

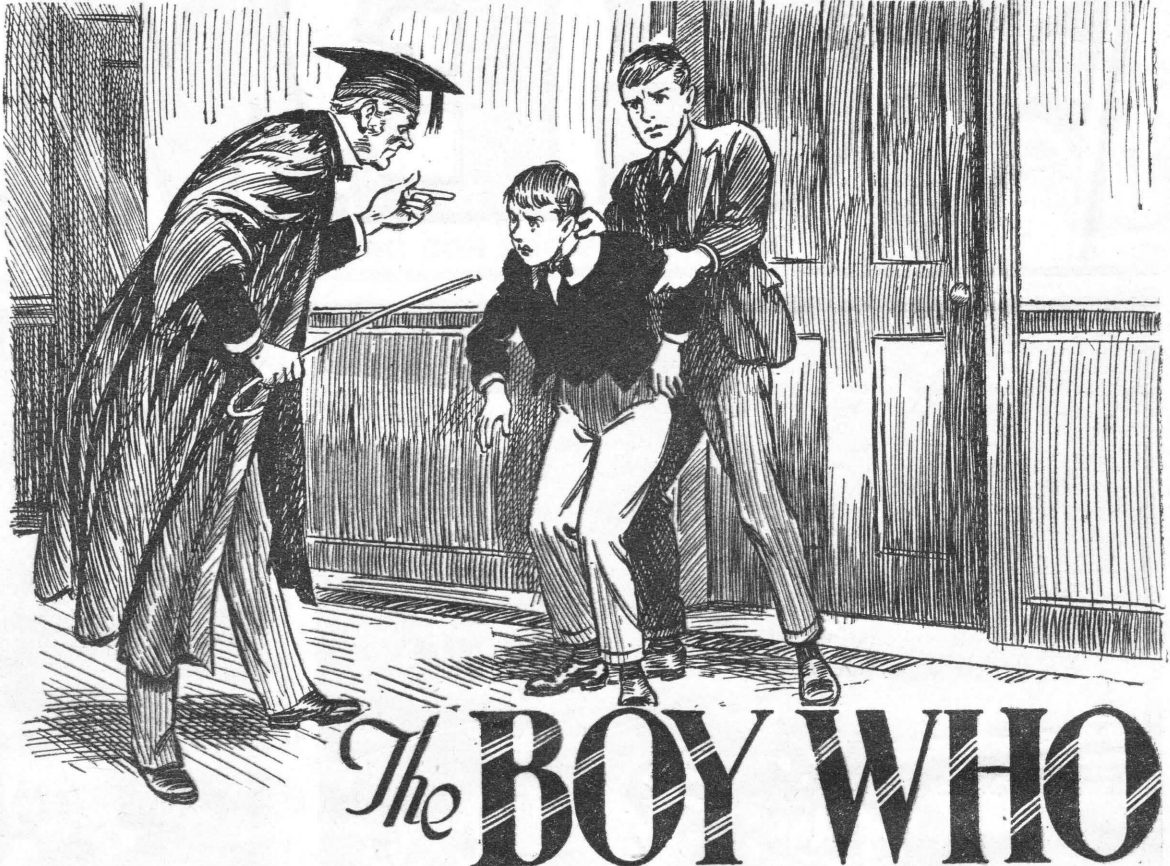
"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY" —Breezy "Boat Race" Number of the St. Jim's Chums' Own Paper— **INSIDE!**

The **GEM**

THE BEST PAPER FOR BRITISH BOYS **2d**



**THE BOY WHO
RAN AWAY!**



The BOY WHO

To sneak on the chap who kicked a football in the face of Mr. Selby, or to suffer unlimited lickings from the sour-tempered master of the Third Form! That is the unhappy position that confronts little Joe Frayne, the waif of St. Jim's. Joe solves the problem in his own way.

CHAPTER 1.

"Goal"!

"IMPOSS, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's did not mean to be exasperating when he made that remark. But it was often noticed about D'Arcy of the Fourth that he succeeded in being exasperating without intending it.

Perhaps it was the languid tone in which he uttered the remark. Perhaps it was the tone of finality he gave it. Perhaps it was the way he jammed his eyeglass into his right eye and looked at Tom Merry as he spoke.

Be that as it may, the effect was distinctly exasperating; hence Tom Merry's terse and somewhat personal reply:

"Fathead!"

D'Arcy gave his monocle another jam, as if to screw it right into his eye, and surveyed Tom Merry with considerable scorn.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—" he began.

"Ass!"

"You feahful boundah—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!" said Jack Blake, of the Fourth. "If Tom Merry thinks he can do it, let him try."

"But it's impos, deah boy!"

"I know it is; but let him try."

"Oh, let him try!" said Herries. "He can do it about as much as my bulldog Towser could. But let him try."

"Look here—" began Tom Merry heatedly

"Oh, we'll look!" said Blake. "Go ahead!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "We are perfectly

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prepared to watch you make a silly ass of yourself, Tom Mewwy."

"Certainly," said Blake considerably. "If Tom Merry has a fancy for playing the giddy ox, why shouldn't he have an audience?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry turned red.

"I say I could send the footer right into the Form-room door!" he bawled. "I tell you I've done it!"

"Fluke, dear boy!"

"Yaas, wathah—a beastly fluke. You couldn't do it again, Tom Mewwy."

"Ass!"

"Weally—"

"Solvitur ambulando," said Monty Lowther. "Let him try. Go ahead, Tommy!"

"Certainly. I'll show these Fourth Form asses—"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Stand back!"

"I decline to stand back. I—"

"But you're in the way!" bawled Monty Lowther.

"Oh! Undah those circs, deah boy, I shall be vevy pleased to stand back," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gracefully.

The Fourth Formers crowded back to the side of the wide-flagged passage.

It was the Form-room passage at St. Jim's. At the end of it, the door of the Third Form Room was wide open. The door was flush with the wall of the passage, and at first glance it certainly seemed a difficult feat to kick a footer along the passage into the doorway. For the ball had to turn at a right angle to go in.

But by catching the opposite wall in a certain way,

—FEATURING JOE FRAYNE AND THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S!

and having a certain spin on the ball, the footer would do it; and Tom Merry had already done it once. The Shell fellow was rather proud of the feat, and the scepticism of the Fourth Formers was distinctly exasperating. They insisted upon regarding it as a mere fluke; and perhaps it was. But Tom Merry firmly believed that he could do it again, any number of times, and he was prepared to try.

Kicking footballs about in the passage was not exactly in accordance with the rules of the school. But juniors have short memories, and there were times when Tom Merry & Co. seemed quite ignorant of the fact that there were any rules at all in St. Jim's.

At all events, at this present moment they were not thinking of rules, or prefects, or masters, or any of those troublesome things, but of whether Tom Merry could, or could not, put a spin on the footer which would turn it into the Form-room door at the end of the passage.

It was really a favourable moment. The boys had not to go into afternoon classes for a quarter of an hour yet, and the masters therefore were not likely to appear on the scene just then.

That any master might for any reason have gone into a Form-room before the time for his class was a possibility that the juniors did not think of for the moment. Fellows cannot think of everything; and just now they were thinking of footers, not Form-masters.

"Go it, Merry!"

"Buck up, Tommy, my son!" said Manners.

Manners and Lowther, Tom Merry's special chums in the Shell, believed, of course, that he could do it. They made a point of it.

Tom Merry placed the footer for the kick.

"Hallo!" exclaimed a cheery voice, as a fag with a

RAN AWAY!

smudge of ink on his face came racing along the passage from the stairs. "What's the little game?"

It was Wally D'Arcy, Arthur Augustus' minor. Following him came Joe Frayne, also at top speed. They stopped as they nearly bumped into Tom Merry, and Joe stumbled over the footer and rolled on the linoleum.

"Ow! Crikey!" he gasped.

Joe would probably never be cured of saying "Crikey!" Wally had tried to instruct him that "My hat!" answered the purpose equally well, and sounded better. But Joe, once the ragged waif of the London slums, and now in the Third Form at St. Jim's, could not break himself of all his old habits—not at once, at all events.

"Out of the way, you silly fags!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"Rats!" said Wally cheerfully.

"Crikey!"

Tom Merry picked Joe up and set him upon his feet.

"I'm sorry, Master Tom!" exclaimed Joe breathlessly.

"It's all right, Joe."

Tom Merry always spoke kindly to Joe. He had been the means of bringing the waif to St. Jim's and installing him there, and in all his trials at the school Joe had never found the kindness of Tom Merry fail him.

"Crikey! I—"

"That'll do, Joe."

Wally pulled Joe back out of the way.

"Shut up, Joe!" he said. "Look here, what's the game, you chaps?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! Look here, old Selby will be along here soon, and if he catches you kicking footers about in the passages there will be trouble."

"Weally—"

"He's in a pretty bad temper to-day—a regular wax," said Wally, with a chuckle. "Jameson got it this morning—both hands. Old Selby had bacon for brekker, and it's always the same—he's got no digestion, you know."

"Weally, Wally, you must not speak of your Form-mastah in that disrespectful way," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I wegard it as howwibly bad form."

"Oh, rats to you, Gussy!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Shut up—here goes!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

He had placed the ball again.

He retreated a few paces, spacing the kick out in his eye, carefully calculating the force and spin he would have to give the ball. Then he took a run.

