a word, he let out his right, and Clyne went head-over-heels into a corner of the room.

Tom's flashing eyes challenged the bullies.

"Any more of you want some?" he demanded.

There was no reply.

"Set Wally loose!"

They did not move. Tom Merry's voice was imperious. Gore flushed a dull red.

"I'll see you hanged first!" he stammered. "Set him loose yourself!"

"Set him loose!"

Mellish bent and untied Wally.

The hero of the Third staggered to his feet.

He looked a sorry object. His clothes were grimed with dust, his collar was loose at one end, his hair wildly tousled.

"Thank you, Merry!" he gasped. "I'm—I'm done up, or I'd make these beasts squirm now! I'll make you sit up yet, Gore, you coward!"

The Lower Form bullies made a movement towards the door.

Tom Merry promptly planted himself in their path.

"You'll stay here till I've finished," said Tom quietly.

"You've been bullying young Wally. I don't care what he's done, or whether he's done anything at all. You have been bullying him like a set of cowards and cads. This sort of bullying has gone on in the Upper Forms, till Kildare stamped it out. I've heard so, at least, but it was before I came to St. Jim's. But it hasn't been tried in the Lower Forms. Whose idea was it?"

"Oh, rats!" said Gore. "Mind your own business!"

"Whose idea was it?"

"Find out!"

"I'm going to. Whose idea was it?"

Clyne staggered up. His nose was swollen, and his eyes looked watery.

"Why don't you go for him?" he snarled. "You're four to one!"

Tom Merry laughed scornfully.

He would not have feared to encounter the four of them single-handed. He was the finest athlete in the Lower Forms at St. Jim's, and Gore & Co. were all more or less slackers. Tom Merry would have given a very good account of himself against the quartet.

"Why don't you?" snarled Mellish.

"Whose idea was it to bully young D'Arcy like this?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Well, it was Clyne's, if you particularly want to know," said Crofton. "I don't see that it's any business of yours, though."

"It's the business of any decent fellow to put down bullying."

"If you're going to set up as a moral reformer——" said Gore, with a sneer.

"I am going to put a stop to caddishness like this. I've noticed that young rotter already——with a glance towards Clyne. "He's a cad who oughtn't to be let into any decent school. He's put you up to this, and he's going to smart for it."

"Look here——"

"You can come into the gym with me, Clyne, and put the gloves on, or——"

"Take a fellow your own size," said Clyne uneasily.

"Well, I'm not much bigger than you are, and you've got to take a licking, anyway. But it's all right on that point. I'll speak to Jack Blake, and he'll take it on willingly enough. You can have a stand-up fight, or you can be rocked as you've been rocking Wally. Take your choice."

"What business is it of yours?"

"Never mind that. Take your choice."

Clyne cast a hunted look at his friends.

They did not seem inclined to back him up.

"Look here, I'm not going to fight," he said. "I'm not a boxing man. I was only putting the kid through it a bit."

"And now you're going to be put through it yourself."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Gore, feeling that he was called upon to say something. Gore, bully as he was, was not without a certain amount of dogged courage. "You're not going to rag Clyne. We're all together in this."

"Then you can all take the same gruel," said Tom Merry. "I'll call Manners and Lowther, and the three of us will be enough to wipe up the floor with you five."

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Gore. "We've had enough of this gas! Rush him!"

The juniors rushed forward. They didn't like the task

much, but it was safer to settle with Tom Merry before Manners and Lowther arrived on the scene.

Tom Merry faced them without flinching, his fists up.

But before the combat could commence, a stern voice rang out:

"Stop!"

Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, was looking in at the open door of the box-room.

The Housemaster's usually calm and good-natured face was dark with anger.

Tom Merry swung round, his hands dropping to his sides.

Gore & Co. changed colour.

From the Housemaster's look they could see that he had been a spectator of the scene for some minutes, and that he knew all that had been going on.

Mr. Railton advanced into the room.

"You have done quite right, Merry," he said. "I am glad you interfered here. But the matter is serious enough to be taken into my hands. You boys have deliberately bullied a younger lad, and adopted one of the cruellest

PADDY AND THE PIANO!



Bill: "Hi, Paddy, why are you carrying that piano upstairs to repair it?"

Paddy: "Well, ain't the hammer up there?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Hyde, 12, Carburton Street, Marylebone, London, W.1.

forms of bullying, in addition. You will follow me to my study. "You may go, Merry and D'Arcy minor."

The Housemaster walked away, and the amateur bullies of the School House slowly and unwillingly followed him.

D'Arcy minor grinned.

"I rather think they'll catch something now," he remarked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry, with compressed lips.

They left the box-room. The five delinquents were going down to the Housemaster's study. Their faces were decidedly lugubrious. Mr. Railton entered the study, and turned round to fix his eyes on the quintet as they reluctantly followed him in. He selected a thick, strong cane.

"I need not enlarge upon the cowardice and the brutality of bullying a younger boy, especially with so many of you attacking him at once," he said. "I think, upon reflection, you will realise that. I hope the punishment I am about to inflict will help you to realise it. Bend over, Gore!"

Gore received six severe cuts, and left the study, wriggling and squirming.

Mellish and Crofton and Sharp had four each, and they also were squirming and gasping as they left the study in turn.

The new boy was left to the last.

He was looking nervous and uneasy, but there was a gleam of impudence in his eyes at the same time, which the Housemaster was not slow to observe.

"I have left you to the last, Clyne," said Mr. Railton quietly, "because I wish to speak to you. You are a new boy at this school. You seem to have learned some customs at your previous school which are not in accordance with our traditions. You will understand that you are not to impart this valuable knowledge to your associates here. I shall keep an eye on you, sir. As a warning, I am about to inflict a punishment more severe than that awarded to those you have led into following your own evil example."

"If you please, sir——"

"Not a word! Bend over! You require a severe lesson, and you are about to receive it. I intend that this punishment shall be a warning to you."

Clyne hesitated. The Housemaster repeated the order in a voice of thunder, and then Clyne slowly obeyed.

Then followed a punishment which Clyne was not likely to forget for some time.

Mr. Railton gave him a caning that made him writhe.

Clyne was hurt, and he filled the study with his yells. His face was white, and his eyes glittering like a rat's with rage and pain when the Housemaster pushed him away.

"You may go!"

Clyne went. The look on his face was not pleasant to see. He gritted his teeth savagely as he went slowly and painfully down the passage.

CHAPTER 5.

D'Arcy. Tenor!

"Y AAS, let me like a soldiah fall—"

"No objection as far as I am concerned."

"Pway do not intewwupt me, Blake!"

"I thought you were speaking to me," said Blake innocently. "Was it Digby?"

"I've no objection to his falling like a soldier," said Digby. "Blessed if I care whether he falls or not!"

"Weally, Dig, you are perfectly well awah that I was not addressin' you."

"Oh, was it me?" grunted Herries. "Well, I'll let you fall like a soldier if you're set on it. I should recommend a cushion to fall on."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

The three chums had just entered Study No. 6, and they found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy standing in a pathetic attitude on the rug, with a tuning-fork in his hand.

He had just started on the song of Don Cæsar, in "Maritana," and really he was not singing so badly; but Blake & Co. chose to take it all in a humorous spirit.

"Go it," said Blake. "Where are you going to fall? You've got full permission from everybody present."

"It is very hard for a chap to study singing with a lot of howwid unmusical boundahs aaround him," said Arthur Augustus. "On second thoughts, I find that the song in the 'Meistersingers' does not suit me so well as the 'Soldier Fall' f'wom 'Mawitanah,' so I have changed ovah. I weally think I get this tenah vewy nicely. Of course, it's hard to sing without an instwument—"

"Good! You can put off the practice, then."

"Not at all, deah boy. Now I'm on the 'C.'"

"Off your rocker?" asked Herries, staring. "I was under the impression that you were ashore."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I've often noticed that chaps who take up singing go rocky in the crumpet," said Herries, looking round. "If this sort of thing grows on Gussy, he'll have to change into another study."

"Hewwies, I wegard you as an uttah ass! The 'C' I am alludin' to is the 'C' on the piano. I am on the 'C' now, and that is my first note. Pway shut up!"

And Arthur Augustus started again:

"Yaas, let me like a soldiah fall
Upon some open plain,
This bweast expanding for the ball,
To blot out ewery stain—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus broke off with a glare of indignation. A dusty and dirty face was looking in at the door. It belonged to Wally, and it was he who had given vent to that irresistible burst of merriment.

"Weally, Wally—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared D'Arcy minor. "Sorry; but I couldn't help it. I can imagine a chap who was going to be shot singing like that. I don't think!"

"I wegard it as extremewy wealistic!"

"Well, it's realistic in one way—it's apt to make your hearers wish they were shot instead!"

"I wefuse to listen to such wibald wemarks. And, by the way, what do you mean by thwustin' such a dirty face into a respectable study? I have nevah seen even you in such a disgustin' state before!"

Wally chuckled.

"It's not my fault. Your precious new study-mate and his friends have been ragging me, and you have been kicking up a row here, instead of coming to help!"

"How was I to know they were waggin' you?"

"You might have heard 'em if you hadn't been kicking up—"

"I wefuse to have my singin' alluded to as kickin' up a wow! I have a we remarkable tenah voice, and I am thinkin' sewiously of givin' a sewies of wecitals at St. Jim's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' to cackle at in that wemark, Wally! I would take it as a personal favah if you would kindly wetiah and wendah yourself a little more respectable before comin' here!"

"I was coming to speak to you when those rotters collared me. Jameson and Gibson have got their birthdays this week."

"Weally, I am not responsible for a set of Third Form fags havin' birthdays."

"They both come on the same day," said Wally. "It's a coincidence, isn't it? But there's another coincidence, too—neither Jameson nor Gibson has any tin to keep it up with."

"That's not surprisin'," said Blake. "You fags never do have any tin a couple of days after you receive your weekly pocket-money, I believe."

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"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, Jameson and Gibson put it like this. It's their birthdays, and so it's up to me to stand a feed," said Wally. "I'm broke—"

"Your usual state, I believe."

"Well, I'm stony now, anyway, and I thought Gussy would be willing to stand the feed for the honour of the family."

"I decline to do anythin' of the sort."

"Now, look here, Gus, I've practically promised for you. If you like to make it ten shillings—"

"I wegard the wequest as uttally unweasonable."

"Five bob, then."

"Wats!"

"Half-a-crown," said D'Arcy minor desperately.

"More wats!"

"Well, of all the mean monkeys," said Wally, "I think you Fourth Form chaps take the giddy biscuit! It's a bit up against me having a brother in the Fourth. The Third Form don't like it, but Jameson and Gibson have been very decent about it."

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, scat! I say, you chaps, how much can you stand?"

"I think we've stood about as much as we can stand," said Jack Blake sweetly. "We can't stand too much from a Third Form fag. Outside!"

"But—"

"Outside!"

And Blake, Herries, and Digby gently placed the hero of the Third in the passage. Arthur Augustus viewed the proceedings with approval.

"Very good!" he remarked. "Now I can wesume my pwactise!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby looked at one another, and then, like the hunter of the Snark in the ballad, they silently, suddenly vanished away.

CHAPTER 6.

The New Boy's Scheme!

FIVE sore and smarting juniors gathered in a deserted class-room and groaned in chorus. Mr. Railton, when he was in earnest, knew how to lay the cane on, and he had been in earnest that time.

Gore & Co. were hurt, and greatly inclined to revile the new boy, who had led them into that unfortunate adventure.

Clyne made the least noise of all, though he was the most hurt. There was an evil glitter in his eyes, however, that spoke volumes. It was plain that all the hatred and uncharitableness of his nature was aroused, and that thoughts of vengeance were passing in his mind. He looked at the groaning quartet with a sneer on his face.

"Blessed lot of row you're making!" he sneered. "You haven't had half what I got!"

Gore scowled at him savagely.

"It's all your fault we've got anything!" he snarled.

"After all, young D'Arcy hadn't done much, and there wasn't any reason to rag him like that!"

"When I was at my old school—"

"Oh, blow your old school! We've heard enough of that!"

"Bah, there's nothing to whine about in this! We used to get lickings that nearly fetched the skin off, and laughed. You are a pretty soft lot here!"

The imputation of being "soft" is never an easy one for a boy to bear. Even among these "wasters" there was a little pride left, and they resented it.

Gore left off groaning, and there was a perceptible slackness in the chorus of anguish from the others.

"At my old school," said Clyne, "we shouldn't have whined about a licking. We'd have made the master who licked us sit up."

"I suppose you can't jape a Housemaster?"

"Why not? I've japed the Head at my old school."

"You can't do it."

"I'll jolly soon show you! Look here, will you back me up?" said Clyne, raising his voice. "I've got a good wheeze, and I've seen it worked off before, and it went like a clock."

"What is it, first?"

"I've noticed that Railton is looking rather overworked and worried," chuckled Clyne; "that makes it all the easier, of course. If you fellows will back me up, we can put him through a course of surprises that will make his hair turn grey."

The complaint of the sufferers died away at once. All were eager for a chance of avenging their injuries, if it could be done in safety.

"Go it!" said Mellish. "I'm game, if there's a chance for us."

"It will need nerve, that's 'all."

"I've got plenty of nerve, for one," said Gore sullenly.

"Railton is always down on me, and I shall be glad of a chance of getting even."

"Out with it!" said Sharp.

"Well, this is the wheeze. It has to be worked by a number of fellows, but I think five will be enough. I'll do the first bit of work, to show you how it's done. We'll begin to-morrow."

"Begin what?"

"The wheeze. This is the idea. I march into Railton's study to-morrow, and show up fifty lines of Virgil he's set me."

"Has he set you any lines?"

"No, he hasn't; and that's the scheme!" chuckled Clyne.

"He'll think he's suffering from absent-mindedness, loss of memory, and so on. He'd never dream that a junior would do lines he hadn't had given him."