Biff!

Tom Merry kicked the ball

With a whizz it went down the passage, swerving just as Tom Merry intended, touching the wall opposite the doorway, and shooting right across the passage into the open doorway of the Form-room.

And just as it did so, a thin form in cap and gown came striding out.

It was Mr. Selby, the master of the Third! Probably the noise in the passage had irritated him, and he was coming out to see what it was about. He certainly chose a most unlucky moment for stepping out of the Form-room.

Biff!

There was a gasp of horror from the juniors.

Right upon Mr. Selby's ill-tempered face the ball banged, and the startled Form-master, with a loud cry, reeled back into the room.

Bump!

Almost frozen with horror, the juniors heard the Form-master fell with a crash inside the Form-room.

Then Tom Merry recovered his voice.

"Cave!" he gasped.

The juniors tore away from the spot. With a wild rush they escaped, scattering along the passages or into the studies. Mr. Selby, raging with wrath, came tearing out into the passage a moment later. But the passage was empty, deserted, and not so much as a heel was to be seen.

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 2.

Just Like Joe!

MR. SELBY gasped in the passage—he gasped and snorted. Mr. Selby was a most suspicious and ill-tempered man, and he had not the slightest doubt that the trick had been played upon him on purpose.

He raged down the passage, and raged back again. He rushed into the Form-room to look for the footer, hoping that it might furnish a clue. But it was an old footer, such as the boys used for practice, and there was nothing about it to identify it or its owner.

Mr. Selby raged out into the passage again.

His face was dusty, his nose was very red. His eyes were inflamed with indignation and rage.

"Monstrous!" he gasped. "Infamous! Oh dear—it is villainous! A plot—certainly a plot on the part of a whole gang of desperate young scoundrels! But I will find them out—I will punish them!"

He caught sight of Knox, the most unpopular prefect at St. Jim's, with his grasp on the collar of a fag.

It was Joe.

The thought rushed into Mr. Selby's mind at once that Knox had seen the outrage, and had caught the perpetrator in the act of escaping.

"Knox!" he exclaimed. "Ah! You have caught him!"

Knox dragged the lad towards the Form-master. Knox disliked Joe very much, chiefly because he was under the protection of Tom Merry, the junior who was Knox's special foe in the School House. Knox, prefect as he was, had not found it safe to bully Tom Merry. He was quite mean enough to get at Tom Merry by bullying Joe Frayne of the Third when opportunity offered.

"Has he done anything, sir?" asked Knox.

"I ain't done nuffin'," said Joe, in the peculiar English he had learned in his early days as a waif in Blucher's Buildings. "I ain't done nuffin', sir!"

"Where did you find him, Knox?"

"I heard some fellows rushing past my study, sir," said Knox. "I thought there was probably something up, and

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I came out. This boy was just disappearing round the corner, and I ran and collared him."

Mr. Selby's eyes glittered.

"You did quite right, Knox!" he exclaimed. "I have not the slightest doubt that this young scoundrel—this denizen of the gutter—most flagrantly assaulted me in the doorway of my own Form-room—by hurling a football in my face."

Knox looked properly shocked. He knew better than to grin, which was what he was very much inclined to do.

"My goodness, sir!" he exclaimed gravely.

"Boy!" thundered Mr. Selby.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you hurl that football at me?"

"No, sir."

"Don't lie to me, Frayne!" shouted Mr. Selby. "I insist upon knowing whether you hurled that football at me—your Form-master."

"No, sir."

"Answer me truthfully, Frayne."

"I'm doing it, sir!" said Joe sturdily.

Mr. Selby snorted with rage. He did not believe Joe. He was too keen upon finding a victim to allow him to believe the fag's denial.

"Frayne!" he exclaimed. "I ask you again seriously, and I demand a truthful answer—did you or did you not hurl that football at me?"

"No, sir!" said Joe.

"You can't expect anything but lies from him, sir," said Knox.

"I suppose not," said Mr. Selby. "No, I suppose not. The wretched boy was brought up to lie, as he was doubtless brought up to steal."

"I didn't bring meself up, sir," said Joe sullenly. "I can't 'elp it!"

"Don't be impertinent, boy!"

"Wery well, sir."

"You hurled that football at me—"

"I didn't, sir!"

"Then who did?"

Joe was silent.

Mr. Selby saw his advantage, and he pressed it. If Joe had not kicked the footer he had seen it kicked, otherwise why his hurried flight, which the prefect had interrupted? Mr. Selby felt that he had the boy either way now.

"Frayne!" he rapped out. "Did you see that football hurled?"

"Yes, sir!" faltered Joe.

"Then who did it?"

Joe did not speak.

The Form-master set his thin lips. Knox compressed his grasp upon Joe's collar and shook him.

"Answer your Form-master, you cheeky young villain!" he said.

"I ain't got nuffin' to say."

"Frayne, give me the delinquent's name—give me the name of the unscrupulous young wretch who committed this heinous offence," said Mr. Selby, his flow of language growing really finer and finer as he proceeded.

Joe set his teeth.

"Speak, wretched boy!"

"I ain't got nuffin' to say, sir!"

"Frayne," said Mr. Selby, in terrible tones—"Frayne, on a previous occasion I inflicted a severe punishment upon you for obstinately refusing to answer my questions."

Joe shuddered. Well he remembered that cruel, spiteful caning. His pluck in enduring it had first won him the good opinion of the Third Form, and had cemented his friendship with Wally for ever.

Could he face that again? Yes, rather than betray Tom Merry to punishment—yes, that or any other punishment. There was a deep and heroic devotion in the breast of this lad who had been reared in the slums. Tom Merry had stood his friend through thick and thin, and towards Tom Merry, Joe had a faith that never wavered.

"Will you answer me, Frayne, or will you face the consequences of disobedience?" thundered Mr. Selby.

"I ain't got nuffin' to say."

"Follow me!"

"Yes, sir!"

Knox released the fag, and returned to his study with a grin on his face. Knox was a firm believer in not sparing the rod. Any child in Knox's charge would not have been in danger of being spoiled by the rod being spared, if there were any truth in that old maxim.

Joe obediently followed the Form-master into the Third Form Room. Mr. Selby took a cane from his desk. His face was very spiteful.

"Hold out your hand, Frayne."

Joe obeyed. He went through the infliction of the cane with the fortitude of a young Spartan. Hardly a gasp

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escaped him, though Mr. Selby gave him four cuts on each hand, and laid them on as the Head never did.

"You may go, Frayne," said Mr. Selby, "but this is not an end to the matter. I insist upon knowing the name of the young ruffian who perpetrated this outrage upon me."

A look almost of contempt passed over Joe's face. Any other master at St. Jim's would have allowed the matter to end with that severe caning. But Mr. Selby was not a sportsman. The youngest fags in his Form told one another that Mr. Selby never "played the game."

"I shall question you again to-night," said Mr. Selby harshly. "If you still refuse to answer me, I shall cane you again, more severely. If you still refuse then, I shall repeat the punishment in the morning. I will break this disobedient spirit you have shown, Frayne."

The boy left the class-room without a word.

CHAPTER 3.

Mum's the Word!

TOM MERRY stopped, panting for breath.

The chums of the Shell had taken a passage that led them to the box-room stairs, and they had gained their study in the Shell quarters by a round-about route.

Tom Merry dropped into the armchair in the study, panting, and Monty Lowther sat on the table and gasped. Manners leaned against the wall.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry.

"My word! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Narrow squeak!" panted Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha! Did you see Selby's chivvy?"

"Right on the boko!" sobbed Monty Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Terrible Three roared again.

Had it been any other master but Mr. Selby the chums of the Shell would have been sorry, though they would probably have laughed all the same. But they never thought of stopping and explaining the accident to Mr. Selby, and taking "lines." They knew that he would be suspicious and unjust, and that was an end of it.

They were glad enough to have escaped unrecognised. Of the fate of the others they did not know. The party had scattered; taken different routes. But the Terrible Three had little doubt that the rest had got clear.

"How were we to know the Selby bird was in the Form-room?" grinned Manners. "Why, his own chaps didn't know—Wally and Joe."

"So we couldn't, naturally."

"Naturally. Besides, what did he want to put his head out of the door at that precise moment for?"

"Oh, it's his way! He's always doing something," said Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"By the way, what about the footer?" said Manners. "I gave Hancock two bob for that old footer. It's pretty old, of course."

"Confiscated, my son. Your two bob is completely done in," said Monty Lowther. "But it was well worth two bob of anybody's money to see Selby go over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wonder how the others got off?" Tom Merry remarked.

"Let's go and see."

"I dare say we shall find them in their study," said Lowther.

The Terrible Three went down the passage to Study No. 6. The sound of breathless laughter within the study told them that the chums of the Fourth were there. Tom Merry pushed open the door.

Blake and Herries were leaning against the wall, panting with merriment. D'Arcy stood in front of them with his eyeglass jammed in his eye and a raised forefinger, admonishing the juniors.

"Weally, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is weally too bad—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, it was vewy funnay," agreed the swell of the School House, "but, at the same time, I do not weward it as respectful to laugh in this way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We must wemebah that Mr. Selby, howevah little we must respect his chawactah, occupies the posish of a mastah here."

"My dear Gussy, you talk like a book," said Tom Merry.

"Jolly long book," remarked Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

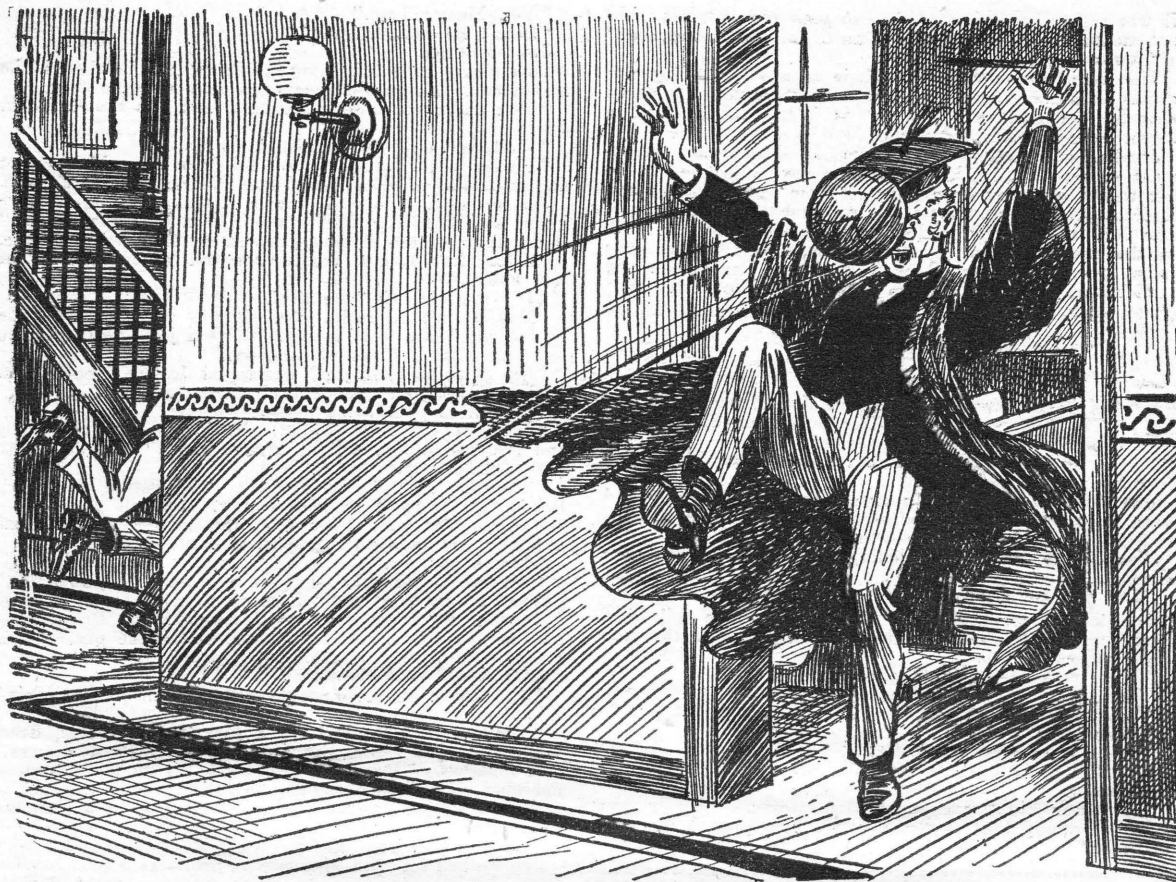
D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon the chums of the Shell.

"Weally, you know—"

"Glad to see you've got clear!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"How did you get away?"

"Oh, we dodged through the Fourth Form Room, and



Biff! As Mr. Selby strode from the Form-room the football banged full in his ill-tempered face, and with a loud cry he reeled back into the room. With gasps of horror, the juniors made a wild rush to escape. Tom Merry's shot had scored a "goal"! But it was likely to have painful results!

got out into the quad," said Blake, laughing. "It was all right."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"What about Wally and Joe?" said Herries. "Did they get clear?"

"I don't know. I hope so," said Tom Merry. "I'll look for them. My hat! If Selby caught them running he would make it jolly warm for them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Terrible Three went on their way. Wally was found in the quadrangle, resting on a seat under the old elms. He was relating the adventure to an interested crowd of Third Form fags. The trees screened Wally from the House, and from any possible observation by Mr. Selby. The fags were very interested, as their incessant chuckles testified.

"Hallo, you young scamp!" said Tom Merry, coming up with Manners and Lowther. "I see you're safe."

Wally grinned.

"Yes, rather! I'm all serene! Did you get off all right?"

"You really kicked the ball right on his chivvy?" asked Jameson. "Really and truly?"

"Yes," said Tom, laughing. "It was an accident, of course."

"Oh, of course! He, he, he!"

"But it was, really," said Tom Merry. "I certainly hadn't the faintest idea that there was a Form-master close at hand, or I shouldn't have been kicking a footer about the passages. Has Joe got off all right, Wally?"

"I think so," said Wally, looking round. "Isn't he here?"

"He's not here?" said Higgs.

"Anybody seen him?"

"Not lately."

"I haven't."

"My only Aunt Jane!" Wally rose to his feet in some alarm. "I missed him in the Sixth Form passage, I remember, but I thought he had cut off by the side corridor. He can't have been nailed by old Selby. We were too far off."

"Well, he's not here," said Jameson.

"Phew!"

"Better look round for him," said Tom Merry seriously. "If Mr. Selby's caught him, and he's in hot water, I shall own up about the footer. I don't want Joe to be licked on my account; and if he was caught running, Mr. Selby would think he was the chap."

"You're right."

"Let's look for him," said Manners.

And look for Joe Frayne they did. But Joe was lying very low. He did not want Tom Merry to know that he had been punished, and he kept very close till the bell rang for afternoon classes. Then he ventured out and joined the Third Form. The Fourth and the Shell had to rush off to their respective rooms, and Joe was saved from their questions for a time; but the Third Form were anxious to know what had happened to him.

Wally caught him by the arm the moment he sighted him. "How did you get off, Joe?"

Joe avoided his eyes. He wanted, if possible, to keep secret what he had suffered at the hands of Mr. Selby.

But the pinched, painful twitching of his face betrayed him.

Wally gave him one hard look, and his grasp tightened upon his arm. He scanned the little ragamuffin's face keenly and searchingly.

"You've been licked, Joe."

A denial trembled upon Joe's lips. But he remembered his promise to Tom Merry—never under any circumstances, or for any reason whatsoever, to tell a lie.

"Yes, Wally," he said.

"Selby caught you?"

"Knox caught me, and took me back to Selby, the beast!"

"And I never knew!" Wally exclaimed remorsefully.

"You couldn't have done nothing, Master Wally," said Joe. "It's orlright. I've been licked afore."

"Did he think you punted that ball at him?"

"He wanted to know who did."

"And you didn't tell?"

"No," said Joe quietly.

Wally pressed his arm appreciatively.

"Good for you, Joe!" he exclaimed. "Good for you!"

It was rather hard cheese, but I'm glad you stood it without sneaking. Old Selby was in an awful wax, I suppose?"

"Wotto!" said Joe.

The Third Form went into their room. Mr. Selby was at his desk, and from his expression it could be guessed that he was still in a "wax," as Wally called it. The frown upon his face was quite Jove-like.

Joe had said nothing to his chum of the intending punishment of the evening. He meant to say nothing. For he felt that Wally would probably let Tom Merry know; and if Tom Merry had known, he would have gone straight into Mr. Selby and owned as to what had been the truth in the matter. And then the punishment would have fallen upon Tom Merry; and Joe would have stood any punishment before he allowed that to come to pass.

CHAPTER 4. Honouring Joe!

TOM MERRY was waiting for Joe Frayne when the Third Form came out after lessons, the Shell having been dismissed a little earlier.

As Joe appeared with the rest, Tom Merry ran forward to meet him.

Joe looked at him with a cheery smile. Mr. Selby had been harassing him that afternoon, but Joe had learned to bear the Form-master's bad temper patiently.

Tom Merry dropped a friendly hand upon his protegee's shoulder.

"Did you get clear, Joe?" he asked.

Joe looked troubled. He did not want to tell Tom Merry anything about the licking, but he knew that the question must come.

"Well, you see—" he began.

Tom Merry's face grew concerned at once.

"Selby didn't catch you, Joe?"

"Knox did."

"Oh! Have you been licked?"

"Well, I got a few cuts," said Joe, with great carelessness of manner.

"My dear kid!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Surely you told Mr. Selby that it was not you who punted the ball at him?"

"Yes, Master Tom."

"Didn't he believe you?"

Joe hesitated.

Tom Merry gave him a quick glance, and he thought he understood. He pressed the fag's arm affectionately.

"You mean you were questioned and you didn't sneak, Joe?"

"Well, yes, sir," Joe admitted.

"I wish you'd let me know; I'd have come like a shot and explained to Selby," said Tom Merry, in great distress.

Joe grinned. He had known that very well, and he knew, too, that Tom Merry would own up "like a shot" if he knew of the further punishment that was to come. And for that precise reason Joe did not intend to let him know.

"It's orlright, sir," he said.

"But it isn't all right, Joe. It was rotten of Selby to go for you," said Tom Merry. "I've a jolly good mind to tell him what I think of him, too."