"True enough. But—"

"Wait a tick! Then later on he discovers you, Gore,

together," went on Clyne. "We can meet in the study or out of doors, but in the Common-room and the passages we'd better appear a bit standoffish. In fact, we might as well work up a quarrel for the public benefit, and stop speaking to one another."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

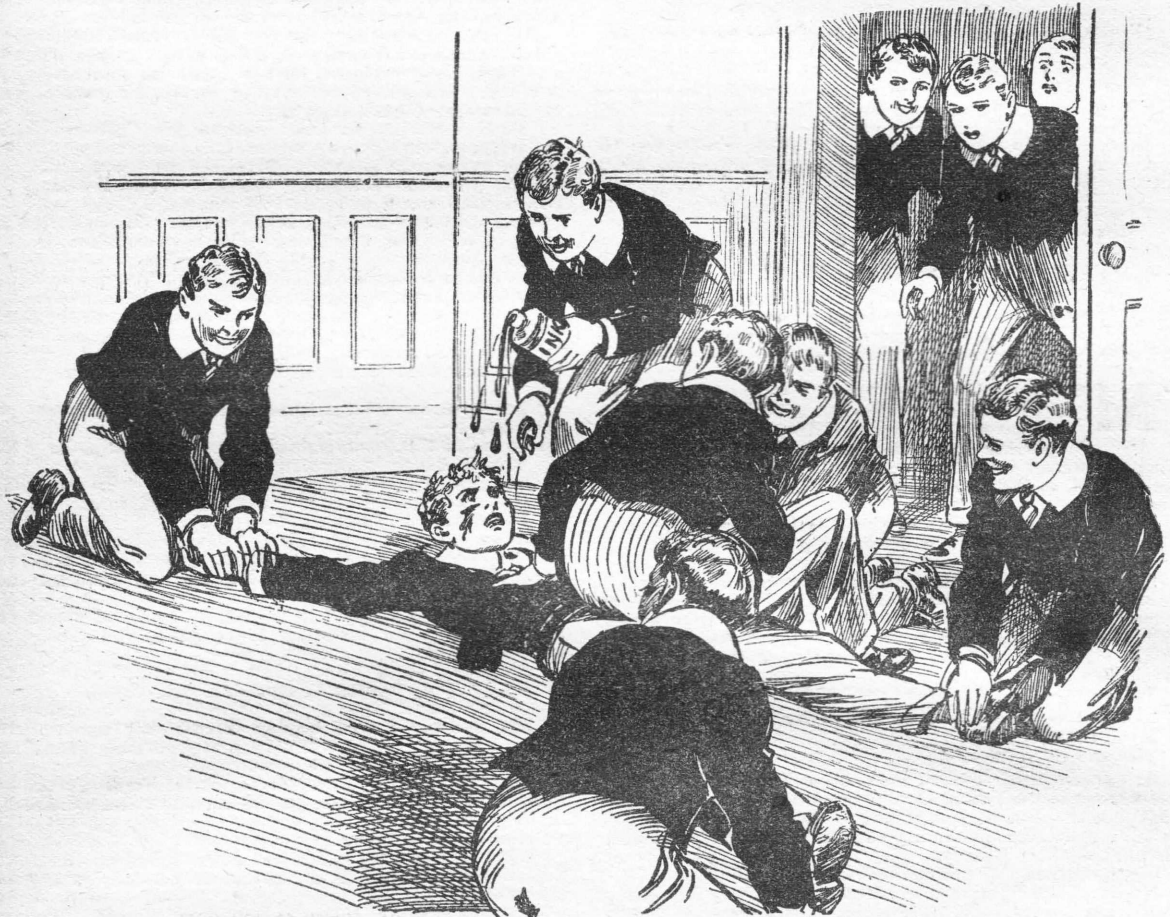
"By George, you do think of things, Clyne!" said Crofton admiringly.

The cad of St. Jim's chuckled

"At my old school we had a good many japes that you chaps have never heard of," he said carelessly. "I'll tell you some more later. We'll jape that chap Merry next, for his cheek in interfering with us. We can fix something on him that will make him look small before all the House. But we'll finish with Railton first."

"Good!" said Mellish. "You chaps go out first, and I'll follow with Clyne, and we'll keep our distance in public."

Gore, Crofton, and Sharp left the room.



Stretched out on the floor, Wally D'Arcy was helpless in the grasp of the fags. "Keep that ink away from my face!" he yelled. "I'll smash you when I get up!" "Rats!" retorted Curly Gibson, and he promptly tilted the bottle of ink over Wally's face.

waiting for him in his study—when he's been out some time, you know. You tell him he sent you there to wait, and he won't remember it."

"But—"

"Then Mellish stays in the class-room till six one evening, and explains when called upon that Railton ordered him to; calls Crofton to witness, and Crofton swears he heard Railton tell him."

"My hat!"

"You see the idea now? In the long run we shall make Railton think he's really going off his rocker."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I saw that worked off on a French master till he was nearly dotty," chuckled Clyne. "Railton will be a harder subject, but we'll fix him. It's only a question of having nerve enough to do it; and now he's in a worried state of mind it is just the time."

"Good!"

"But, in case of suspicion, we mustn't be seen too much

Clyne looked quickly and suspiciously at Mellish, evidently not liking the private interview with the cad of the Fourth. But Mellish's manner was very friendly.

"I haven't given you away," he remarked.

"What do you mean?" growled Clyne.

Mellish laughed unpleasantly.

"I mean about you being expelled from your last school."

"Hush, you fool!"

"Well, you asked me. I guessed it was you when I heard that it was Albert Clyne coming here, as I happened to be at Redclyffe to see my cousin the day you were—"

"Hang you! Shut up!"

"Certainly! I am your friend."

"Well, then, leave that subject alone. Somebody might hear you."

"And that would be awkward," smiled Mellish. "Dr. Holmes would never have allowed you to enter St. Jim's if he had known that you were expelled from your previous

school, especially if he had known what it was for. Your people must have kept it dark very carefully."

"I suppose they did."

"Yes, and if it came out now—"

"I suppose I should have to leave St. Jim's. I never dreamed that anybody here would recognise me!" snarled Clyne. "But I don't see why you want to harp on it, Mellish. We get on pretty well together; you're my sort."

"I know. You're welcome to St. Jim's as far as I'm concerned. But one good turn deserves another, you know. Can you lend me half-a-crown?"

"I lent you two bob yesterday."

"I know you did, and I want you to lend me half-a-crown to-day," smiled Mellish. "I will let you have both back next week—if I can."

Without a word, Clyne drew a coin from his pocket and passed it to Mellish.

"Thanks!" said Mellish, as he slipped it into his pocket. "It's lucky for a chap to have rich people, isn't it, Clyne?—jolly lucky in some ways."

And he quitted the room.

Clyne's face was not pleasant to look at as he stared after Mellish. His teeth came together with a sharp click.

"Just wait a bit!" he murmured. "Wait till we've carried out this jape on Railton, and then you'll be in it as deep as I am. It's expulsion for the lot if we're found out, and then—then I'll settle with you."

From which it will be seen that Mellish, cunning as he was, was hardly up to the form of the new boy at St. Jim's in that peculiar line.

CHAPTER 7.

A Fight in Study No. 6!

"I only ask of that pwould wace,
Which ends its blaze in me,
To die the last, and not disgrace
Its ancient chivalwy—"

"MY only maiden aunt!" said Clyne, as he came into Study No. 6. "What's that shiek? What the dickens are you doing, D'Arcy?"

Arthur Augustus was standing on the rug, getting the second verse of his song off his chest. He ceased, and glared at the new boy with a glare that should have frozen him.

"Weally, Clyne, I was singing!" said Arthur Augustus deliberately. "I have a remarkably good tenah voice."

"Rats!"
"I cannot expect an unmusical ass to wecognise that fact," said the swell of St. Jim's quietly. "But I have a wight to expect a certain amount of courtesy, especially from a new fellow whom I cannot but wegard as an intwudah in this study. I think you had bettah apologise for your wude we mark, Clyne."

"More rats!"

"Othahwise I shall have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Go and eat tintacks!"

Arthur Augustus pushed back his cuffs. His cuffs were the whitest in the School House—or in the whole House, for that matter. But he was willing to soil even them for the sake of upholding his dignity—a most important point with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Clyne watched this proceeding rather uneasily.

He was not a fighting man when he could help it, usually contriving to break his little spites and revenges in underhand ways that did not call for pluck or personal exertion.

He had certainly not imagined that Arthur Augustus was a fighting man, either, or he would have been a little more careful in his mode of address.

D'Arcy came towards the new boy.

"I wegard your pwesence in this study," he remarked in measured tones, "as a beastlay bore and an imposition. I have we monstated with Waitlon in vain on the subject; and for the sake of courtesy to a stwanganah I have made up my mind to gwain and beah it. At the same time, I cannot help we markin' that you are a wotten cad and unfit to entah any decent fellow's study."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Clyne.

"You are a bully!" said D'Arcy. "You bully smaller boys, and at the same time you cwing in the most disgustin' way to big fellows."

Clyne turned red.

D'Arcy's words were quite true, and he knew it; but it was not exactly gratifying to have his little weaknesses stated in such plain English.

He looked at the slim, graceful swell of St. Jim's, and then down at his own much bigger limbs, and his manner became more truculent. It seemed impossible that he

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should not be able to lick this elegant youth, who was younger and smaller than himself.

"I have also observed," went on D'Arcy in the same tone, "that you are a feahful pwevewicator. I will not use the word lih, but if I could bwing myself to uttah that objectionable word I should certainly chawactewise you as a feahful lih. I have heard you tellin' yarns about your old school that I know cannot be half twue; and, if twue, they only pwove you to be a wank outsidah and a feahful young blackguard!"

"Oh, ring off!" said Clyne. "You go on like a gramophone."

"Will you pway take off your jacket?"

"Yes, rather; and I'll wipe up the floor with you," said Clyne.

"Vewy good! Pway go ahead, deah boy!"

And Arthur Augustus stood waiting. The next moment the new boy rushed at him.

D'Arcy stood like a rock.

Clyne's fists were knocked up and aside, he never knew how, and his face came in contact with hard knuckles.

His own impetus gave most of the force to the blow.

He reeled back from D'Arcy's fists with a gasp of surprise and pain, and went down on the floor with a bump.

There, with his elbows on the carpet, he panted, and stared up at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Pway allow me to assist you to wise," said D'Arcy, extending a hand politely to his fallen adversary. "Then I shall have gweat pleasuah in knockin' you down again!"

Clyne glared at him and gritted his teeth. He imagined that his fall was a fluke, and he was not finished yet. He grasped D'Arcy's extended hand to rise, and as he rose he brought his other fist round with a swoop, and caught Arthur Augustus on the side of the head.

It was the foulest of foul blows, and D'Arcy, who never dreamed of such treachery, was taken quite unprepared.

He reeled and fell against the table, and slid to the floor, with his head singing and buzzing.

Clyne's eyes glittered. He leaped straight at the reeling junior, and went down on top of him, pommelling him hard.

"You—you coward!" gasped D'Arcy. "Pway allow me to wise! I—Ow-ow!"

But the new boy was punching away as hard as he could go, and the fallen junior had no chance.

There was a sudden shout as the study door was flung open. Jack Blake rushed forward, his eyes ablaze.

"You—you cur! Get off!"

Blake's boot in Clyne's ribs sent him reeling off D'Arcy, and he rolled on the carpet. Blake helped D'Arcy to his feet. The elegant junior was looking very rumpled and dusty and dazed.

"Bai Jove, deah boy!" he gasped. "I'm glad you came in. He was hittin' me when I was down, you know—the howwid wascal!"

"And now you'll hit him when he's up!" said Blake grimly. "You're going to fight this out, Clyne, with me to see fair play!"

Clyne staggered up, leaning breathlessly against the table. He had punished D'Arcy pretty severely before his cowardly attack was interrupted.

Arthur Augustus unexpectedly shook his head.

"I am afwaid this can go no farthiah!" he remarked, rubbing his nose.

Blake stared at him.

"What do you mean? He was pommelling you like fun! You've got to give him a licking, or I'll jolly well give you one!"

"I should uttably wefuse to be licked, Blake! I admit that that wotten cad deserves a feahful thwashin', and it was my intention to give him one—"

"Well, go ahead, then!"

"Upon weflection, I feel that I cannot go ahead. It is unworthy of a gentleman to soil his hands upon such a wottah!"

Clyne sneered. He did not know the little idiosyncrasies of the swell of St. Jim's, and he jumped to the conclusion at once that D'Arcy was afraid.

"Look here, Gussy—"

"Weally, Blake, I am afwaid it cannot go any farthah. You see, the wottah stwuck me a foul blow, and then hit me while I was down. He is not fit for a decent chap to touch. I feel that I cannot lay hands on him without a sewious infwaction of my dig. I twust you see the point!"

"I can see that you're an ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"He's afraid!" sneered Clyne.

"Bai Jove, if you put it like that, I think I shall have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'!" said D'Arcy, with a gleam in his eyes. "Come on, you wottah!"

And Arthur Augustus danced up to the cad of St. Jim's, brandishing his fists.

In a moment more they were at it hammer and tongs.

"Good!" exclaimed Blake. "Go it! On the ball!"

"Hallo! What's the row?" exclaimed Herries, coming into the study with Digby. "Gussy on the warpath?" "I am thwashin' a wotten cad, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, looking round. "Ow!"

Clyne's fist crashed into his eye as he looked round; as might only have been expected. The juniors roared.

"Look out, you ass!" "Bai Jove!"

And D'Arcy gave all his attention to the fight.

The exclamations of the juniors and the trampling of feet attracted other fellows from up and down the corridor. Tom Merry looked into the study, and Manners and Lowther looked over his shoulders. Skimpole's spectacles blinked over Lowther's shoulders. The crowd thickened.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Skimpole. "A fight is going on!"

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther. "How long did it take you to find that out?"

"Really, Lowther, this is very brutal! I am opposed to all personal violence," said Skimpole, the genius of the Shell, and a firm believer in every "ism" he had ever come into contact with. "I cannot, but consider it my duty to separate these misguided boys."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A display of brutal fistical force and rancour is no laughing matter, Lowther! I must observe that I am surprised at you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pray allow me room to pass, so that I can put an end to this brutal display!"

The Terrible Three grinned at one another and made room for the genius of St. Jim's to pass.

Skimpole rushed between the combatants.

"Here, sheer off!" shouted Blake.

"I cannot sheer off, Blake; it is my duty to oppose violence in every shape and form!"

"Shut up!"

"Impossible! Companions and schoolmates, I entreat you to cease this brutal display!"

Skimpole's companions and schoolmates did not cease. They were hitting out as if they mistook one another for punching-balls, and they did not even hear Skimpole. But Skimpole was not to be denied. He rushed between. Hammering blows fell on him from both sides. Clyne knocked him towards D'Arcy, and D'Arcy knocked him back again towards Clyne.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "Go it!"

"Dear me!" gasped Skimpole. "I—I—"

An upper-cut from Clyne and a body blow from D'Arcy caught Skimpole at the same moment, and he rolled on the carpet. His peace-making was abruptly finished; the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

D'Arcy and Clyne were fighting hard.

But the new boy, discovering that his adversary was in earnest, and that D'Arcy was really not wanting in courage, weakened from that moment. A coward only needs to be confronted with courage for all his bluster to desert him. Clyne would have given several weeks' pocket-money to be well out of the combat. And at last, when D'Arcy knocked him down, he refused to rise.

"I'm done!" he gasped.

Jack Blake shook his head.

"No, you're not," he replied coolly. "I'll tell you when you're done! You'll go on till I give the word!"

"I won't!"