"Oh, don't do that, sir!" exclaimed Joe, in great alarm.

"It's all right, sir. Least said soonest mended, sir."

"It's rotten your being licked."

"Well, it won't undo that, sir, if you jaw old Selby and get licked, too, will it, Master Tom?" said Joe, with great philosophy.

"The kid's right," said Manners. "It's rotten his getting licked, but it can't be helped now. I'll tell you what—you're a jolly good little kid, Joe, and you shall come and help me take photographs, if you like."

"Thank you, sir."

"Blessed if I'd take that as a reward for goodness," yawned Monty Lowther. "I've borrowed your camera once, Manners, and I got bored to death with it. Better keep off the grass, Joe. Helping Manners to take photographs means holding the camera."

"Oh rats!" said Manners.

"I'll hold Master Manners' camera with pleasure, sir," said Joe, grinning.

"Then come off and have a kick at the footer, Tom, while Manners shows the kid how to carry a camera," said Lowther. "Bring him into the study for tea, Manners, old man. I've had a remittance to-day, and I'm going to feed him up on jam and cake for being such a stunning little chap."

"Good!" said Tom Merry.

Joe walked off with Manners as proud as a prince. The friendship of the Terrible Three meant a great deal to Joe, and their admiration of his courage and constancy was all that was needed to strengthen him in those virtues.

Joe was looking forward with uneasiness to his next interview with his Form-master. But under this genial influence he even forgot Mr. Selby. Sufficient for the hour was the evil thereof; it was no use meeting trouble halfway. A hard life had taught Joe Frayne that wisdom.

So, contriving to forget Mr. Selby and the future, Joe marched off with Manners, and soon had the honour of carrying his camera. Manners even allowed Joe to take a "snap," but he stopped the little waif when he wanted to open the camera and look at the photograph.

"They've got to be developed first, my son," said Manners. "I'll teach you photography one of these days. Come in to tea now."

And Joe was taken in to tea.

Tea was soon got ready—a tea that made Joe's mouth water. There were eggs and ham and pork pies and other indigestible comestibles, to say nothing of cake and buns and various kinds of jam.

Joe enjoyed that tea in the Shell study immensely, resolutely putting away from him any thought of what was coming later in the evening.

Of that, the Terrible Three had no suspicion. Joe did not utter a word on the subject, and Tom Merry naturally did not think of it by himself.

"How are your hands now, Joe?" he asked.

"Oh, they're orlright, Master Tom," said Joe.

"Let's have a look at them."

"But, Master Tom—"

"Look here, has that beast hurt you more than you let on?" asked Tom Merry. "If your hands are marked, after all this time, blessed if I don't take you to Kildare, and ask his advice about it. Selby ought to be stopped somehow."

"They're all right, Master Tom."

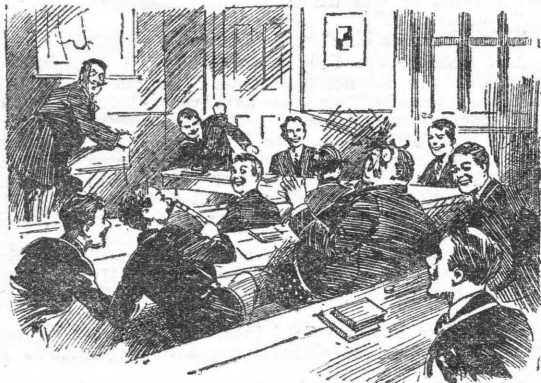
"Let me see them."

Joe Frayne reluctantly held up his hands for inspection. The chums of the Shell burst into a laugh. The hands did not retain the expected traces of the recent caning. But Joe's reluctance to show them was explained at once. They were smothered with jam, and sticky from wrists to finger-tips. In spite of many instructions on the subject, the waif of Blucher's Buildings had not yet learned to eat jam cleanly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther.

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Tom Merry could not help laughing.

Joe turned crimson.

"Y-you see, Master Tom—" he stammered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, I see," said Tom Merry, laughing. "It's all right, Joe. Even jam can be handled in time, you know, if you stick to it."

"The jam's sticking to him, at present," Monty Lowther remarked, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Joe licked his fingers. It was a way of cleaning them much in vogue in Blucher's Buildings, where Joe had had his training.

"Chuck that," said Tom Merry. "We'll give you some hot water in a basin."

"Thank you, Master Tom."

And Joe washed his hands. By the time tea was over, however, Joe's hands were almost as sticky as before, and when he took his leave of the chums of the Shell and quitted Tom Merry's study, he went down the passage vigorously sucking his fingers.

CHAPTER 5.

A Hard Master!

MR. SELBY sat in his study, with a stern, unbending look upon his mean-featured face. Mr. Selby had a cane in his hand, and his expression showed that he was in a mood to use it. The master of the Third was waiting for Joe.

Tap!

"Come in!" said Mr. Selby, in a rasping voice.

Joe Frayne entered the study.

The Form-master signed to him to close the door, and Joe obediently closed it. Then he came towards Mr. Selby, his eyes on the carpet.

The Third Form master fixed his eyes upon Joe, with a greenish glitter in them. Mr. Selby was in his most spiteful mood.

"I trust you have come here to tell me the truth, Frayne?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Joe.

"You were the guilty party in the outrage that was perpetrated at the door of the Form-room this afternoon?"

"No, sir."

"You are aware of the culprit's name?"

"Yes, sir."

"Give me the name."

"I can't, sir."

"Frayne!"

Joe stood silent, with a hunted look in his eyes. He knew that the unfeeling man was going to cane him, and he had a suspicion that Mr. Selby liked caning him. There was no escaping the punishment, whatever he said or did. Joe had a very clear realisation of that.

But if he could have escaped by betraying Tom Merry, he would not have done so. The thought would not even have crossed his mind.

"You have not answered me, Frayne!"

"I ain't nothin' to say, sir," said Joe hopelessly. "I'm sorry, sir!"

"You refuse to give me the name of that boy who hurled that football?"

Joe said nothing.

"Yes or no, Frayne?" said Mr. Selby harshly.

"Yes, sir!" said Joe desperately.

"You refuse?"

"Yes, sir, if you want to make me say it!"

Mr. Selby drew a hard, hissing breath between his teeth. His grasp tightened upon the cane. The greenish glitter was stronger in his eyes. There are some men to whom petty persecution becomes a kind of pleasure when long indulged.

"On a previous occasion, Frayne, you flouted my authority," said Mr. Selby. "I caned you, and the matter was at an end. I hoped that that would be a lesson to you, but it seemed not to have been the case. So far from benefiting by my indulgence, you have become more insubordinate than ever. You again refuse to reply to my questions, and again attempt to make concealment."

"I'm very sorry, sir!"

"There is still time to do as I have bidden you."

"I—I can't, sir!"

"Then I have no resource but to punish you severely, Frayne! I shall not let you go with a single caning, as on previous occasions, because I see clearly that kindness only encourages you in your rebelliousness!"

Joe licked his dry lips. He knew it was coming now.

"I shall cane you now!" said Mr. Selby. "To-morrow morning I shall question you again, and if you refuse to

reply to me, I shall cane you again! I shall repeat the process, Frayne, until you have answered my question!"

Joe stared at him in dismay.

It was not only this caning, then—this and perhaps one more—but canings every day—twice a day—that he had to look forward to—unless he betrayed Tom Merry.

"Oh, sir!" he gasped. "I—I—I can't stand it, sir!"

"Then you had better act in a more respectful manner!" "I can't give you the name, sir. It would be sneaking, sir."

"Hold out your hand, Frayne!"

Joe quivered from head to foot.

"Oh, sir! I—I—"

"Do you hear me, Frayne?" said Mr. Selby in the same deadly quiet tone.

"I—I— It's rotten, sir! It's beastly!" burst out Joe. "Mr. Railton would never treat a poor lad like this, sir!"

Mr. Selby's eyes glinted. He knew only too well how the sturdy, kind-hearted Housemaster of the School House would disapprove of his conduct.

But that reflection only made him the more determined

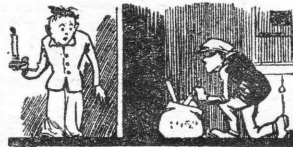
PRESENCE OF MIND!

Householder (disturbed in early hours of morning):

"Who's there?"

Burglar (with great presence of mind): "This is London National calling. The experimental programme is now concluded. Good-night, everybody!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Farenden, 15, Henderson Road, Lower Ed-
monton, N.4.



to carry out his intention. Joe was in his Form, and it was for him to correct the lad.

"I shall cane you more severely for your impertinence, Frayne!" said the Third Form master. "Hold out your hand at once!"

With a hopeless look, Joe obeyed.

He was caned severely—four on each hand, laid on as only Mr. Selby knew how to lay them on. Joe bore the infliction bravely, though he could not help a tear rolling down his cheek with the pain of it.

"You may go!" said Mr. Selby harshly, as he laid the cane on the table. "Remember, Frayne, I shall question you again to-morrow morning, and, if you do not satisfy me, I shall punish you more severely still!"

Joe made no reply.

He left the study quietly, and stood in the passage, with his hands tucked under his armpits, squeezing them to assuage the pain.

His cheeks were wet with tears.

"My only Aunt Jane!" exclaimed Wally. He was speeding along the corridor at his usual rate, but he stopped at the sight of Joe. "What's the matter?"

"Nothin'!" mumbled Joe.

"You're blubbing!" said Wally, in an accusing tone.

"I ain't!" stammered Joe, belying his word by drawing his cuff across his eyes. "It's orlright, Master Wally."

"Old Selby been pitching into you again?" asked Wally sympathetically.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Oh, he's always at it, ain't he, Master Wally?"

"Poor old chap!" said Wally sympathetically, linking his arm in Joe's and leading his chum away. "I'm jolly sorry, you know! Come with me, and I'll give you something to rub on it. It's a ripping cure!"

Joe Frayne went quietly with Wally. All the spirit seemed to have been driven out of the boy, and he was unnaturally quiet, subdued. Wally's wonderful cure did not assuage the pain much, and Joe's hands were still aching and tingling when he went up to bed with the Third Form.

There was a strange expression upon Joe's face, too. He was not soft by any means—in fact, his early life had made him as hard as nails. But there was a limit to the punishment he could take.

The thought of a caning on the morrow morning, upon hands that were still aching and swollen, made his heart beat almost to suffocation with uneasy dread. But how was he to escape the punishment which he felt that he could not endure?

There was but one way.

And that was the thought that was working in the mind of the unhappy fag as he went up to bed with the Third.

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CHAPTER 6.

Out Into the Night!

DARKNESS and silence in the School House at St. Jim's.

The school was sleeping.

Midnight had tolled out from the old tower, and hardly a light glimmered in a window in the great school of St. Jim's.

But there was one who was not asleep—one who was restless, awake, with wide eyes staring into the darkness.

It was Joe Frayne, in the Third Form dormitory in the School House.

Joe had not slept.

For hours he had lain there, while one by one the fellows dropped off, till at last the final good-night was said and the fags slept.

Joe lay awake.

There was an aching pain in his hands, and that was sufficient to keep him awake. But that was not all.

His thoughts were busy and restless.

As his wakeful eyes looked out into the gloom unseeingly, Joe was thinking of many things. He thought of his old days in Blucher's Buildings, the bare garret, the drunken, brutal Bill Frayne, who had passed as his father; of the cold and hunger and wet, all his life, before he met Tom Merry, passing before his eyes as he lay there.

What a change had come over his days—a change that was enough to make any lad lose his balance a little—a breathless change! It was through his befriending Tom Merry, in his humble way, when Tom Merry was down on his luck and alone in London. Tom Merry had not forgotten him. In the grim garret in Blucher's Buildings, Tom Merry had told him that, if he came into good luck again, he would never forget his friend of the slum—and he had remembered his promise. Through Tom Merry, Joe had come to St. Jim's.

The difficulties that had at first beset his path seemed to be disappearing of their own accord. But now all was wrong again.

If Mr. Selby had been kinder—

He might have been kind. He might have understood some of Joe's difficulties, some of his trials, and might have been patient with him. But it was useless to think of that.

Joe felt that he could not face what was to come. The punishment he had already endured was bad enough. To face it again and again was impossible. Mr. Selby did not understand what he was doing when he cornered the lad in this way. There was a limit to the little waif's endurance.

But there was only one way out—to leave St. Jim's.

Joe had decided upon it.

He hoped that Tom Merry would not think him ungrateful, and he meant to leave a word for him. He hoped that Mr. Railton would not think badly of him, but he would have to risk it.

He must go!

In the poor lad's confused and troubled mind, it seemed that he had no other course open. St. Jim's and its ways were still strange to him, and he was feeling like a hunted animal in an unknown land.

The last stroke of twelve had died away when Joe slipped out of bed.

He had placed his things ready. He intended to dress in his oldest clothes, and to take a few articles—undoubtedly his own property—in a small bundle. The bundle was now hidden under the bed. The money he had in his pockets he would not take. He intended to leave every penny of it in his note to Tom Merry.

The little waif drew near the high dormitory window. There was a shaft of clear moonlight falling in. He drew a stump of pencil and a fragment of paper from his pocket, and by the light of the moon he wrote:

"Dear Master Tom,—I can't stand being caned again, and I think I ought to go. I hope you won't think I've forgotten how kind you've been to me. I shan't never forget that. I inklose the munny which does not belong to me as you give it to me. JOE."

He placed the folded sheet in an envelope and licked it, and stuck it fast. Then he debated in his mind where he should place it.

He decided upon pinning it to the coverlet of his bed. The boys' maid would find it in the morning if the fags did not, and it would be taken to Tom Merry. He scrawled on the outside of the envelope "Master Tom Merry," and pinned it down.

Then, taking up his bundle, he went to the window.

To the nimble, active lad it was easy to climb out of the window. Holding his bundle he clambered out and hung

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for a moment or two looking into the darkness below. The moon glimmered wetly through a falling shower.

It was raining.

But Joe did not stop. He scrambled down the rain-pipe and reached the ground. After one look round him he scuttled off in the direction of the school wall where it bordered upon Rylcombe Lane.

In a few minutes he had clambered over the wet ivy and dropped into the road. Then he turned his back upon St. Jim's.

Joe Frayne paused to listen.

There was darkness on the road, broken only by the fitful gleam of a lamp at long intervals.

The rain was descending thinly but steadily.

Joe looked back towards the school. He had heard an indefinite sound in the gloom, and it had immediately brought the thought of pursuit into his mind.

But there was no one behind him on the road.

His escape had not been discovered yet.

He turned his face towards Rylcombe and tramped on, his head bent to the rain. He was thinly clad for such weather, and he was soon very wet.

It brought back a grim recollection of early days. Many and many a time had he been wet to the skin in those days, and he had crept to a cold garret in his wet rags to shiver till they were dry.

It was like old times now, and perhaps he thought of his warm, cosy bed under the roof of St. Jim's as the rain came down. But the thought of Mr. Selby and the endless punishments followed that thought.

And he set his face resolutely away from the school. Suddenly he paused once more to listen. The sound he had heard came through the gloom once more, and he recognised a voice.

"Beastly dark here."

It was the voice of Knox, the prefect.

"Rotten!"

The replying voice belonged to Sefton, a senior of the New House at St. Jim's. Joe trembled as he listened.

His only thought was that Knox had discovered his flight and had followed him from the school. He backed away into the hedge, heedless of the dripping of the rain from the branches, hoping that the two seniors of St. Jim's would pass him unnoticed.

He heard their tramping footsteps now.

To his surprise he discovered that they were coming from the direction of the village and not from the school at all. Knox and Sefton were returning to the school, not leaving it.

Joe stood in wonder. He realised that he could not, after all, be the cause of the two seniors being out of the precincts of St. Jim's.

Two dim, dusky forms loomed up in the rain.

Knox and Sefton passed him, both in overcoats muffled up to their ears, with caps drawn down over their faces. They tramped on to the school wall and stopped at a little wicket-gate near the trees where Joe had taken refuge. In the rainy moonlight he could still see them.

Joe wondered.

Knox paused and fumbled for a key in his pocket. The prefects of St. Jim's, as well as the masters, had a key to that side gate.

It was pretty clear that Knox put the key to a use the authorities of the college never contemplated, and that the wicket-gate served him as a means of exit when he wished to break bounds at late hours.

"Haven't lost it, have you?" grunted Sefton.

Knox snarled.

"No. I've lost everything else at the Green Man, but I've got the confounded key here somewhere."

"Don't keep me standing in the rain all night."

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

Joe Frayne grinned.

The two seniors had evidently been making a surreptitious visit to the Green Man and had lost their money with the sharpers there and returned to the school in the worst of tempers.

The boy watched them in silence. He remembered bitterly how hard Knox had been upon him—how zealously he had done his duty as a prefect when it enabled him to be hard upon the junior from the London slums. And this was Knox—this fellow breaking bounds at night and gambling in secret with a set of rascals at the village inn.

There was a click in the silence and the gate opened.

Knox and Sefton went in and disappeared, and the gate closed and was locked behind them.

Joe drew a deep breath of relief. He wondered what Knox would have done if he had discovered him. But he

EVERY WEDNESDAY

was glad to be undiscovered. He tramped on his way in the falling rain.

Steadily it came down!

There was a cold wind blowing from the moors, and it swept down the lane with the rain upon it, cutting through the thin clothes of the little ragamuffin.

Joe paused at the cross-roads.

The wind was beating upon him, and the rain had soaked him to the skin by this time. He was growing deeper and deeper in despondency.

Which way should he go?

Anywhere away from St. Jim's! But how was he to get to London? London, naturally—the only place he knew—was the only refuge he thought of.

There he could sell papers and get some sort of a living

in and was passing upon the platform when a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder.

Joe gave a violent start, his heart beating hard with terror, and a sharp cry escaped his lips.

"Wotcher doin' here?" demanded a voice.

Joe shivered.

"I ain't doin' no 'arm!" he muttered.

"Get out!"

Joe was led in an iron grip to the door, and the porter looked at him in the dim light of the single lamp burning, and then pushed him into the street. He shook a warning finger at Joe.

"You cut hoff!" he said.

Joe Frayne moved away.

He realised that it was useless to think of boarding the express now, when it stopped, and concealing himself there,



Leaving the note for Tom Merry on his bed, Joe Frayne took up his bundle and went to the window. The next moment he was quietly climbing out. Joe had endured enough punishment from Mr. Selby—and he was taking the only course to escape it. He was running away from St. Jim's!