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Is that exactly playing the game, Blake?"

"Mind your own business!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" exclaimed Blake, considerably ruffled by the suggestion that he was not "playing the game." "You Shell fellows can bunk! This is a Fourth Form affair! Scoot!"

"Yes; but—"

"Pway don't let your angwy passions wise, deah boys! Tom Mewwy is undah a misappwehension! This wottah is only malingewin', Tom Mewwy!"

"Yes; but a chap ought to be let off when he says he's had enough!"

"He wequiah a feahful thwashin' for educational purposes. He stwuck me a foul blow and piled on me when I was down!"

"Oh, I didn't know that! Go it!"

"I won't go on!" groaned Clyne.

"Yes, you will!" said Blake. "If you don't get up, I'll hold you up by the back of your collar while Gussy lathers you!"

"I could not stwike the wottah undah those circs, Blake!" "Very well, I'll do it myself, as you're so particular! Give me your dog-whip, Herries!"

"Here you are!"

"Let him alone!" called out Mellish behind the crowd.

(Continued on page 12.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Fine footballs are awarded every week for the two best jokes received and a half-a-crown is paid for every other joke that appears in this column.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT.

"No, Tommy," said mother firmly, "one piece of cake is quite enough for you."

"Well, it's funny," said Tommy, with an injured air. "You're always telling me I ought to learn to eat properly, and yet you won't give me a chance to practise!"

A football has been awarded to D. Dawe, 48, Mount Pleasant Lane, Upper Clapton, London, E.5.

THE ORDER OF THE BOOT!

Office Boy: "If the boss doesn't take back what he said to me I'm leaving."

Clerk: "Why, what did he say?"

Office Boy: "You're sacked!"

A football has been awarded to E. Davies, "Alhena," Lake Road West, Cardiff.

CHECKMATE.

"More money!" exclaimed father. "You're always wanting money. It's like a game of chess—nothing but cheque, cheque, cheque!"

"But if you don't give me more money," replied the son, "it will be even more like a game of chess—pawn, pawn, pawn!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to L. Burdett, 24, Lorrimore Street, Walworth, London, S.E.17.

ON THE WATCH.

Tom Merry: "Why is a sentry like a minute?"

Gussy: "Weally, deah boy, I do not know."

Tom Merry: "Because he is always on the watch!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Fearnside, Lyndhurst, Ossett, Yorks.

THE HIKER'S CONCERN.

Hiker: "How far is it to Birmingham?"

Farmer: "Well, it's about sixty miles as the crow flies."

Hiker: "Yes, but how far is it if the crow has to walk and carry a rucksack with it?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Brown, No. 8 Ward, Beverley Road Hospital, Beverley Road, Hull.

THE SMALLEST IN THE WORLD.

Diner (after a meal): "Is this reckoned to be a good restaurant?"

Waiter: "Yes, sir. If you order fish you get the freshest fish in the world. If you order coffee you get the best cup of coffee in the world, and—"

Diner: "I quite believe it—I ordered a small steak!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Harrison, Dunham Mount, Dunham Road, Bowdon, Cheshire.

GETTING PREPARED.

Dentist: "How many teeth do you want out?"

Boy: "I only want the nerves taken out."

Dentist: "Why, sonny?"

Boy: "So that I won't feel a punch on the jaw!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Begley, 44, Paignton Road, St. Ann's Road, London, N.15.

LONG-WINDED.

Barber: "Sir, your hair is quite grey."

Customer: "Quite possible, but couldn't you finish cutting it before I am quite white?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to N. Foster, Beech Cottage, Greenham Common, near Newbury, Berkshire.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,354.

Blake looked round.

"If you want to interfere, Mellish, come in! Make room there for Mellish to come in!"

The fellows made room, but Mellish did not come in. He walked rather quickly down the passage instead.

"This new chap has come into our study and disgraced us," said Blake. "If he stays here we're going to educate him. He's going to fight now till he drops, or I'll give him a dog-whip licking that will take his skin off!"

There was no doubt that Blake meant it. His eyes were blazing. Clyne saw it, and he staggered to his feet.

"Come on, you rotter!" he muttered.

D'Arcy's eyes glittered, and any hesitation he might have had vanished.

"Yaas, wathah, I'll come on!" said D'Arcy grimly.

And he came on. The way he wired in then was a revelation to the joyful and admiring spectators.

He sailed round and round the cad of St. Jim's, knocking him right and left, and getting hardly a tap in return.

D'Arcy with his blood up was a new D'Arcy, and not a safe person to encounter with or without gloves.

Clyne fought like a cat, but his punishment was severe, and at last he went down again, and this time it was clear even to Blake that he was done.

"Gentlemen, the performance is now over!" said Monty Lowther.

And the Terrible Three went down the passage.

Blake looked contemptuously at the wretched junior on the carpet. He could always pity a fallen champion, but in the case of Clyne his disgust was too great.

"You'd better cut along to a bath-room," he said. "You don't look pretty!"

"I'll make you all smart for this some time!" groaned Clyne, as he went unsteadily out of the study.

Blake laughed scornfully.

"Bai Joye, he's an uttah wottah, you know!" said D'Arcy. "I have given him that feahful thwashin' for his own good, and he seems to be a worse cad than evah!"

"Have you seen my spectacles?"

It was Skimpole who asked the question. Blake picked up his spectacles from the corner that they had rolled into, jammed them on his nose, and pushed him out into the corridor. And the genius of the Shell drifted away, feeling that perhaps, upon the whole, he would think twice before he acted the gentle peacemaker again.

"And now," said Digby, "how did the trouble start between you and Clyne?"

"He wudely intewwupted me when I was pwactisin' my tenah solo. If you fellows would care to heah—"

"Thanks, no!"

"I will wesume, and give you the second verse of 'Soldier Fall.' I should like your opinion on the 'A' in the third line. That's the highest note, you know, and I think I get it pwetty well. I—"

"You look jolly dirty and untidy," said Blake. "Suppose Wally were to come in and see you now. It would encourage him in his untidy ways, and—"

"Bai Joye, you're wight; and it's vevy thoughtful of you, Blake! I will buzz off at once!"

And D'Arcy hastily left the study. And Blake, Herries, and Digby chuckled.

CHAPTER 8. Law and Order.

"CLYNE! What do you want?"

Mr. Railton looked up rather wearily. There was a great deal of work upon the Housemaster's shoulders. It was mid-term, and at any time Housemaster had plenty to do. In addition to his own work, however, Mr. Railton was doing a great deal for the Head, who was indisposed, with a slight but troublesome attack of the "flu." Mr. Railton was a strong man, and a hard worker, but even the keenest worker is not immune from fag. And the Housemaster at the present moment was feeling tired, and had, in fact, had a tired feeling for a week past.

Clyne had tapped and entered the study with an air of great meekness and respect.

His face showed very clearly the signs of his late combat with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and Mr. Railton's eye did not fail to note them.

His brow grew a little severer; but, as a rule, the Housemaster did not take notice of fighting among the juniors, unless the case was a very flagrant one, and so he made no remark upon that.

He asked Clyne what he wanted, and the new boy assumed an expression of surprise.

"You told me to come, sir."

It was Mr. Railton's turn to look surprised then.

"I do not remember telling you to come, Clyne."

THE GEN LIBRARY.—No. 1,354.

"Yes, sir. It was for fighting with D'Arcy, sir."

The late circumstances had led Clyne to modify his original scheme somewhat.

Mr. Railton looked more and more surprised.

"I do not understand you, Clyne. Have you been fighting with D'Arcy? Did I tell you to come here?"

"Yes, sir."

"I certainly do not remember."

Mr. Railton must have suspected that it was a "jape"; but it seemed inconceivable that a junior should come up for punishment without being compelled by direct necessity.

"Yes, sir," said Clyne meekly.

"When did I tell you, Clyne?"

"In the passage, sir—about an hour ago."

Mr. Railton passed his hand over his brow. He had certainly come along the passage about an hour ago, and he remembered having spoken to Tom Merry there. He did not even remember having noticed Clyne.

"Well, I do not recall the circumstance, Clyne," he said. "You can go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Clyne, with real relief.

He was willing to take a caning for the purpose of carrying out his scheme, but he was glad enough to escape it. He left the study.

Mr. Railton leaned his head upon his hand, and his puckered brow grew very dark and troubled.

"Is it possible that I am becoming so absent-minded?" he murmured. "That was never a failing of mine. I have not the slightest remembrance of having told Clyne to come here, yet it is evident that I did so."

There was a tap at the door. Mr. Railton was too immersed in thought to hear it, and the tap was repeated and the door opened.

Tom Merry looked in.

"Merry!" Mr. Railton came to himself with a start.

"Yes, come in. What is it?"

"My lines, sir."

"Your—er—lines?"

Mr. Railton looked at the imposition Tom Merry laid before him.

The hero of the Shell looked a little surprised.

"Yes, sir, my lines—the fifty from Virgil."

"Ah, yes!" said Mr. Railton. "I had forgotten. I remember now. I gave you fifty lines for sliding down the banisters, to the danger of your limbs."

Tom Merry smiled.

"There wasn't any danger, sir."

"H'm! There are two opinions about that evidently. You may leave the lines, Merry."

Tom Merry left the study.

Mr. Railton rose and paced the room.

"There is no doubt about it," he muttered. "I suppose it is a case of brain-fag. I had forgotten giving the lines to Merry, though I now recall the circumstances. In the case of Clyne, I cannot recall it yet. I must be careful."

Tom Merry left the study, feeling a little troubled in his mind. Although Mr. Railton sometimes came down on the juniors with a heavy hand, the Housemaster was very popular in the School House. And Tom Merry could see that he had something on his mind.

"Railton looks ill," he remarked, in a reply to a query from Monty Lowther as to whether he was practising for a funeral mite.

"Yes, I've noticed that," said Manners. "Suppose you write to your old governess for some medicine, Tom?"

"Good wheeze!"

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Tom Merry. "It isn't as if it were Raterliff of the New House. Railton is all right; and I'm sorry he's seedy."

"So are we," said Lowther seriously. "We'll make an agreement, if you like, to bar all japes till he pulls round, and keep the other chaps in order—excepting rows with the New House, of course."

"Good! We'll stick to that!"

It seemed a good idea, though the role of peacemakers and guardians of the law and order came rather strangely to the Terrible Three. As a rule, there was very little mischief went on in the School House without Tom Merry and his chums having some sort of a hand in it. But the role had the attraction of novelty, at all events, and the chums of the Shell took it up quite keenly.

It was surprising the amount of disorder a fellow could find in a House when he was really bent on finding it and putting it down.

The Terrible Three had finished their prep, and nothing seemed more advisable than to make a round of the House to see that the other fellows were quiet and orderly.

A sound of scuffling from the Third Form Room attracted their attention at once, and they bent their steps in the direction of the row, with the praiseworthy intention of remonstrating with the fags, and, if necessary, licking them all round in the interests of order and peace.

The row grew louder as they neared the Form-room, where

SUPER NEW ST. FRANK'S STORY STARTS NEXT WEEK!



Let the Editor be your pal! Write to him to-day, addressing your letters: The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, Chums! The final chapters of our present serial appear in this number, and as I have already told you, Mr. E. S. Brooks has written us another. It's a great story, and I am fully convinced that it will be a tremendous success—even more popular than "The White Giants of El Dorado!" The new serial is just the type of story you will all revel in, and, of course, it has the added attraction of featuring once again the adventures of the Chums of the St. Frank's Flying School. The title of this new story is:

"TREASURE ISLE!"

and the adventure is staged on a lonely island in the Pacific that is inhabited by fierce cannibals.

The Sky Wanderer, the St. Frank's airship, is passing low over Tao-Tao Island, when an appeal for help is seen written in the white sand of a beach, with four Britishers frantically waving to the airship. The Sky Wanderer lands, and from that moment big-thrill adventure starts with breath-taking suddenness. The St. Frank's party find themselves up against a modern pirate, who has got the whip-hand of a party of explorers treasure-seeking on Tao-Tao Island!

There you have a brief idea of the

the fags of the Third were went to foregather after lessons. They preferred it to their share of the Junior Common-room, and fellows of both Houses gathered there, to work or play or fight, as their humour moved them.

"Get up! Get off my chest, young Jameson!"

"Hallo! That's young Wally's voice!" said Tom Merry, grinning, as he pushed open the Form-room door. "There's a rift in the lute!"

"Rats, young D'Arcy!"

"Keep that ink away from my face, Gibson, or I'll jolly well smash your features when I get up!"

"Rats, young D'Arcy!"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

Wally D'Arcy was extended on his back on the floor. Jameson was sitting on his chest, and four fags were holding him by the wrists and ankles. He was absolutely helpless, and could only glare at curly Gibson, who was tilting a bottle of ink over his face. The ink had just commenced to flow when the chums of the Shell looked in.

"Hallo! What's the row?"

"Mind your own business, you Shellfish!" said Jameson. "What are you poking into here for? But if you want to know, it's a rag. D'Arcy minor has failed to play the game."

"I've done my best."

"Silence, D'Arcy minor! I'm ashamed of you!"

"Look here, Jim—"

"Oh, don't talk to me! To-day's my birthday and young Gibson's birthday, and there's not the ghost of a spread on the double occasion!"

"Beastly!" said Gibson.

"We're stony!" said Jameson indignantly. "And we relied on you to stand something. The Form expect it. You haven't played up."

"But—"

"Your father's a duke—"

powerful new serial that is in store for you. So whatever you do, chums, make absolutely certain of not missing the opening chapters appearing in next week's number!

"FALSELY ACCUSED!"

is the title of the next St. Jim's yarn, and for sparkling school adventure and mystery, this story simply cannot be beaten.

When petty thefts suddenly start to occur at St. Jim's, suspicion not un-naturally falls upon Percy Mellish, the cad of the Fourth Form. Mellish has himself to blame for this, for he is generally considered to be the only fellow at the school who is capable of such conduct, and the evidence against him is convincing enough to make him appear the guilty person in the eyes of most of the fellows. It certainly seems that Mellish will be expelled unless some new light can be shed on the mystery of the thefts. What transpires you will discover when you read this grand story, which will hold your interest from beginning to end.

In addition to this ripping story programme, there will, of course, be our other usual features, which include another picture-story of "Mick o' the Mounted!"

readers' prizewinning jokes, and lastly, more news from your Editor, in which I will have something to tell you about a tip-top new feature that is starting shortly.

AN UNREHEARSED ACT.

The audience at a circus got an extra and quite unrehearsed turn the other day when one of the lions turned on its trainer! The trainer entered the cage, and for a moment he turned his back on the lion. As he did so, he stumbled, and in a flash the animal had leaped upon him and felled him to the ground with a blow from one of his paws. Attendants rushed into the cage and drove the lion back before he could do any further damage, and the trainer was luckily found to be suffering from nothing worse than cuts on his face.