—perhaps with what he had learned at St. Jim's do better still. But how was he to get there with no money? It was impossible to smuggle himself upon a train, even, for all the trains had long ago left the local station at Rylcombe.

He knew there was a night express that stopped at Wayland Junction. If he could stow himself upon that—

The thought of the dishonesty of travelling without a ticket did not strike poor Joe. He had not been brought up to think of such things. He had learned honesty in his daily conduct at St. Jim's. But there were many things he had to learn. And he was feverishly anxious to get away from the neighbourhood before search could be made for him.

He felt that Tom Merry would search for him when he discovered his absence. And he wanted to get away from all risk of being recaptured.

He tramped on by the road skirting the wood, towards the old market town of Wayland. Two o'clock was striking when he entered the town.

He knew that a night train stopped there, but he did not know at what hour. He crept to the railway station and found the outer door of the vestibule partly open. He stole

He was not at all sure, either, that the express had not gone.

What was he to do?

With a heavy heart he tramped away into the country.

The rain was steadily descending.

There was a cloud over the moon, and the road was dark and desolate, and the only light came from the glimmer of the rain puddles.

Joe's feet swamped through the puddles as he tramped on miserably.

Where was he now?

He hardly knew.

The country was strange to him—he had never been so far from the school before since he had come to St. Jim's.

He tramped on, wet and weary.

He sat down at last by the roadside to rest, careless of the dashing rain, and the cold, wet wind that seemed to search into his very bones.

He sat there, wet and weary. In the east a grey, dull light was beginning to steal through the grim darkness, filtering through rainy clouds.

The dawn was coming—the dawn of a new day—a desolate day for poor Joe—dark and desolate for the boy who had run away from St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 7.

A Startling Discovery!

WALLY D'ARCY was the first to awaken in the Third Form dormitory that morning. Wally was concerned about the weather. It had looked like rain overnight, and Wally was thinking about the state of the ground for footer that day. And so, as soon as he heard the rising-bell, Wally jumped out of bed and ran to the window.

"My only Aunt Jane!" Wally exclaimed.

"It was still raining. But that was not all. The bottom of the window was open, and the raindrops were beating into the dormitory.

The top of the window was always open at night. But the bottom of it being open showed that someone had specially opened it since the prefects had seen lights out on the previous evening.

"Who's been playing the giddy goat?" demanded Wally.

Curly Gibson sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes sleepily.

"Blow that bell!" he exclaimed. "What did you say, Wally?"

"Who's been playing the giddy ox?"

"What's up?" asked Hobbs.

Wally pointed to the window.

"Look there!"

"My hat!"

"Somebody opened it!" said Fane.

Wally sniffed.

"You don't say so!" he exclaimed. "I really believe I could have seen that for myself. Some silly ass has been breaking bounds, going down the rain-pipe."

"Jolly risky!" said Hobbs.

"Well, I've done it myself," said Wally. "It can be done. But what frabjous ass has been breaking bounds, especially on a rainy night?"

"Your workhouse friend, perhaps," suggested Hobbs maliciously.

"Oh, shut up, Hobbs!" said Wally. "Joe wouldn't do it. He leaves that sort of thing to you rotters."

"Look here, young D'Arcy——"

"Well?" said D'Arcy minor, coming up to Hobbs' bed with his fists clenched.

Hobbs' truculent look faded away at once.

"Oh, never mind!" he said.

There was a shout from Picke, farther along the dormitory.

"Hallo! Your slummer isn't here!"

"What?"

"He's gone!"

"Rot!" said Wally angrily.

Wally ran to Joe's bed. He stopped before he reached it, with blank amazement in his face. There was no denying the truth of Picke's assertion. Joe Frayne's bed was empty; he was certainly gone.

"My only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Wally.

Hobbs gave a sneering laugh. Hobbs, Picke, and Fane, Joe's special enemies in the Third Form at St. Jim's, felt that they scored now.

"Breaking bounds at night!" ejaculated Picke. "Going down to the pub in the village, I suppose. Nice for a kid of his age!"

"Oh, don't talk rot!" said Wally irritably. "You know jolly well that he hasn't done anything of the sort."

"Where has he gone, then?"

"Explain that, D'Arcy minor."

"Blessed if I know!" said Wally, staring at the empty bed in wonder. "I can't make it out. It's jolly odd that he should go out like this."

"Jolly odd that he ever came to St. Jim's at all, I think," said Hobbs, with a sneer. "He wasn't in his right place here, D'Arcy minor. Of course, he was bound to get sick of decent habits in time."

"He wouldn't get sick of yours," said Wally. "You haven't any!"

"Look here——"

"Oh, shut up! He has gone out, I suppose, as he isn't here," said D'Arcy minor, in perplexity. "I can't make it out, especially as he hasn't come back."

"Perhaps he's been arrested in the village for disorderly conduct, or something," said Hobbs.

"Perhaps you'll get a thick ear, if you don't stop your silly rot!" roared Wally.

"Well, it looks like——"

"Shut up!"

"Well, he hasn't come back," said Curly Gibson. "He must be somewhere, Wally, and he must have gone somewhere in the first place. What do you think?"

"May have been an accident."

"Oh, rats!"

"Chap might break his neck climbing down that rain-

pipe, if he slipped," Picke remarked cheerfully. "I don't suppose Rags has done that, though."

Wally changed colour. He ran to the window and clambered up, and looked out into the quadrangle.

He cast a quick, anxious glance to the ground below, underneath the window of the Third Form dormitory, and he drew a deep breath of relief as he saw there was nothing there.

Joe Frayne had not fallen, then, in quitting the dormitory, as Wally had feared for a terrible moment.

"Well, is he there?" called out Curly Gibson.

"No," said Wally, jumping down.

"Oh, I knew he wasn't! Where has he gone, though?"

"Bolted!" said Picke.

"You ass!" exclaimed Wally angrily. "What do you mean?"

"What I say. He's bolted. He's got sick of living in a respectable school, and he's run away, and gone back to his slum friends."

"Very likely."

"Quite so!"

Wally glared at the fags. It was pretty clear that the wish was father to the thought with many of them.

"You set of duffers!" said Wally. "Of course he hasn't run away! Do you think that even if he were going to run away, he'd go without leaving a word? Of course, he——"

"My hat!" exclaimed Gibson.

"What's the matter?"

"Look there!"

Curly Gibson was out of bed now. He had gone towards Joe's bed, and he now stood pointing to an envelope pinned on the coverlet. Wally had not noticed it before.

"What is it?" asked Wally, coming towards it angrily.

"It's a note."

"In Frayne's scrawl, too," said Picke.

"It's addressed to Tom Merry."

Wally picked up the note. His face was a study. The envelope, in the well-known sprawling characters of Joe Frayne, was addressed to Tom Merry. Wally stood looking at the note, turning it over and over in his hands, with dismay in his heart. The conviction was forced upon his mind of what this really meant—that Joe had indeed "cut," and run away from St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 8.

The Runaway!

TOM MERRY was sitting on the side of his bed, fastening his boots, when the door of the Shell dormitory was thrown open and D'Arcy minor of the Third came dashing in.

So sudden was Wally's entrance that it made Lowther, who was washing, give a jump, and dab a soapy sponge into his mouth.

Tom Merry ceased to pull at his laces, and looked round at Wally.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "You young boulder! What's this for?"

"You ass!" roared Monty Lowther. "Grooogh! What do you mean?"

"It's a letter——"

"Eh?"

"Joe's bunked!"

Tom Merry jumped up.

"What?" he exclaimed.

"Joe's bunked; and he's left this letter, addressed to you, Tom Merry, pinned to his bed," said Wally hurriedly. "He's buzzed off in the middle of the night. We hadn't any idea till I found the window open this morning and this note pinned on his bed. For goodness' sake, open it, and see if he says where he's gone!"

Tom Merry mechanically opened the letter.

Believing, as he did, that Joe had fought his way through most of his troubles in the Third Form at St. Jim's, Tom Merry was astonished by the news.

He ran his eye hastily over Joe's note, and did not fail to observe a suspicious blur on the paper, as if a tear had fallen there while it was being written.

Tom Merry's face went quite pale.

Wally was watching him anxiously, and he gave a gasp as he saw how the Shell fellow's expression changed.

"He's really gone, then?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Wally."

"Why?"

"He says he can't stand being caned again."

"Old Selby was goin' for him last night," said Wally savagely. "The cad! Poor old Joe! I didn't know he was booked for another lickin' to-day, though."

Tom Merry frowned darkly.

"Has Mr. Selby been caning him again over that affair of the footer, Wally?" he asked.

Wally shook his head perplexedly.

"I don't know," he said. "I know he was licked again last night, but he didn't explain what it was for, and he didn't say he was expectin' another licking."

"Poor kid!" said Manners. "I suppose Selby was going to pitch into him until he gave you away, Tom, and the kid never told us so."

"It's rotten!" said Bernard Glyn. "Poor kid!"

Tom Merry's eyes were dim for a moment.

He fully understood the devotion which had prompted the action of the little ragamuffin. He thought he could fully follow the feelings which had driven poor Joe to take this desperate step.

"Well, it's rotten!" said Kangaroo.

"The poor chap's bolted. But where's he gone?" Monty Lowther remarked. "He doesn't say in the letter, Tom?"

"No."

"Is he coming back?"

"I suppose not."

"Poor Joe!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"Selby has driven him to this!" he exclaimed. "If I had the least idea—"

"But you hadn't," said Manners. "So it can't be helped. Of course, Joe will be found and brought back again."

Kangaroo whistled.

"That means being expelled," he said.

"Or flogged."

"Well, there are extenuating circumstances," said Clifton Dane. "Joe's isn't an ordinary case."

Crooke gave a sneering laugh.

"No, it isn't," he explained. "I shouldn't wonder if the Head doesn't have him looked for at all. He may be glad to be rid of him."

"Oh, shut up, Crooke!"

"Well, I think—"

"Never mind what you think. Shut up!"

And Tom Merry's eyes glittered in a way that made Crooke think it advisable to "shut up." It was not safe to say anything against Joe in the Shell dormitory just then.

Tom Merry finished dressing as quickly as he could, and hurried downstairs. Joe was gone, and, of course, the authorities of the school had to be notified. They would soon, of course, have discovered it for themselves.

Tom Merry looked for Mr. Railton. He knew that the Housemaster was an early riser, and generally worked in his study before breakfast, and he expected to find him there. Mr. Railton was there, and he looked surprised as Tom Merry came in with an excited face, and the little note in his hand.

"What is it, Merry?" he asked.

"It's Joe, sir!"

"Joe?"

"I mean Frayne, sir—Frayne of the Third. Will you look at this, sir?"

And Tom Merry held out the note. Mr. Railton took it, with a puzzled expression, and read it. Then his look changed.

"Does this mean that Frayne has left the school, Merry?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton compressed his lips.

"He has run away?"

"Yes, in the night, sir. D'Arcy minor found a window open this morning, when he got up, and Joe's bed was empty."

"It is very strange. So far as I have noticed the boy, he seemed to be very tractable," said Mr. Railton, musingly.

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed.

"He has been punished a lot lately, sir," he exclaimed; "and punished for nothing."

"Merry!"

"It is true, sir!"

"He mentions caning in his letter," said Mr. Railton, glancing at poor Joe's scrawled note. "By whom was he caned? A prefect?"

"His Form-master sir."

"Ah! Why?"

"Well sir, Mr. Selby came out into the Third Form Room passage. I was kicking a footer there—" began Tom Merry.

"You should not have been doing that, Merry; but proceed."

"Well, sir, Mr. Selby came out of the Third Form Room just as the ball bounced in the doorway, and it caught him on the boko—I mean the nose, sir."

"Well?" said Mr. Railton.

"We hooked it, sir, and Mr. Selby didn't know who it was."

"It would have been much better, Merry, if you had stayed to explain, and apologised," said the School House-master severely.

(Continued on next page.)



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.

INEVITABLE.

Client: "I want you to draw up my will, but I'm not sur^e how to dictate it."

Lawyer: "Just leave everything to me."

Client: "I suppose that would save time; it's bound to come to that in the long run!"

A football has been awarded to G. Marshall, Wesley Manse, Redcar, Yorks.

PREVIOUS.

First Actor: "What are you looking upset about?"

Second Actor: "Work, work, work—nothing but rehearsals morning, noon, and night!"

First Actor: "Hard luck. How long have you been at it?"

Second Actor: "Start to-morrow!"

A football has been awarded to A. Buckley, 9, Cadmus Street, Everton Road, Liverpool, 6.

HORSE SENSE.

Son: "My teacher has never seen a horse."

Father: "What makes you think that?"

Son: "Well, I did a drawing of a horse at school to-day and he asked me what it was!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Pincock, 61, Prospect Road, St. Albans, Herts.

FOLLOWING FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS.

Boss: "That office-boy is never around when he's wanted."

Clerk: "That's not altogether his fault."

Boss: "What do you mean?"

Clerk: "It's hereditary—his father's a policeman!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss I. Mills, 12, The Pass, Ramsay Street, Rochdale.

NEVER MIND THE NEIGHBOURS.

Jones: "How can you let your dog bark all night as he does?"

Brown: "Oh, it won't hurt him—he sleeps all day!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to S. Atkin, 14, Gipsy Road, Melton Road, Leicester.

AN EXPENSIVE PROMISE.

Sandy Junior: "Ye promised tae gie me saxpence every week I was top boy at school. I've been top for two weeks running now."

Sandy Senior: "Weel, here's a shilling, but ye must gie up studying so hard; it's no good for ye!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Pustkuchen, Eversham, Meckering, Western Australia.

A (K)NOTTY WAY.

Mother: "Remember to get up early and chop that firewood, Billy."

Billy: "O.K., mum! I'll tie a knot in my handkerchief to remind me to wake up early."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to H. Rudeforth, Treloar Hospital, Alton, Hants.

THAT EXPLAINED IT.

Teacher: "You used to be as good at suras as Jimmy Baggs."

Boy: "Yes, but I don't sit beside him now!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Taylor, 120, Sarsfield Road, Balham, London, S.W.12.

Tom Merry flushed.

"Yes, sir; and so we would have done if it had been you, or Mr. Lathom, or even Herr Schneider, but we knew that Mr. Selby wouldn't understand."

"Go on, Merry," said the Housemaster, discreetly letting that point drop. Probably he realised quite clearly that what Tom Merry said was correct.

"So we bunked, sir," said Tom Merry. "I—I mean we buzzed off, sir. We didn't know that Joe was nabbed."

"Was what?"

"Caught, sir. We didn't know that Joe was caught till afterwards, when we found out that he had been licked for not telling who kicked the footer."

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton.

"Then, when we knew that, we thought it was all over, and we tried to make it up to him," said Tom Merry. "But Mr. Selby seems to have kept it up. Joe was licked again last night. I don't know what for; and he seems to have expected another licking this morning, for he bunked over-night."

"It was you who kicked the football on that occasion?"

"Yes, sir."

"If you had known that Frayne was being punished—"

"I should have gone to Mr. Selby at once, sir. I hope you don't think I'd have left poor Joe to take my licking!"

"I am certain you would not, Merry. But— It is quite certain that Frayne is gone?" the Housemaster asked.

"Quite, sir. D'Arcy minor found his bed empty, and the window open, and this note, addressed to me. He hasn't taken any money with him, either. He put all he had in the envelope, with the letter."

"Why so?"

"I suppose he thought he oughtn't to take it," said Tom Merry. "It was rot! It was all his. My uncle makes him an allowance, you know, sir. It was his tin."

"That shows a very strict idea of honesty, however, Merry. The boy seems to have improved greatly since he came to this school."

"Very much, sir."

"I must acquaint the Head with this occurrence," said Mr. Railton. "It is very unfortunate. As it is possible that the boy may not have quitted the precincts of the school, after all, but may be hiding away near at hand, will you and some of your friends search the grounds for him?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Very good, Merry."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"I—I suppose Joe—I mean Frayne—will be searched for, sir," he said.

"Of course."

"And brought back to St. Jim's?"

"Certainly, Merry!"

"Will he be punished, sir?"

"Naturally."

"I—I—excuse me, sir," Tom Merry blurted out, "but—but will he be expelled, sir?"

Mr. Railton's face was very grave.

"I do not know, Merry. A boy who runs away from the school can hardly expect anything else; but perhaps, owing to the peculiar circumstances of the case, the Head may take a merciful view of the matter. That is all I can say."

And Tom Merry left the Housemaster's study with a downcast face.

CHAPTER 9.

Towser is Called In.

"**B**AI Jove!"

"Run away!"

"Gone!"

"Gweat Scott! I wegard this as wotten!"

"Rotten isn't the word!" said Tom Merry, as the chums of Study No. 6 surrounded him, eager for information.

"He's gone, and it's beastly!"

"The young boundah!" said D'Arcy. "He nevah said a word to me on the subject."

The others stared at him.

"Why should he say anything to you on the subject?" asked Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"He doesn't seem to have said anything to anybody," Herries remarked.

"Natuwally, he should have asked my advice," said D'Arcy loftily. "I have remarked to him on more than one occasion that I considahed him as bein' in some degree undah my pwotection. I have told him that in any case of doubt he should always wely upon me to tell him the wight and pwopah thing to do."

"Go hon!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"So he's gone!" said Herries thoughtfully.

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"Yes, clean gone!"

"It's wotten!"

"Beastly!"

"Old Selby's fault, of course!"

"That won't make it any better for Joe when he's caught, poor chap!"

"Wathah not!"

"Mr. Railton thinks he may not have got out of the school," Tom Merry remarked. "He wants us to look round the grounds for him. Of course, he mayn't have got over the wall, or the rain may have kept him from going on. It's barely possible that he's hiding somewhere in the outhouses."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Not likely, but we'll look," said Jack Blake. "I believe it's left off raining now."

"Bai Jove! Joe's clothes must be quite wuined, you know, if he was out in all that wain!" said Arthur Augustus, with great concern. "Mr. Selby has weally a gweat deal to answah for."

"I'll go and fetch Towser," said Herries.

"But Towsah—"

"Towser will take us straight to where Joe is, if he's in the grounds at all," said Herries. "You know how Towser can follow a track."