BUTTONS!

Here is a strange story which happened some years ago to a man who worked at the time for a firm of tailors in Bombay. This man was an expert cutter, and one of his jobs was to make six pairs of breeches for a maharajah. Not long afterwards his firm received a telegram from the maharajah, asking them to send a cutter to him at once, in his native state. The cutter who made the breeches was chosen to go, and he set off on the one-thousand-mile journey. When he arrived, he found that the maharajah was in a shooting camp of almost unbelievable luxury, which contained among other things a tent fitted as a jeweller's shop, from which the maharajah could select gifts for his friends.

The cutter himself was taken to a beautifully appointed tent fitted with electric light, and there he was given a bath and a meal. Then, at length, he was taken into the presence of the maharajah himself, who greeted him in quite an off-hand manner and said, pointing to the silk breeches which he was wearing:

"I find that these buttons are a little too high up; would you alter them?" Think of it; a one-thousand-mile journey to move some buttons!

THE EDITOR.

"He ain't. He's only a giddy lord!"

"Well, I don't care whether he's a lord or a duke or a millionaire. I know jolly well he's got lots of tin, and you ought to be able to stand a Form-room brew on the occasion of a double birthday."

"Ow! Steady with that ink, you young beast, Gibson!"

"Serve you right, D'Arcy minor! You're barred by the Form unless—"

"I blued all my tin on a new footer. It's as much yours as mine."

"That's all very well; but you've got a brother in the Fourth who's rolling in filthy lucre!"

"I've tried—"

"Oh, rats! You ought to have made a raise. You can't say that we haven't treated you decently about him. Lots of fellows would have cut you dead for having a brother in an Upper Form, and you know it. We've taken it kindly and never set it up against you. We've looked over it."

"I know you have; only—"

"And now you can't stand a Form-room brew on the occasion of a double—"

"Ow! Keep that ink away, you beasts!"

Wally struggled desperately, and the fags of the Third and the ink-bottle were mixed up on the floor in an inky scramble.

The Terrible Three were laughing heartily; but the din was growing great, and they remembered all of a sudden that they were the champions of law and order.

"Here, this won't do!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Stop that, you kids! We're keeping the House in order!"

"Yah! Who's made you prefect?"

"Don't you ask rude questions, kid! Stop that row!"

"Rats! Get up!"

"Yah!"

"Booh!"

"This looks like a case of 'suasion,'" said Tom Merry. "Pile in!"

They piled in. Three sturdy fellows in the Middle School could account for a host of fags. Wally & Co. were knocked right and left. Wally was freed from the raggers, but, curiously enough, he did not side with the rescuers. Form feeling was too strong. He placed himself at the head of the Third in a desperate resistance.

"Line up!" shrieked Wally. "Knock 'em out! Down with the Shellfish! We'll teach 'em to come and play at being prefects here!"

The noise the fags had been making was considerable. The noise that resulted from the efforts of the champions of law and order was terrific. But it was all in the good cause.

An angry face looked in at the door. It belonged to Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's.

"Stop that row!" he roared. "Eh? What's the matter, Kildare?" "What do you mean by kicking up this hullabaloo?"

"We're—we're keeping the fags in order, Kildare."

"If you don't stop it, then, I'll keep you in order!"

"Look here—"

"Get out of the Third Form Room!"

The Terrible Three looked at one another with sickly expressions, and left the Form-room. The dusty fags sorted themselves out. Kildare gave them three minutes of fluent abuse, and retired.

Wally chuckled. "It's all right, my sons—"

"Is it all right?" growled Jameson. "I've a jolly good mind to finish that ragging."

"Hold on! I mean it's all right about the feed."

"Oh, I see! What—"

"I've got a wheeze!"

No more was needed. When Wally announced himself as being equal to an occasion, his friends knew that it was all right. And the late raggers, dropping all hostility on the spot, hugged Wally, thereby transferring a considerable amount of ink from his person to their own, and D'Arcy minor explained his "wheeze."

Pong!
"My only Aunt Jane!" murmured Wally, as he drew near Study No. 6.

"What on earth's that?"

Pong, pong!

"Lah, te, doh! Got it! That's my 'C'!" came the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Now for a little practice while those unmusical wottahs are in the gym, and I shan't be intewwupped."

Wally grinned. The pong of the 'A' of the tuning-fork, assisting Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to find his key.

"Yaas, let me like a soldier fall, Upon some open plain, This breast expandin' for the ball—"

"Weally, Wally, I wish you would not come twainpin' into the study just as I am on my top note!"

"It's all right, Gus—"

"It is not all wight. That note is an 'A' and I am not vewy stwong on the top 'A's.' I was gettin' that one beautifully when you come wushin' in like a Wed Indian!"

"That's just what struck me, Gus."

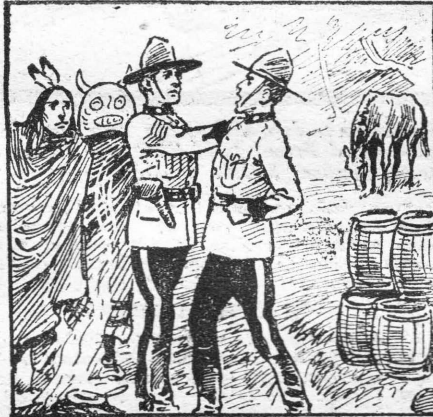
"What stwuck you, Wally?" asked D'Arcy, looking at him.

"What a ripping-top 'A' you have," said Wally unblushingly. "I wish I could sing it as you do, Gussy."

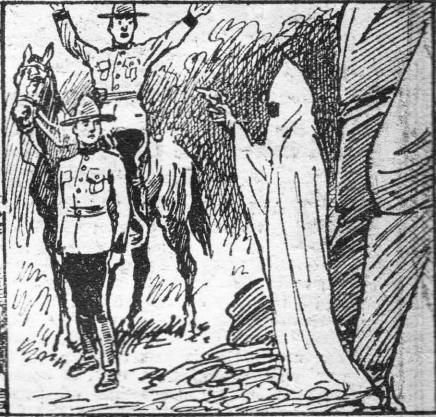
"I dare say you do, Wally. It isn't



Mick Ray is investigating the mystery of a "White Demon" when he spots the Demon appears, scaring the smugglers away. Mick is left with the



"Ray, I must detain you on suspicion of being concerned in the unlawful sale of liquor to the Indians!" accused the sergeant; and, watched by the witch-doctor, he escorted Mick back to barracks.



Mick seemed in no way perturbed; neither did he show great surprise when a white-clad figure suddenly appeared and barred the trail. "Put 'em up, sergeant!" hissed the White Demon.



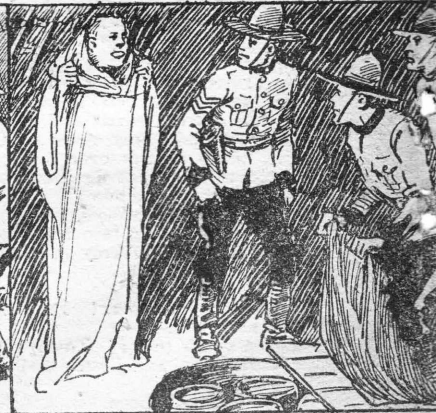
That night Mick stealthily crept into the Indian Reservation and saw his old ally, Eagle Eye. "Take this letter to the barracks," he said, "and make sure that nobody sees you!"



Mick then set himself to watch Hooded Raven's wigwam. An hour or so later he saw the witch-doctor and two other Indians appear in sight, all three carrying heavy casks.



"Grab them—and make sure of the witch-doctor!" shouted Mick, as he and the other Mounties rushed forward. Hooded Raven and one assistant were quickly captured and made prisoners.



Smiling grimly, Mick led the way back into Hooded Raven's wigwam. He removed a skin rug which covered a pit containing casks of liquor. Then the "White Demon" revealed himself as ex-Sergeant Byrnes!

(Another thrilling advent

THE MOUNTIED!

STORY OF THE WILD WEST!

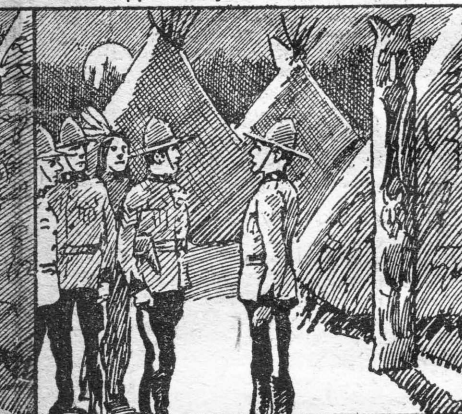
Indian smugglers landing casks of liquor on a river shore. Suddenly the White Demon appears, and later a Mountie sergeant accuses him of being a smuggler!



Menaced by a revolver, the dumbfounded sergeant was then ordered to dismount and face the other way. He was disarmed; then with the White Demon covering his retreat, Mick slipped away.



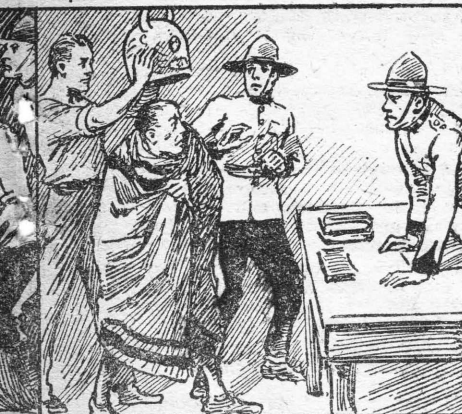
He and his mysterious friend lay in hiding while the baffled sergeant searched unavailingly for his prisoner. Then the White Demon issued certain instructions to Mick, who nodded understandingly.



A few minutes passed and Mick heard movements behind him. Eagle Eye had returned with the Mounted Police, as instructed in the letter. "Get ready for a big capture!" said Mick.



Suddenly there was a chorus of cries from the witch-doctor's wigwam. Out rushed Hooded Raven and the other Indians, pursued by the White Demon, who had been concealed inside.



"And now for a surprise!" said Byrnes, when the prisoners had been taken back to barracks. Removing the witch-doctor's head-dress, "Hooded Raven" turned out to be Paul Dubois, wanted by the Mounted!



And so ex-Sergeant Byrnes, dismissed from the Force owing to the trickery of Dubois, was restored to rank. The first one to congratulate him was Mick. "Welcome back to the Force—you demon!" he chuckled.

venture of Mick next week.)

every fellow who is born with a remarkable tenor voice."

"But you oughtn't to keep it all to yourself, Gus. Why don't you give a sing-song, you know, to the fellows?"

"I am thinkin' of givin' a concert."

"Good! Then perhaps you wouldn't mind giving us a sort of rehearsal in the Third Form Room," explained Wally. "That's what I was thinking of. You see, we've got a lot of musical chaps in the Third, and we never get a chance to hear any good music."

"Weally, Wally, you are impwovin' vevy gweately in some wespects," said the unsuspecting swell of the School House. "I am glad to see it. I did not notice before that the Third Form were at all musical."

"Oh, yes, they are, you know—awfully! You should hear young Gibson doing the 'Bridal Chorus' from 'Lohengrin' on the paper and comb."

"I have heard him, and I vegarded it as a feahful wow."

"Well, perhaps it was," assented Wally, who was unusually docile; "but it shows a taste for music, doesn't it? Lots of fellows would be buzzing 'Stormy Weather' instead of the 'Bridal Chorus.'"

"Yaas, there is somethin' in that."

"If you'd give a little singing entertainment in the Form-room, Gussy, the Third would appreciate it. You see, if you're thinking of giving a concert, this would be a ripping good practice—a sort of preliminary canter, you know."

"Yaas, wathah! If you are weally desiwous of impwovin' your minds—"

"That's it, exactly! You see, we want to improve the whole Form—give 'em lessons in taste and—and musical feeling. All the fellows who don't want to come must be made to come and listen. That's the idea."

"Yaas. But how are you goin' to make 'em come?"

"Well, young Jameson thought that if there was a bit of a feed they'd come and listen, and then we could bung the singing at them, and they really couldn't help themselves. They wouldn't leave so long as the grub lasted."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You think it's a good wheeze?"

"Yaas, certainly!"

"There's only one difficulty in the way—"

"Pway allow me to assist you in any way poss!" said Arthur Augustus. "I am only too anxious to waise the musical tone of the coll."

"Well, it's about the funds," said Wally glibly. "I'm stony, and most of the fellows are on the rocks. If we could raise—"

"Oh, that's all wight, I can lend you a pound!"

"Good!" exclaimed Wally, delighted.

"Then I'll manage it all right. What time will you come along?"

"Any time you like, deah boy. I've done pwep."

"Then we'll say half an hour, and that'll give me time to get the feed going. We'll have the music along with the grub, you know."

"Vevy good!"

"The Third Form Room, then, in half an hour," said Wally, and he quitted the study.

He ran to the Form-room like a whirlwind, and burst in it, and seized Jameson and Gibson round the neck, and waltzed them round the room till they crashed into a form, and went rolling on the floor.

"You raving lunatic!" gasped Jameson.

"What the—"

"It's all right."

"What's all right?"

"The feed."
 "Oh, made the raise?"
 "Yes. The only trouble is that Gussy's going to sing to us; but it's worth it for a birthday feed."

CHAPTER 9.

The Plot Progresses !

"WHAT is it, Gore?"
 Mr. Railton asked the question in a slightly irritable tone. Gore's manner, as he came into the Housemaster's study, was very respectful, but there was a curious lurking glimmer in his eyes.

"My lines, sir."
 "Your—your lines?"
 "Yes, sir."
 And Gore laid a carefully written imposition on the table. Mr. Railton laid down his pen, and looked steadily at Gore.

The cad of the Shell met his glance without flinching.
 "I gave you this imposition, Gore?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "When?"

"Just after afternoon school, sir."
 "Indeed! I had quite forgotten. You may go."
 Gore left the study. Mr. Railton took up the impot and looked at it. There were fifty lines from Virgil, well written out. Mr. Railton knew the lines almost by heart, but he stared at them now as if they were a ghastly and startling sight. Then he pressed his hand to his forehead.

"There is no doubt about it," he muttered, "my memory is going. Is it a case of mental fag, or what? Worse, perhaps."

The Housemaster's look grew almost baggard. To a man already in a worried and nervous frame of mind, it was terrible to discover that he could no longer rely upon his own faculties—that his mental powers were tottering in the balance.

There was a tap at the door.
 "Come in!" said Mr. Railton, in a hollow voice.
 Sharp entered the room.

He was looking a little nervous, having not the gift of nerve that Gore and Clyne rejoiced in; but as juniors often looked nervous—and with reason—on entering a Housemaster's study, there was nothing to excite suspicion in that.

"Well, Sharp, what is it?"
 "My lines, sir."
 Mr. Railton almost jumped.
 "Your what?"
 "My lines."

Sharp laid an imposition on the table as Gore had done. Mr. Railton looked at him, and signed to him to go. He realised that it would not do to betray himself to a junior. But his expression was sufficient to show the boy how the plot was working, and he felt a pang of remorse as he left the study.

Gore, Clyne, and Mellish were waiting for him at the corner of the passage. They grinned gleefully as he came up.

"Well, how did it take, Sharpy?"
 "He looked knocked into a heap," said Sharp uneasily.
 "I say, you chaps, I—I don't like this."

"What's the matter?" demanded Clyne. "It's going to be all right, isn't it?"
 "Ye-es; but—but—"

"Oh, you're getting frightened!"
 Sharp turned crimson.
 "I'm not getting frightened, only—only—well, never mind. I'm game if you are. I'll stick it out."

"Of course you will!" said Clyne sneeringly. "We're in too deep now for sliding out, my pippins. We've got to go through with it. And it's safe enough. We'll make his hair turn grey before we've done with Railton."

"Oh, will you?" said a voice at his elbow, as Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther came round the corner. "What's the little game?"

Clyne was taken aback.
 "Eh? I didn't know you rotters were listening."
 Tom Merry flushed.

"We weren't listening, and you know it!" he said sharply.
 "We couldn't help hearing what you said. You've got some game on, I can see—something up against Railton."

"Nothing to do with you."
 "Quite a mistake," drawled Lowther. "Railton is seedy, and we're looking after the law and order of the House to save him worry just now."

"Precisely!" said Manners, with a nod.
 "So you see," went on Tom Merry, "whatever your little game is, you've got to drop it. Railton is not to be ragged while he's off his form."

"I don't quite catch on to it," he confessed. "But it's

"Mind your own business!"
 "Haven't we told you that we've made this our business? I don't know what game you're playing, but I can guess that it's something beastly mean. I warn you to drop it. We've got our eye on you."

And the Terrible Three walked on.
 Gore & Co. looked at one another uneasily.
 "That was beastly unlucky!" said Clyne, with a short laugh. "Still, they haven't found out anything. If they did it wouldn't matter. They couldn't sneak of us without being sent to Coventry by the House."

"Right enough. It's Mellish's turn next. Go on, Mellish!"

"Better leave it for a bit."
 "You're not going to funk it," said Gore. "I've done my bit, and now you're going to do yours."

"Yes; but—"
 "You'll go straight to Railton's study, or take a licking!"
 "Oh, it's all right; I'm going!"

And Mellish went. He passed Manners and Lowther in the passage. They were standing at a window looking out. Tom Merry was not there. The cad of the Fourth tapped at Mr. Railton's door, and entered with a meek and smug expression on his face. He started a little as he saw that Tom Merry was in the study.

Tom was at the table with a Latin exercise before him, upon which he was evidently asking Mr. Railton's advice. The Housemaster was always willing to help any junior who took his work seriously, and Tom Merry was one who worked hard as well as played hard. Mellish would gladly have left his errand over till Tom Merry was gone, but that was impossible. Mr. Railton had pushed the exercise aside for a moment to attend to the newcomer.

"What is it, Mellish?"
 "If you please, sir, have you done with my fountain-pen?"

The Housemaster stared at him.
 "Your fountain-pen, Mellish?"
 "Yes, sir."

"What do you mean? Why should you suppose that I know anything about your fountain-pen? What are you talking about, Mellish?"

The junior looked amazed.
 "Yes, sir. Don't you remember you borrowed it this morning, sir?"

"I certainly do not remember."
 "Why, there it is, sir, on your inkstand!"
 The Housemaster turned white.

"Ye-es—yes, Mellish! Take it, by all means, and thank you. Stay a moment! I do not quite remember! When did I borrow it?"

"After first lesson, sir," said Mellish glibly. "You wanted to write something, and you told me to ask you for it."
 "I do not remember. Was it in the class-room?"

Mellish hesitated a second. He meant to say "Yes," but he wished Tom Merry had not been there. Tom's eyes were fixed steadily on his face, with a glance that Mellish did not quite understand, and which alarmed him a little.

But he remembered in a moment that a Shell boy could not possibly know what had happened in the Fourth Form Room after first lesson, and he regained courage.

"Yes, sir."
 The answer came out without a tremor.
 "Ah, yes, no doubt you are right. I had forgotten. You may go."

Mellish slipped the fountain-pen into his pocket and left the study. Mr. Railton sat silent, lost in painful thought, and Tom Merry was quite still, not caring to interrupt him.

The Housemaster came to himself with a sudden start.
 "Ah! I was forgetting your Latin, Merry. I'm growing very forgetful lately."

"Don't let me bother you now, sir. I—"
 "Nonsense! We will finish!"

And the exercise was gone through. Then Tom Merry thanked the Housemaster and withdrew. He caught a glimpse of the master as he closed the door, and he saw that Mr. Railton's face was white and almost haggard. His heart was heavy as he rejoined Manners and Lowther.

"There's some underhand business going on here," he said. "Those cads have a plot of some kind up against Railton, and they're bothering him. I just heard Mellish at it, and I'm almost certain he was lying."

And Tom Merry explained what he had heard, and what he suspected. Manners and Lowther wrinkled their brows over it.

"Blake can tell you," said Lowther. "He will know whether Mellish was lying or not. But—but what could be his motive if he was lying?"

Tom Merry shook his head.
 "I don't quite catch on to it," he confessed. "But it's

(Continued on page 18.)

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The Worst Boy at St. Jim's!

(Continued from page 16.)

a mean game, I'm certain of that, and that new fellow Clyne is at the bottom of it. As guardians of the law and order of the House, we ought to put a stop to it."

"Yes, rather, that's right."

"I'll ask Blake, anyway. Come along and look for him."

CHAPTER 10.

The Top B Flat!

JACK BLAKE had just come from the gym, with Digby and Herries. They were looking very healthy and rosy after arduous exercise, when the Terrible Three met them near the door of Study No. 6.

Strange sounds were proceeding from the study. At any other time the juniors might have supposed that someone was being cruelly and remorselessly slain, and was gasping out shrieks for mercy. But as they knew that it was the swell of St. Jim's practising his top notes, they were not alarmed.

"I say, Blake, do you remember—"

"Certainly," said Blake immediately, and without waiting for the rest of the question. "Ah, distinctly I remember, it was in the bleak December, and—"

"Oh, don't be funny now. I—"

"I'm not being funny. I'm practising my recitation for D'Arcy's show. D'Arcy is going to give a selection of tenor solos from Wagner, Puccini, Berlioz, Gounod, Wallace, and Leslie Henson!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm not quite sure, but I think I've got the list about right. We're going to back him up. I'm reciting 'The Raven'!"

"Ah, distinctly I remember,

It was in the bleak December,

And each separate dying ember

Wrought its ghost upon the floor!"

"That's the style. You don't often hear 'The Raven' recited like that!"

"No!" said Lowther.

"Look here, Lowther! If you don't like the way I recite—"

"Oh, it's ripping!" said Tom Merry hastily. "But—"

"You wait till I make the raven croak," said Jack Blake confidently. "I'll make the audience shudder then."

"Shouldn't wonder if you make the audience croak, too!"

Blake glared. Lowther was using the word "croak" in its slangy sense, as an equivalent for the verb "to die."

"If you came along here to be funny," said Blake, "I can only say—"

"We came to ask you a question," said Tom Merry. "Don't mind Lowther, he was born like that. Do you remember—"

"Ah, distinctly I—"

"Cheese it for a minute! Do you remember in the Fourth Form Room this morning, after first lesson, Mellish lending his fountain-pen to Mr. Railton?"

Blake, Herries, and Digby stared blankly at Tom Merry.

"What the dickens are you getting at?" demanded Blake.

"Is that a conundrum?"

"No, it isn't. I want to know. It's important."

"Well, he didn't! Railton was taking the Fourth Form for first lesson, as Lathom has made it a special point to catch the flu and get laid up. But I didn't see any fountain-pen business. Mellish never did anything of the sort, as a matter of fact. Mr. Railton wrote a note to the French master, but he used a pencil he borrowed of young Hancock."

"Yes, I remember that," said Digby.

"Well, I just heard Mellish tell Railton he had borrowed his fountain-pen to write a note after first lesson in the Form-room."

"Then Mellish was—mellishing!" said Blake, inventing a new word on the spot. "I always knew he was a fearful prevaricator, also a wonderful fabricator, and not to say a beastly liar; but I'm blessed if I can see where there was any use in telling that fib to Railton. What's the game?"

"But his fountain-pen was lying on Mr. Railton's inkstand, just as if Railton had laid it there absent-mindedly."

"Well, Mellish could easily have put it there himself, I suppose, when Railton wasn't in the study some time?"

"Ye-es, I suppose so."

"That was it," said Lowther. "Now, the question arises, my beloved hearers, what on earth is Mellish trying to mystify Railton for?"

"Blessed if I know," said Blake.

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"That fellow Clyne is at the bottom of it," said Tom Merry, with conviction. "We came upon them—the whole gang—jawing over something they're plotting up against old Railton. This is part of the wheeze. It's some plot to worry the old boy, and he's so run down just at present that he's easy game. See?"

"Beastly caddish!" said Blake.

"We're going to stop it," said Tom Merry. "This is a matter that requires fellows older than you."

"Two months and seven days older!" jeered Blake.

"Well, yes, counting by the calendar, but years and years older if you go by experience and—wisdom," said Tom Merry loftily.

"And gas," suggested Blake.

"Aha!" came a sort of scream from the study, and Blake & Co. rushed in.

"What on earth are you doing?" roared Blake. "You'll alarm the House!"

"Pway don't intewwupt me!"

"What do you mean by shrieking like that? You'll have fellows come along to ask if we're slaying you."

"And we shall have to truthfully answer 'yes,'" said Digby darkly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your wibald laughtah intewwupts me feahfully," said D'Arcy, screwing his monocle into his eye, and regarding the chums with an icy glare. "I should be obliged if you would wetiiah. I am due in the Third Form Room in a few minutes, and I am pwactisin' my top B flat."

"Your which?"

"My top B flat. I am goin' to sing the 'Flower Song' fwom 'Carmen' to the fags."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There is nothin' whatevah to excite your laughtah, deah boys. Wally has wewpresented to me that the fags have musical aspivations, which I can encourage by singin' to them."

"He was pulling your leg."

"I wefuse to admit the possibility of anythin' of the sort. If there are any musical fellows in the Third, I weward them as worthy of encouragement. I am goin' to sing the 'Flower Song' fwom 'Carmen.'"

"Ha, ha, ha! In French?"

"No. Out of consideration for the pwobable lack of knowledge on the part of the fags, I shall sing the twanslation."

"There'll be a row!"

"Weally, Blake!"

"Keep off the top B flat!" said Blake, with a warning wag of the head. "Suppose you were to burst a boiler, or something?"

"I can get the note quite simply. I have been pwactisin' it. Unfortunately, I have not studied long enough to have yet attained the accuwate pitch without the aid of a musical instrument or a tunin'-fork. But by stwikin' 'A' on the tunin'-fork, and tweatin' it as the 'te' of the tonic-solfa, I get to B flat without difficulty. As far as pitch is concerned, I mean, of course. It is wathah difficult to get weally good pduction on top note at first. I am not yet perfect."

"No—no, I don't think you are—quite!"

D'Arcy struck the "A" fork, and the usual "pong" resounded. He sang "Ah" to the note, and Blake, Herries, and Digby staggered against the wall. Then he went up a semitone, and sang the B flat, and the three juniors sank to the floor in attitudes of great agony. D'Arcy glared at them indignantly, but proceeded to practise his B flat regardless of their contortions.

"That's the top note in the 'Flower Song,'" he said triumphantly.

"If you're going to work off that on the fags," said Blake, "I can only say that there'll be a row—in a double sense."

"If you fellows like to come along—"

"Not much! We've stood it once, but you never know how it might turn out if we went through it again."

"I weward your wemarks as uttaly wotten and fwivolous!" said D'Arcy. "I have no time now, or I should probably give you all a feahful thwashin'. I am goin' to the Third Form now, where I am eagerly expected. They don't find a wemarkable tenah to sing top B flat to them ewevy day."

And Arthur Augustus left the study and slammed the door.

CHAPTER 11.

After the Feed!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS was certainly expected in the Form-room, but perhaps not exactly with eagerness. The Third Form had received the news of the feed with eagerness enough. When they were informed that D'Arcy of the Fourth would be singing tenor solos at the same time, they cheerfully acquiesced. It wasn't a very



“ Oh, my Carmen ! ” sang Arthur Augustus. “ My life shall be given 'to thee ! ” As Gussy reached his top note on the “ thee,” with one accord the fags, holding their ears, bolted from the room. They had had enough of D'Arcy's solo !

high price to pay for a good feed, and, as Jameson said, they could stand it.

“ Besides, he may be late,” said Gibson.

“ And then the feed won't last so very long,” added Wally.

“ We shan't be bound to listen to anything that isn't got through while the feed lasts.”

“ Oh, we can stand it ! ” said Baker III. “ Only let's hope he'll be late.”

D'Arcy was late. His top B flat detained him in the study till the feast had been in progress for nearly ten minutes, and a very considerable diminution was apparent in the supplies.

The feed was at its height when the swell of the School House appeared in the doorway of the Form-room with a tuning-fork in his hand, and a roll of music under his arm.

“ There he is ! ”

“ Come in, Gussy ! ”

“ You can sing ! ”

Arthur Augustus entered the room. There was a becoming flush of modesty on his face. He turned his eyeglass on the fags with a benevolent expression.

“ I am vevy pleased to come and sing to you chaps,” he said. “ I hope it will be the beginnin' of a new ewah in the history of the Third Form. I am vevy pleased to find that you young wascals are musical. Shakespeare has wemarked that—”

“ Pass the sardines.”

“ Shakespeare has wemarked—”

“ Jam this way, old chap.”

“ Shakespeare has wemarked that the man that hath no music in his soul is fit for tweekons, stwatagems, and spoils. He furthah wemarks—”

“ Where's the pickle-jar ? ”

“ He furthah wemarks : ‘ Let no such man be trusted. ’ My deah fellows, you will usually find in this world that a chap who cares for music is a much more decent chap than a man who doesn't, and therefore I wepeat—”

“ Shove along the cream-puffs, you young pig ! ”

“ I wepeat that I am pleased and flattahed by this invita-

tion to sing to you. I shall begin with the ‘ Flower Song ’ fivom ‘ Carmen ’—”

“ Coffee this way.”

“ I do not wish to stand upon cewemony,” said D'Arcy.

“ I will sing just where I am, but as there is no accompanist, I will ask your permish to use my tunin'-fork to get my note.”

“ Go ahead ! ” said Wally.

The Third Formers were going ahead, and Arthur Augustus could not help noticing that more attention was paid to the feed than to the founder thereof. But that was all to be changed when the singing commenced, of course. Then he would see the fags forgetting sardines, strawberry jam, and currant wine, and listening open-mouthed to the song—perhaps.

The tuning-fork ponged, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, after several false starts, found his note. Holding up the music with both hands, he started :

“ See here, thy flowewet tweasured well,
Its odour cheered my pwison cell—”

“ Pass the marmalade ! ”

“ Open another bottle, will you ? ”

“ Thou withered dead, the chewished flower,
Its perfume kept its magic power—”

“ Look here, young Baker III, don't you wolf all the cream-puffs ! Give a fellow a chance ! ”

“ Oh, you go and eat coke ! ”

“ I'll jolly well give you a thick ear if you don't pass the cream-puffs ! ”

“ Next my heart it softly weposed,
And how oft, with eyelids half-closed,
I dwank its perfume with delight—”

“ If you drop your rotten sardines over my trousers, young D'Arcy minor, I'll jolly soon bung the tin down your neck ! ”

"And saw thy smiles illumine the night.
Sometimes I cursed the hour I met thee——"

"Jolly lucky for you your Form-master ain't here, D'Arcy major. I say, D'Arcy minor, your brother's swearing!"

"I twined all vainly to forget thee.
Sometimes I asked in senseless wrath,
Why did Fate bring her in my path?"

"Blessed if I know, D'Arcy major! Who's he talking about?"

"Give it up! It must be Cousin Ethel!"

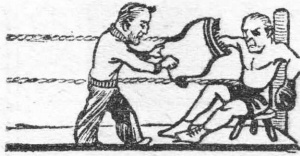
"Or the girl at the draper's in Rylcombe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, let him rip! Pass the pepper!"

"Weally, deah boys, I don't see how I am goin' to sing if you keep on intewwuptin' me with wemarks that I can only chawactewise as wibald!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, breaking off at last.

AWKWARD!



Second: "Watch his right, Battler!"
Battler: "Ow can I, when 'e's allus pokin' me in the eye with it?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to F. Clifton, 76, Noth Street, Bicester, Oxon.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Wally. "Fellows will jaw, you know. Keep it up!"

"That's right. On the bawl!"

"Go it!"

"Vewy well! But weally——"

"Any more sardines?"

"No; they're done."

"Any more tarts?"

"All gone."

"Any more anything?"

"No, apparently not."

"Then I'm off!"

"Here, wait and hear the rest of the song!" said D'Arcy minor. "Don't be a cad, you know. Gussy stood the feast, so it's only fair that we should stand the song."

"Weally, Wally, if you put it like that——"

"Oh, go ahead, Gussy! You're improving our minds, you know."

"Oh, all right! Let him improve our giddy minds. Prestissimo, Gussy, please."

"Vewy well! I will begin again at the beginning——"

There was a yell of protest.

"No! Go straight on!"

"Finish your innings!"

"Kick off, do!"

"Vewy well, I will go stwaight on, but I considah——"

"Go ahead!"

"On the ball!"

"Then, my curse wecalling with shame——"

"I should think so, D'Arcy major! Where were you brought up?"

"Fondly, tenderly bweathed thy name,
And felt——"

"Why, there's that young villain Baker III got his jacket stuffed with scones! Roll him over and have 'em out!"

The remainder of D'Arcy's solo was lost in the din as Baker tertius was forced to disgorge. But the noise died away as Arthur Augustus sailed on to the climax and reached the famous B flat.

"Oh, my Carmen!
My life shall be given to thee!"

On "thee!"—at any time an awkward word for a top note—D'Arcy came to the B flat. The Third Formers listened and stared and shrieked. Then, with one accord, they bolted from the room, holding their ears.

In the twinkling of an eye almost Arthur Augustus was left alone with the remains of the feast. He lowered his music and stared round him.

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"Bai Jove!"

Slowly and sadly he left the room. He could not help realising that he had been done, and that the Third Form at St. Jim's was, after all, as unappreciative of really good music as it had ever been. In Study No. 6 he found Blake, Herries, and Digby, roasting and eating chestnuts.

"Blake, deah boy, will you tell me weally and twuly what you think of my top B flat?" asked D'Arcy seriously.

"Can't, old chap!" said Blake affectionately. "It would hurt your feelings; and, besides, there's no words in the English language to express it."

D'Arcy looked thoughtful.

"Upon the whole," he remarked presently, "I shall let weally difficult songs alone for the pwesent and stick to easy things like the 'Soldier Fall.' I can get the 'A' all wight. It's wemarkable how much diffewence a semitone makes at the top of the voice. You think I get the 'A' in 'Soldier Fall' all wight, don't you, Blake?"

"Oh, ripping!" said Blake. "Good enough for the Fourth Form, anyway."

And with that rather doubtful commendation D'Arcy had to be satisfied.

CHAPTER 12.

Gussy Issues Invitations!

"PLEASE, sir——"

Mr. Railton stopped as Clyne spoke in his meekest and most submissive tone. The Housemaster, with a cloud upon his face, was coming away from the Sixth Form Room. Mr. Railton's face had rarely been unclouded for the past few days.

"Yes, what is it, Clyne?"

"Please, sir, may I leave my lines till after prep, as I want to go down to Rylcombe and get my new football boots, sir?"

Mr. Railton stopped short and stared at Clyne, the harassed expression intensifying upon his face. His features looked very worn in the morning sunlight.

"What lines are you referring to, Clyne?"

"The hundred lines from Horace, sir."

"Did your Form-master give them to you?"

Clyne looked astonished.

"Mr. Lathom, sir? Oh, no, sir! You gave them to me! Don't you remember, sir? It was for skylarking in the passage."

"You may leave them till after tea," said the Housemaster.

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Clyne.

He scudded off. The lines were an invention of his own, and he felt pretty certain that Mr. Railton would never ask to see them, so he had committed himself to nothing.

He strolled out into the quadrangle, and stopped sharply as a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder. He turned to see Tom Merry and Manners. It was Tom who had caught him by the shoulder with a grasp like iron.

Clyne looked at him defiantly.

"What do you want, Merry?"

"I want a word with you, you cad!"

Clyne wrenched his shoulder free, and was inclined to walk away; but Tom Merry looked as if he meant business. Clyne did not want to come to blows with the hero of the Shell if he could help it. He had had enough of that kind of thing with Arthur Augustus; and Tom Merry was a more redoubtable adversary than the swell of the School House.

"Well, you can go on," said Clyne, with a sneer.

"I heard what you just said to Railton——"

"Listening again!" sneered Clyne.

The blood rushed into Tom Merry's face, but he made no reply to the taunt. He went on very quietly.

"You were lying to Mr. Railton. I have been watching you lately—ever since I knew you and your friends were plotting something against our Housemaster. Mr. Railton never gave you lines for skylarking in the passage. It's a lie; and Mellish was lying to him yesterday about the fountain-pen. You are planning all this to bother him, because he's run down and you think you can fool him."

Clyne shrugged his shoulders.

"You ought to be a detective," he remarked.

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

"Isn't what I've said true?"

"Find out!"

"You cad! You know it is!"

"Are you going to turn sneak?" demanded Clyne. "Can't I jape a master if I like, if I choose to take the risk? What business is it of yours?"

"It's different, japing a master. This is a cad's game, and no decent fellow would play it. Even Gore wouldn't if he weren't led on by you."

"Any more to say on the subject?" asked Clyne, yawning.

Tom Merry's eyes blazed. He had hard work to keep his hands off the sneering, mocking face before him.

"Yes," he said. "You've got to stop it—all of you!" Clyne laughed.

Tom Merry made a step towards him, and his laugh died away. Manners passed his arm through Tom's, and Clyne walked away. Tom Merry was breathing hard.

"The cad!" he muttered. "I shall pulverise him yet! He ought to be kicked out of the school!"

"Tom Mewwy—"

"Hallo, Gus! Are you up to pitch this morning?" asked Tom Merry cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had his tuning-fork in his hand; in fact, he was seldom seen without it now. He was beaming with smiles, too.

"Yaas, wathah!" he replied. "I found my top B flat all right when I wose this mornin'. All the same, I am goin' to keep the 'Soldier Fall' for the piece de resistance this evenin'. The top note is 'A' in that, you know."

"What are you doing this evening, then?" asked Manners.

"I am givin' a sort of wecital to the fellows. Only an informal sort of thing, you know," explained D'Arcy modestly. "No charge for admission, and no tickets wequahed."

"I see; we just roll up in our thousands and roll in."

"I am afraid there wouldn't be woom for thousands," said D'Arcy. "You see, I am givin' my little entertainment in Study No. 6. We're bowwowin' chairs fwom all quartahs, and I'm to stand on the table for a platform. I shall sing half a dozen tenah solos. I mustn't wun the wisk of twyin' my voice, you know. Tenahs have to be awfully careful with their throats."

"Ye-es, I suppose so. Only half a dozen?"

"Yaas, wathah! And Blake and Hewwies and Dig will fill up the intervals. Blake is goin' to wecite 'The Waven,' you know, and Dig will give a cake-walk. I weward a cake-walk as wathah unworthy of the occasion, but Dig won't give anythin' else, and he says he'll wefuse to support me on any othah terms. Hewwies is goin' to give a cornet solo."

"Very much solo, I expect," grinned Manners. "There won't be anybody there but Herries at the time."

"Well, weally, I anticipate somethin' of that sort," said D'Arcy confidentially, "so I have put Hewwies last on the pwogamme. He has been pwactisin' to-day, and I admit it is somethin' feafuh. I couldn't hear myself singin' B flat."

"Then it must have been awful."

"He's at it now," said Manners, looking up at the window of Study No. 6, from which strange, weird sounds were proceeding. "Awfully like a steamer's siren, isn't it?"

"Yaas; the wesemblance is weally quite stwikin'."

"What is he playing—'The Lost Chord,' or 'We Won't Go Home Till Morning'?"

"He is playin' 'On the Ball,' awwanged as a cornet solo," explained D'Arcy. "I know, because he told me; othah-wise, I should nevah have wecognised it. I advised him to give it a new name, and pwetend that it was an extwact fwom somethin' vewy classical, and then the audience would natuwallly expect to have a headache and wouldn't grumble. But he only said wude things. But I stopped to ask you chaps if you were comin' to the show aftah tea."

"Quite sure Herries will be last?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And members of the audience are allowed to leave before the finish?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then you can rely on us."

"Vewy good. Bettah come early and avoid the cwush."

"Ha, ha, ha! Certainly! We'll be among the first at the pit door."

"I wathah think you will be surprisid," said D'Arcy, with much satisfaction; and, with a graceful nod, he walked away.

His course lay across the quad in the direction of the New House. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were chatting together in the porch there, and they looked up as the swell of the School House bore down upon them.

"When did you get out?" asked Figgins cheerfully.

"Bai Jove, Figgins—"

"And how did you dodge the keepers?"

"I did not come here to bandy wude wemarks," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I came to extend an invitation to you."

Fatty Wynn pricked up his ears at once.

"We have tea in Study No. 6 at five sharp."

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn. "We don't mind! I get awfully hungry in this cold weather. We can have tea in our study, too, when we get back."

"We have tea at five sharp, so as to get it ovah—"

"Oh!"

"And allow time for the little entertainment I am givin'."

There will be half a dozen tenor solos, beginning with 'Let me like a soldier fall,' fwom 'Mawitanah.' There will be othah items—"

"Any preparation made in the case of casualties?" asked Figgins sarcastically.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"I think I ought to go," remarked Kerr. "I've learned first aid to the injured, you know, as a Boy Scout."

"Weally, Kerr—"

"And there isn't a blessed feed," said Fatty Wynn indignantly. "We're asked to go and listen to a chap squealing, without anything to eat at the finish! My word!"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"I'd be jolly glad to come," said Figgins, winking at space. "But I've got to see a man about a dog, you know. I'll look in after the tenor solos are over, if possible."

"I shall instwuct the stewards to wefuse admittance to any New House boundah whatsoever," said Arthur Augustus, with great dignity; and he marched off with his nose very high in the air, leaving Figgins & Co. chuckling.

CHAPTER 13.

Exit Clyne!

"WHAT shall I do?"

Mr. Railton muttered the words feverishly. He was pacing to and fro on the soft turf in the Head's garden. He had gone to that quiet spot

to think out his problem. To the worn and worried master of the School House, it seemed certain that he was losing his mental balance—that he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He had been hard driven by his work, and additional work, of late. Once or twice he had forgotten things, though usually a most methodical man. Now he had taken to forgetting things without being able to recall the circumstances at all—a much more serious matter.

What was he to do?

The Head was only just recovering from an attack of the flu, and Mr. Lathom was still very unwell. Much work fell upon the School House master, but he did not care for that. He was a keen worker. But what if he were in no fit state to do the work?

Matters seemed to be going from bad to worse. What was he to do?

The Housemaster's face was worn and worried. He was trying to think things over—to pull himself together. But the mere feeling that he no longer had control of his faculties was enough to unnerve him. He had been there half an hour or more, pacing in the grass under the trees, silent, his footsteps making no sound. Suddenly, through the still quietness, came the sound of a voice he knew—the voice of a junior in his own House.

"Clyne! I've been looking for you, you skulking cad!"

Mr. Railton smiled slightly. He knew Tom Merry's voice. The juniors were on the other side of the fence, and only the palings and a mass of rhododendrons were between them and the Housemaster.

"What do you want?"

Clyne's voice was sullen, with a trace of fear in it.

"I want to speak to you—about Railton."

Mr. Railton started.

He had been about to walk away quietly, not caring to be the hearer of, perhaps, some private matter between the juniors. Now he paused. Was it possible that the juniors had noticed his peculiar state already?

"Oh, keep off that!" said Clyne. "It's no business of yours."

"I'm making it my business. You're not going to bother old Railton any more. You can see how ill he's been looking lately, and if you were anything but an utter cad, you'd let him alone."

"I'm not the only one."


"Gore and Mellish and the rest would stop if you did. You know jolly well that you're the ringleader."

A strange look came over Mr. Railton's face. He walked quietly towards the gate, to pass the fence and reach the spot where the two juniors were speaking.

"Perhaps I am," said Clyne, little dreaming whose ears were taking in his words. "Perhaps I'm not. Railton was rough on us—"

"Because you were bullying a fag."

(Continued on the next page.)



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"Anyway, we're going to do as we like, without being dictated to by you. If you were to sneak, you'd be cut dead by the whole House, and you know it."

Tom Merry gritted his teeth.

"Perhaps so. I don't mean to sneak. You're going to stop this cowardly game without any sneaking. I can see now what you're driving at. You'll make Mr. Railton think he's loose in the head—that's your little game. He isn't the kind of man to suspect fellows of lying wholesale."

"It's a good jape."

"You're going to stop it. I'm not going to sneak—don't be afraid of that. But if you don't drop this game, I'm going to thrash you within an inch of your life!"

Clyne drew a quick, hissing breath.

"I won't! I tell you I won't!"

"Then take off your jacket!"

"I'm not going to fight you!"

"You are!"

Clyne panted.

"Hang you, you—you bully! I——"

"Will you take off your jacket, or will you fight as you are?" asked Tom Merry determinedly.

"Hang you! I won't fight! I—I——"

"There! Now will you come on?"

Clyne turned quite white as his face was smacked. But even then he did not accept the challenge.

"Hang you! I——"

"Stop that," said Mr. Railton, quickly coming through the gate. "I will deal with you over this matter, Clyne."

Tom Merry turned pale.

"Oh, sir! I—I——"

"You need not apologise, Merry. You have acted like a decent and right-minded boy. As for this wretched lad, I hope he will never experience the trouble he has caused me in the past few days. I have had a long experience with boys, but thank Heaven I have never come across so much baseness in one so young before. Follow me, Clyne!"

Clyne reeled against the wall. Tom Merry sprang towards him, for the wretched boy looked as if he were going to faint.

Clyne muttered a savage word.

"Don't touch me! This is all your fault!"

"It's all your fault! I'm sorry Mr. Railton heard us, but you've only got yourself to thank!"

Tom Merry walked away without another word. Clyne followed the Housemaster with a sullen face and a slow, reluctant step. In the Housemaster's study he stood with his eyes on the floor and a sneer on his lips. Mr. Railton regarded him long and steadily.

"You have treated me in a cowardly and disgraceful manner, Clyne," he said quietly. "I have observed already that you are a boy of evil influence, and this last discovery proves conclusively that you are not fit to associate with decent boys. It is impossible for you to remain here. Meanwhile, please tell me the names of your associates in this matter."

Clyne was silent for a moment. A rag of honour he had left made him hesitate to betray his friends, and from bravado he was inclined to refuse to reply. Then he thought of Mellish, and grinned.

"There was Mellish of the Fourth, sir," he said.

"And the others?"

"I'd rather not say, sir."

Mr. Railton was silent.

"Very well," he said at length, "if you have a shred of self-respect left I will not tear it from you. Let the others go. I have a pretty clear idea as to who they are, but I know they were little more than your dupes. Mellish, however, was probably almost as bad as you were. He shall answer your charge."

And the Housemaster called a fag in the passage and sent him for Mellish. The cad of the Fourth entered the study a few minutes later, looking somewhat scared. At the sight of Clyne, with sullen and downcast face, and of Mr. Railton's frown, his knees knocked together.

"You—you sent for me, sir," he stammered.

"Yes, Mellish. I have discovered the plot against me, and Clyne named you as his accomplice."

Mellish caught at the table for support.

"I—I—he—he—it's a lie, sir—I—I mean, it's not true, sir. I—I knew he had been expelled from his last school——"

"Expelled!"

"Yes, sir. He——"

"Is that true, Clyne?"

Clyne shrugged his shoulders. He knew that there was no hope for him, and his impudence stood by him to the last.

"Yes, sir, it's true. I don't care!" he said carelessly. "Mellish is lying. He was backing me up all the time. He extorted money from me for keeping my secret."

"Oh, sir! I—I——"

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"I cannot but believe Clyne's statement, from what I have observed of your character, Mellish," said Mr. Railton sternly. "Yet, on his word alone, I cannot condemn you. I should not condemn a dog on the evidence of a boy like Clyne. I shall not punish you, Mellish. I only tell you to take warning of the punishment of this boy. He will be expelled from the school. You may go—and remember that I have my eye on you now."

Mellish staggered rather than walked from the study. He knew that he had been within measurable distance of expulsion, and he was thoroughly scared.

Mr. Railton fixed a stern glance on the sullen Clyne.

"You will go up and pack your box at once, Clyne," he said. "I will not allow such a character to mingle a minute longer with the boys of my House. I only hope that you have not succeeded in sowing corruption too effectively already."

And, without a word in reply, Clyne went. For a quarter of an hour after that Mr. Railton was shut up in the Head's study. Some of the boys noticed a box being taken down by Taggles, the porter. But only Mellish knew what had occurred until the Fourth Form went into class that afternoon. Clyne's place was empty. The truth gradually dawned on the juniors of the School House.

There had been no public expulsion; but the cad of St. Jim's was gone and the school never saw him again.

CHAPTER 14.

Gussy Comes a Cropper!

"Y AAS, let me like——"

"Hallo! Tuning-up already, Gussy?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Bag the front seats!" said Tom Merry; and the Terrible Three rushed into the study.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "Remember the tenor solos! On an occasion like this I prefer to be modest and take a back seat."

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Order, you Shellfish!" exclaimed Blake. "None of your Shell rowdism here. This is a respectable study. Here they come, Gussy—in thousands! I never thought recitations were so popular in the School House."

The fellows were certainly coming in, taxing the accommodation of Study No. 6 severely. D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and looked at Blake with a great intensity of gaze.

"Weally, Blake, if you imagine that the fellows are comin' here to heah a wottah wecite a wecitation, you are——"

"Well, what the dickens do you think they're coming for?"

"Gussy's right," broke in Digby, before Arthur Augustus could reply. "Recitations are really only a stop-gap, you know. What fellows really like is a lively cakewalk."

"Weally, Dig, I wegard you as an ass! The fellows are weally comin' in for——"

"My cornet solo," said Herries. "I've been thinking about that, Gussy. One cornet solo ain't much to compensate chaps for listening to all the piffle you fellows are palming off on them——"

"Weally, Hewwies——"

"So suppose you shove down three or four? I don't mind! I can do 'On the Ball' and 'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf'——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "That sounds rather mixed!"

"I mean——"

"I wufese to considah any such fwivolous suggestions. The fellows are comin' here to listen to a wemarkable tenah voice."

"Hallo! Any room left?" demanded Figgins & Co. with one voice, showing themselves in at the crowded doorway.

"Yah! Get out!"

"New House boudners not admitted!"

"Rats! We're here by special invitation. We want to see Gussy fall like a giddy soldier!"

"He came over to the New House to invite us," said Kerr. "We're coming in."

"I hope there's refreshments in the interval!" gasped Fatty Wynn, squeezing his ample proportions into the crowded study, shoved from behind by Figgins and Kerr. "Oh, go easy, Figgy, old chap!"

"House full!" bawled Blake into the corridor, along which fellows were coming thickly. "Standing room only! You can stand in the passage!"

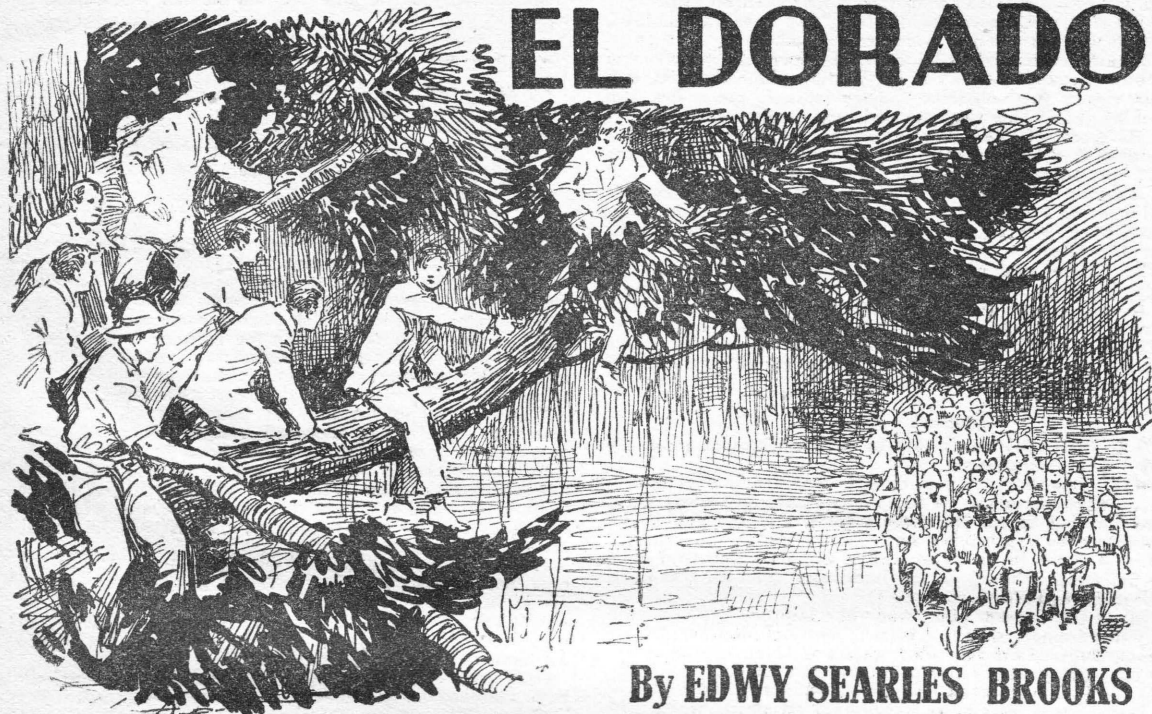
"Gentlemen, the concert is about to commence!"

"Go it, Gussy!"

(Continued on page 23.)

MORE FULL OF THRILLS CHAPTERS OF OUR GRAND SERIAL.

THE WHITE GIANTS OF EL DORADO!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Within the 'Trap!

NOT until the great rebel force of Surnum Mentius was well into the valley did the flood of water come cascading down from the heights. Even the Ciri-ok-Bak warriors, who formed the rearguard, had no time to retreat.

Confusion spread like an epidemic; the Arzac rebels of Surnum Mentius, so jubilant a minute earlier, were now panic-stricken and disorganised. They went running madly up the grassy hillsides, and their shouts mingled with the mighty roar of the surging flood.

Nelson Lee's first thought now was to shout orders to the St. Frank's masters; and they, in turn, saw that all the boys, seniors and juniors alike, were kept intact as one party. Everybody was staring at the incredible cascade as it widened, deepened, and seemed to split the very hillside in two. The roar of the flood was deafening, and it spread fanwise, sweeping down into the valley's hollow with awe-inspiring rapidity.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Lord Dorrimore. "Where in the name of wonder is all this water comin' from?"

"The reservoir!" said Captain Harry Cane, in a startled voice.

"The what?"

"Zingrave has ambitious schemes for the betterment of El Dorado," went on Cane. "One of his plans was to provide the city with a modern water supply. For over a year he has had thousands of men working on the great reservoir. It is a higher valley than this one, and the water drains into it from the hills beyond."

"Zingrave does things in a big way," said Lee grimly. "He did not hesitate to destroy this great work, if, by so doing, he could destroy the invading armies."

Hundreds of rebels were caught in the foaming waves, and, although not many of them were drowned, they were rendered helpless. Nelson Lee confined himself to his own party—the St. Frank's boys. In an orderly fashion they raced for the opposite hillsides.

Higher and higher rose the flood waters. Already the bottom of the valley was a great lake, and almost as far as the eye could see men were struggling.

"Look!" shouted Handforth. "Great Scott! Boats!"

At the top of the heights for which the St. Frank's boys

were climbing, there were dense clumps of trees. Suddenly myriads of gold-ornamented soldiers made their appearance. They were heaving over the ground clumsy-looking, flat-bottomed boats which had been concealed amongst the trees.

Once fairly on the downward slope the flat-bottomed boats gathered speed. They came careering down, with Arzac soldiers in their rear.

One after another the boats struck the flood with a splash, and then settled down. At the same time hundreds of Zingrave's men, appearing on the flank, cut off all possible retreat.

To advance round the shoulder of the hillside was impossible, for the flanking army barred the way. To retreat was just as futile, for the boats were launched by now, and already the soldiers were swarming into them. The rebels, in scores, were captured.

"Keep together, boys; make no resistance!" said Lee urgently. "Not a single shot must be fired!"

"But why not?" urged Dorrie. "We've got rifles, machine-guns—"

"Yes, sir! Let's have a go at them!" yelled Handforth. But Lee was firm.

"It would be madness!" he said. "They outnumber us fifty to one! We should kill scores, yes—but by doing so we should arouse their fury, and then we should have no chance at all. For they would fall on us and slay us as we stand. Better to be taken prisoners."

"Wau! Thou art surely right, Umtagati; but my blood turns to water," said Umlosi, with regret. "'Tis a wise general who knows when defeat has come."

The Arzac soldiers who were surrounding them were coming in solid masses—in dense formation. The St. Frank's boys were well up the hillside, but the flood was rising all the time. Rebels were being fished out of the water by the victorious defenders; others, fleeing, were rounded up. The debacle was complete.

There was a certain dignity in the Arzac officers who came forward towards the British party, which stood so calmly, so quietly. In the forefront was the redoubtable Captain Oss, the Arzac officer who had been the first man in this strange country to speak to the Britishers.

"We meet again, Captain Oss," said Lee quietly.

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"You make yourself my prisoners," said Captain Oss stiffly. "You make no fight."

"We make no fight," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "We have weapons, but we did not come to your country, my friend, to kill."

"Yet you bring many men to attack El Dorado," said the officer, his face as impassive as a statue's. "You come now—to the City of Gold. You come before King Yoga. It is my order that any man who resists shall be killed."

"We shall not resist," said Lee. "We have surrendered, and we will not use our arms against you."

Captain Oss turned to his men. He gave sharp orders in his own language. Many of the soldiers came forward, and their object was obvious. They seized the rifles and machine-guns which the boys and men carried.

"By George! This is a nice state of affairs," grunted Handforth. "Prisoners again! Just where we were at the start—prisoners marched into El Dorado."

"It's most frightfully disturbin'," said Archie Glenthorpe. "I hope that blightin' Zingrave chappie won't send us down into that cavern again, with the molten gold flowin' all over the place."

The future was not pleasant to think of. Professor Cyrus Zingrave had won, and they were at his mercy again.

"It might work out for the best, after all," muttered Dorrie, with a despondency which was foreign to his nature.

The St. Frank's party were all lined up by the Arzac officers; hundreds of men were placed on either side, and the march to El Dorado began.

Zingrave's Revenge!

EL DORADO was a city of mad excitement when the prisoners arrived.

The short tropical twilight was nearly over; darkness was about to shut down. Already great flares were burning in all the main streets, and the gold-edged pavements were gleaming and shimmering in the reflected lights. Crowds lined the roadways, and were gathered upon the flat roofs of many of the buildings. The air was filled with mighty shouting.

Nelson Lee did not know what had happened to the main body of prisoners—to the Arzacs of Surnum Mentius and the Ciri-ok-Baks. Certainly they were not being marched into the city. Only the British party had this honour.

As they came into the magnificent square in the centre of El Dorado they saw an extraordinary structure, which had recently been erected in an open space of the square. It was, in fact, a great platform, fifty feet in height, and at first sight it looked like the scaffolding of a new building. But there was no building within—nothing but masses of poles and criss-cross supports. At the very top there was a solid platform of wooden planking without any protecting rail.

"Wonder what it can be?" asked Captain Cane in a low voice.

"I don't know—but I think I can guess," said Lee, and in his voice was a note of foreboding.

As they went round that scaffolding Lee saw that there was an enormous trench surrounding its foot—a trench twenty feet wide and fully fifteen feet deep. It was empty—as yet.

Amid a mighty tumult of shouting the British party was marched right round to the very front of King Yoga's palace. And there, standing on the golden steps, was the venerable-looking, white-bearded Zingrave. It was difficult to imagine that here stood one of the most ruthless criminals in the world.

Sharp orders were given; the prisoners were lined up, the boys being in the rear. Lee, Dorrie, Umlosi, and Captain Cane were placed in front, facing the gleaming steps. Utter darkness had fallen now, and torchlights were flaring by the hundred, throwing a lurid, flickering light upon the scene.

Zingrave slowly and deliberately descended the golden steps. At last he stood right opposite Nelson Lee, and in his eyes there was an expression of malevolent triumph.

"So we meet again, Mr. Nelson Lee!" he said in his soft, purring voice. "But not in the circumstances you planned, eh? I was to be the prisoner—and you the victor."

"What is your intention—to gloat?" asked Lee bluntly. "Do not be too sure, Zingrave. Sometimes in the past you have gloated too soon."

"But this time, my unhappy friend, you are beyond reach of all help," said Professor Zingrave. "Your only friends, Sir Hobart Manners and his men, are dead. With me they would have been useful. I did not want them to die. But you—you shall die."

He suddenly strode forward, and his face was transformed into that of a fiend.

"You shall die—and die horribly!" he purred. "Everything is ready for your reception. Have I not planned well?"

"I do not doubt that you intend to wreak your vengeance upon me," said Nelson Lee. "But there are many boys in this party—"

"Boys who have on many occasions worked against me," interrupted Zingrave sulkily. "Do you think I am prepared to let them escape now?"

"You devil!" burst out Dorrie. "You're not goin' to make war on schoolboys, are you?"

"Happily I am in a position to laugh at your taunts," said Zingrave. "When I first made you my prisoners it was my intention to send you to various parts of my domain—to slave. But I have changed my mind. Since you came you have created mischief. You have become traitors to me—King Yoga. And the penalty for traitors in Arzacland is death. I am taking no more chances; I am going to give El Dorado the greatest spectacle it has ever witnessed."

He waved a hand towards the great scaffolding.

"You do not understand, eh?" he went on. "But soon you will. El Dorado is to see a sight which will eclipse anything that was ever done by Nero in ancient Rome! This great square is the arena, and my citizens are gathered about—by my orders. What they will see will put fear into their hearts, and the news will spread far and wide to the uttermost corners of my country. There will be no more rebellion. Arzacland is mine!"

Nelson Lee understood. It was not merely to Zingrave's own fiendish pleasure that he had prepared the spectacle. He knew well enough that the majority of his "subjects" lived in fear of him. They should continue to live in fear—for he would show them how he punished his enemies. Terrorism was his watchword now.

Orders were given, and without any delay the prisoners were marched away from the golden steps—straight towards that colossal erection of scaffolding. In one place a crude staircase had been provided. With soldiers in front and with soldiers behind, the captives were compelled to mount.

At last they all reached the summit, fifty feet from the ground. And here they found themselves upon the great platform. All the boys were allowed to roam freely over the great space, and the men followed. When this was done the Arzac soldiers descended. An enormous trapdoor was closed, and Lee heard immense balks of wood being forced into place.

Lord Dorrimore was curious enough to go to the very edge, and, lying at full length, he peered over. He saw the Arzac soldiers descending. When they reached the bottom of the first flight of stairs they wrenched the stairs free.

"Pretty—very pretty indeed!" said his lordship, rising to his feet. "Do you know what they've done, Lee? They've closed up this openin'—an' they've removed the stairs."

"Which means that we cannot escape—for if we jump it will mean death," said Lee. "The platform on every side overhangs the scaffolding. It is not even possible to climb down."

"What are they going to do, guv'nor?" asked Nipper. "Something horrible, I'll bet!"

Lee's lips were compressed into a thin line.

"I think I had better speak to the boys, Dorrie," he said, his voice trembling a little. "The end will come very soon now."

Nipper marvelled at his famous guv'nor's control. Well he knew that Nelson Lee was filled with acute mental agony. He felt his responsibility keenly. It was death for them all—and the boys were helpless victims of Nelson Lee's enemy.

Before the detective could move towards the St. Frank's fellows a sudden tumult arose from the multitudes round the great square.

At the same time there came a queer, uncanny increase of light—and it rose from the ground strangely in red reflection.

"Look!" shouted Handforth, his voice cracking. "Oh, my goodness! How awful!"

He had run recklessly to the edge of the platform. Church and McClure, at his heels, tried to drag him back—for they feared that he would topple over in his excitement. But the next minute they were transfixed, staring downwards. For they, too, had seen that which had brought forth their leader's mighty shout.

For the first time they saw that a channel led from t-

**St. Frank's
STAMP
WHO'S
WHO**



B. Forrest. R. Yorke. C. Talmadge.

(Three more portraits next week.)

and then settled steadily on the great platform. From the multitude below came a mighty shout of fear.

"The airship—the airship!" shrieked Chubby Heath of the Third, dancing up and down. "Look! It's the airship!"

"Hurrah!"

"We're saved!"

"It's the Sky Wanderer!"

Nelson Lee grabbed at Dorrie's arm.

"This thing is sheerly impossible, but the airship is overhead!" he said, his voice throbbing. "It is the Sky Wanderer, Dorrie!"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" said Lord Dorrimore. "I think we must all be mad. Who can be operatin' her? You're not goin' to tell me that the Ciri-ok-Baks—"

"Who but Manners and his men?" shouted Lee. "They're not dead, Dorrie, they can't be dead! The evidence we saw was false."

The excitement was terrific—not only on the top of the platform, but in the city itself. The unexpected arrival of the Sky Wanderer had thrown the Arzacs into utter consternation, and Zingrave himself into a fear.

There was no delusion about it. The Sky Wanderer, in all her majestic splendour, was sailing serenely over the City of Gold. Lights were gleaming from her ports, and all along her promenade decks and entrance deck. She was ablaze from stem to stern, and, what was more, she was under perfect control, as though she had never met with any serious mishaps. It seemed like a miracle.

As she came lower and lower her grapnel claws shot out. Then came a stentorian voice from above, a voice amplified by an electric loud-speaker.

"Keep to the middle!" came the words. "'Ware grapnel claws! Be ready for ladders!"

"Did you hear that?" yelled Dorrie, dancing up and down, excited as a child. "It was Manners himself."

The boys needed no orders from Lee; they raced towards the centre of the platform. Nelson Lee himself was grateful for one thing; he knew that Zingrave, with all his tens of thousands of men, could do nothing now. For

just as the prisoners could not escape from the platform, no man on the ground could approach the platform.

But that very structure, by reason of its design, could be reached from the air!

Down came the Sky Wanderer, and with a splintering of woodwork her grapnel claws gripped at the wooden edges and obtained a firm hold. With rare skill, Squadron-Leader Truscott, the airship's first navigation officer, had operated the claws.

And there hung the mighty ship, secured by only two claws—but seemingly as solid as a rock. The next moment the ladders came down. From below the roaring of the fire was increasing with terrible speed; flames were leaping outwards from the burning structure now, and more than once the whole platform shook and quivered.

"Make it snappy, Lee!" came the voice of Sir Hobart. "We seem to have arrived at a critical moment."

"We're coming!" yelled Lee. "Up you go, boys—the younger ones first. Hurry—hurry!"

The Third Formers and the Fourth Formers went dashing up the metal stairs; many of them, even now, believed that this was some dream. It seemed too good to be true.

Nelson Lee was delighted with the slick, orderly manner in which the boys mounted to the entrance deck. They went speeding up with fleet steps, one on the heels of the other. Then the Removites—and the Fifth Formers and the Sixth Formers. At last, as Nelson Lee and the other men were leaping up the ladders, the platform shook throughout its whole length, and one corner of it sagged drunkenly.

"Free the claws!" shouted Lee. "We're on the stairs—and we're safe! Up, Manners, or all is lost!"

But Truscott, from the control-room, had been watching. In that same second he released the claws, and the Sky Wanderer rose upwards. Lee, Dorrie, and Captain Cane were still on the stairs, clutching for dear life. But they were safe. From below there came a gigantic burst of flame and sparks.

The platform had collapsed, and the heat which arose, in a mighty blast, was almost suffocating.

But in a few minutes the airship was out of the zone of



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the uprising heat. Lee ran up the remaining stairs; in his eyes there was a gleam. His first objective was a long coil of rope, which he took down from a hook.

"Dorrie, I want your help!" he said tensely. "Go to the control-room—get Truscott to take the ship down—as low as he dare—straight over the central square, and fly right over the golden steps of the palace."

Dorrie went leaping along the entrance deck; he almost collided with Sir Hobart Manners, whose face was flushed with joy.

"Dorrie, old man!" exclaimed the airship commander. "This is a glorious night's work—"

"Tell me later!" gasped Dorrie. "Glad to see you, old boy! I'm in a hurry now!"

Dorrie had grasped Nelson Lee's intention, and he was as eager as the detective himself.

Far below, in the square, there was a gigantic bonfire. But it mattered nothing now. It was a bonfire without any victims.

Manœuvring swiftly, the airship swung round; her nose went slightly downwards, and soon she was flying over the heart of El Dorado again. Lower and lower—straight towards the king's palace. Standing there, in the very centre of the golden stairs, isolated from his men, stood Professor Zingrave. He was helpless against the airship by night. During the daytime, and while the sun shone, he could use his destructive ray.

Lower dropped the airship—then, suddenly, with unerring aim, a coil of rope went hissing down from the entrance deck. It was a clever throw, for the loop settled right over Zingrave's shoulders, and in a flash the line was drawn taut.

"Up—up!" shouted Lee.

Like lightning, he made a hitch round a strong metal

them to themselves," replied Nelson Lee. "One thing is certain. The news of Zingrave's capture will soon reach the ears of Surnum Mentius. Without Zingrave's evil influence the peaceful Arzacs will settle down; there will be no longer any rebellion or warfare. We can rely upon Surnum Mentius to gain control, and to rule that little kingdom peacefully. We have done our share—and more than our share—by taking Zingrave away."

"But aren't there some other white men in the country, sir?" asked Nipper. "I mean men like Captain Cane, who were captured—brought down by Zingrave?"

"They are aboard," replied Lee. "Sir Hobart rescued them before he came on to El Dorado."

Sir Hobart himself now appeared, and there was a general shout.

"Explain, sir—explain!" went up a roar. "We all thought you were dead!"

"And we thought you were dead," said Sir Hobart Manners. "It has been a hectic time! As a matter of fact, there is very little to tell. After we had been taken prisoners by Zingrave, we were sent to an outlying 'factory,' as he called it. We found two other Europeans there—and these men had been making elaborate plans for escape for some time. We arrived, in fact, at an opportune moment. There's no need to go into details. The long and short of it was, we made a break for freedom one night—just over a week ago. We got away, but for some time after we were chased, and, having got beyond the Great Wall, we were obliged to make for the open country."

"And then?" asked Lee.

"We came into that hollow—that curious place which was oil-soaked at the base," replied Sir Hobart. "The pursuit was hard on our heels then. We managed to scramble up the bank on the other side of the hollow, and then there

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Right Away!

support, and Dorrie, who had been awaiting that signal, transferred it rapidly to the control-room. The Sky Wanderer rose—and there, dangling at the end of the rope, was King Yoga himself—for all his subjects to see!

"What in Heaven's name have you done, Lee?" asked Sir Hobart.

"I've captured the man who has been responsible for Arzacland's misery!" replied Nelson Lee grimly. "Professor Zingrave is my prisoner—he is wanted in England for many crimes, and I'm going to hand him over to the authorities. It doesn't matter whether they are Brazilian, or Peruvian, or any other kind. They will keep Zingrave a prisoner—until extradition facilities can be arranged."

"You always believe in getting your man, don't you, Mr. Lee?" laughed Sir Hobart. "By gad! I've spent many an exciting hour in my life, but this one beats all!"

"Let's get away now—direct the airship across Arzacland—to freedom," said Nelson Lee.

And soon the Sky Wanderer was sailing majestically into the night, leaving that ruddy glow far, far in the rear. Professor Zingrave, hauled aboard by eager members of the airship's crew, was livid with fury and hatred.

"Again you win, Lee!" he said harshly.

"Again I win," replied Nelson Lee, nodding. "Your desire for the spectacular, Zingrave, was your own undoing. You are my prisoner, and for the duration of this voyage you will be locked up in a storage-room."

In the great lounge of the airship, the boys, looking very travel-stained, were wild with excitement.

"But what about the Arzacs, sir?" went up a chorus, when Nelson Lee appeared.

"We have had enough of the Arzacs—and we will leave

came a terrific explosion, which knocked us in all directions. When we looked back, we saw flames towering up from the hollow—and we heard the awful screams of the men who were dying. Poor devils! There must have been twenty of them, at least."

"It was an inferno," said Mr. Vickers, the second officer, with a shudder. "How it happened, we can't imagine—unless one of the pursuers accidentally caused a spark in running over a flint, or something like that."

"Before it was all over, I had an idea," said Sir Hobart. "I instructed all my men to empty their pockets—to throw their knives, cigarette lighters, and all metal objects far into the blazing hollow. I even told them to tear off their buttons and throw them in, too."

"With the object of baffling pursuit?" asked Lee.

"I thought that if other searchers came—particularly when daylight arrived—they would see the relics, and would assume that it was we who had died," said Sir Hobart. "You fell into the same mistake—it was a perfectly natural one. We took to the forests, and, guided by friendly Ciri-ok-Baks, we reached the airship."

"After that it was fairly easy," said Truscott. "We found she needed repairing, and we set to work with a will. Meanwhile, we knew that you were advancing upon El Dorado, and Sir Hobart's plan was for us to get there at the height of the fighting. We never imagined that we should save you from such a horrible death."

So the amazing adventure in the Land of the White Giants ended—and the mighty Sky Wanderer, still in need of repair, but gallantly airworthy for all that, sailed off into the wilderness of the Amazonian forests and swamps—off to seek further adventures with her schoolboy passengers!

THE END.

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