"Well, I suppose he can follow some track," assented Monty Lowther. "I believe he could follow a railway track if he were tied up in the guard's van."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!" said Herries. "My dog Towser—"

"I object to the pwesence of Towsah, Hewwies. That beastly bulldog has no wespect whatevah for a fellow's twosahs."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Bosh!"

"Undah the circe—"

"Piffle!"

And Herries marched off in search of Towser. D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye and turned a look upon the retreating junior which really ought to have bored a hole in Herries' back, but didn't.

The juniors turned out into the quadrangle. It was decidedly unpleasant out of doors. The ground was very wet, and there were still drops of rain falling, as well as spatterings from the roofs and trees.

But the juniors turned up their trousers, and started on the search.

It was not improbable that the little waif's heart might have failed him when he found himself out of the building in the darkness and rain, and that he might have hidden in one of the outhouses till morning. Anyway, Mr. Railton wished them to search, and they searched.

Gr-r-r-r!

Arthur Augustus gave a jump.

"That beastly bulldog!"

Herries rushed up with Towser, or, to speak more correctly, Towser rushed up with Herries, for Towser was dragging on the chain and pulling his master along. Herries was quite breathless with his striving to hold the bulldog in.

"Keep that fearful beast away from my twucks, Hewwies, you ass!"

"Oh, blow your trucks! Towser!"

Gr-r-r-r!

"Towsy, old boy, quiet."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"You have to show him something belonging to Joe, and he'll track him down like anything," said Herries. "Where's D'Arcy minor? He's got fifty times the sense of his major."

"Weally—"

"Right you are, old cock!" said Wally, coming up with his hands in his pockets. "What's wanted? Look after that beast of yours?"

"Have you got anything belonging to Joe?"

"Belonging to Joe?" said Wally. "What do you mean?"

"I want something for Towser to follow the scent of," Herries explained. "You know how Towser follows a scent—"

"I remember him tracking down some kippers," said Wally, with a shake of the head. "Towsah would never be able to track Joe down."

"You fathead—"

"Why, if a dog could do it, my dog Pongo would do it like a shot," said Wally. "As for that Chinese idol you call a bulldog—"

The incensed Herries made a swipe at Wally, who promptly dodged. It was evident that the hero of the Third was no believer in Towser's wonderful powers as a tracker.

"Have you chaps got anything belonging to Joe?" asked Herries. "You gave him a change of clothes once, D'Arcy."

(Continued on page 14.)

HALT HERE FOR MORE NEWS AND VIEWS FROM



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.

I WILL begin this week by thanking the large number of readers who have written me letters full of good wishes and congratulations. By the way, St. Jim's News comes in for special commendation from practically all of them. Every one of these letters, of course, comes straight to me and is dealt with by me personally. Every one of you who writes to me can rely upon getting a reply if you enclose your name and address.

It is a big task to answer every letter individually, but I enjoy the job and I hope that every one of you will write to me at regular intervals.

There are some grumbles in your letters, but these are always either "The Tom Merry yarn is too short!" or "The St. Frank's story is not long enough!"

I would like to put out a fifty-page GEM every week so as to be able to satisfy you all. Unfortunately economic conditions make this impossible, so I can only do my best to satisfy everybody.

One reader asks Mr. Brooks to write a film play for him, but I rather think that E. S. B. is too busy at present.

Each week my aim is to make the old GEM a little better, and I have a number

of new ideas ready to put into practice as soon as opportunity offers.

By the way, do all your friends read the GEM? If not, they ought to. Surely you will agree with that. Each of you can help me immensely by putting in a word for the old paper when you get the opportunity. Its popularity is growing fast, and it only needs your help to make it the best known paper in the land.

Now for a few words about our next number.

Martin Clifford is once again at the top of his form in

"THE OUTSIDER!"

Who is the Outsider? Well, a new school has established itself close to St. Jim's, and Tom Merry & Co. naturally regard this as a piece of pure and unadulterated cheek on the part of the proprietor, whom they instantly dub the "Outsider." It is true they know nothing about him, but the idea of the new school so near is obnoxious to them.

But is the "Outsider" quite such an outsider after all? Well, that will be revealed in next week's magnificent story.

"TREASURE ISLE!"

What of Nelson Lee and his companions who have captured the steam yacht, the Corsair? In the next thrill-packed chapters they put up a great fight against the Tao-Tao Islanders, and you will revel in the sensations that follow.

In the next ripping issue of "Tom Merry's Weekly" you will find much to amuse and interest you again, while the GEM Jester has another prize selection of jokes for you. Lastly, your Editor will be in the chair again with more facts and news.

MENDED A HEART.

A wonderful operation was recently performed by a surgeon at Bexhill-on-Sea. A man who was working on a ladder fell to the ground and a chisel pierced his body. It penetrated three inches and a half, and actually punctured his heart. He was taken to hospital, and the surgeon realised that the only hope of saving the man's life was to perform a very risky operation. This consisted of actually putting two stitches into the man's heart to sew up the cut! The surgeon succeeded in doing this and the man is making a perfectly good recovery!

THE ORIGIN OF RUGGER.

William Stenning, of Sale, wants to know if I can tell him the origin of Rugby football, and why it is called that. The reason it is called Rugby football, William, is that it originated at Rugby School, and curiously enough it was started by a foul! In the year 1823 William Webb Ellis, while playing football at the school, picked up the ball and ran with it. That simple action was, it is claimed, the origin of Rugger, but it was not until nearly forty years later that the game was played by the big clubs like Blackheath and Richmond, and in those days there used to be twenty players on each side. It was in 1875 that the number of players was reduced to fifteen, and the game became something like the one that is now played.

THE EDITOR.



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to The GEM LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

I. C. Wahlstrom, 57, Hatrick Street, Wanganui, New Zealand, wants correspondents; ages 21.

Ernest Audsley, Hillside, Stannard Well Lane, Horbury, Yorks, wants correspondents in England, America, and Canada.

Bruce Elder, 48, Kangaroo Street, Manly, N.S.W., Australia, wants a pen friend in Canada; age 13-14.

C. C. Mellor, 2, Ince Avenue, Anfield, Liverpool, 4, wants pen pals in the Colonies; interested in stamps and coins; ages 12-14.

Kenneth J. Wright, 22, Manor Farm Road, Greet Hill, Birmingham, wants to hear from Douglas J. Wurtel, 5460, Park Avenue, Montreal, Canada.

Miss Muriel Jones, 79, Oldcott Green, Goldenhill, Stoke-on-Trent, wants girl correspondents in Canada or China; ages 17-18.

A. Dickinson, 27, Farm Hill, Meanwood, Leeds, wants a correspondent age 18-22 in France, Switzerland, or U.S.A.

Tony Brunson, 8, Whitmore Gardens, Kensal Rise, London, N.W.10, wants a correspondent in Canada; age 12-14; hobbies, model trains and dirt-track racing.

C. Mackereth, 15, Petheril Street, Carlisle, wants a correspondent interested in crosswords and sport.

A. Wheat, 35, Vermont Street, Swinnow, Bramley, Leeds, wants correspondents in Vienna, Switzerland, and U.S.A.; ages 18-22.

George Trow, 56, Heathfield Road, South Croydon, Surrey, wants to hear from "Magnet" readers, and others.

Colin Botha, Kingswood Prep., Grahamstown, Cape Province, South Africa, wants a correspondent interested in films, cinematographs, and wireless; age 11-13.

Israel Herr, P.O. Box 3116, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wants to hear from readers keen on the old copies of the "Nelson Lee."

Miss T. Ziemann, 24, Cassels Road, East London, South Africa, wants girl correspondents interested in snaps and papers; ages 18-25.

Philip W. Porter, 20, Lawley Road, Bulawayo, South Rhodesia, South Africa, wants pen pals interested in stamps, in Canada and New Zealand; ages 13-15.

Miss A. Rayner, 4, Tilney Street, East London, South Africa, wants girl correspondents interested in snaps and papers; ages 18-25.

George H. Preston, 7, Parker Street, Granville, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents interested in coins and in the GEM.

Harry Baker, 23, Village Road, Alverstoke, Gosport, Hants, wants a pen pal interested in football; age 14-15.

Robert C. Vickers, 17, Trissillian Crescent, Brockley, London, S.E.4, wants to get in touch with readers who are keen on the old "Nelson Lees."

Miss Vida Bradbury, 30, Stockwell Avenue, Knarborough, Yorkshire, wants girl correspondents in Africa and Australia; ages 14-15.

A. Newton, 58, Bournbrook Road, Bournbrook, Birmingham, wants a pen friend in America; age 12-15.

Miss Margaret Edgar, 3, Smalstown Terrace, Gretna, Dumfriesshire, wants a girl correspondent in Ireland or the Isle of Man; age 14-15.

B. C. Lloyd, 170, Bolton Road, Salford, 6, Lancs., wants to hear from readers who have made a hobby of old GEMs.

F. C. Smith, 1, Albert Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport, Ches., wants correspondents in U.S.A., Mexico, and South Africa (Maritzburg).

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The Boy Who Ran Away!

(Continued from page 12.)

Have you got any of his things left? Do help me! You've got fifty times the sense of your minor.

"Bai Jove!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I'm sowwy, Hewwies, but I haven't—"

"Oh, you ass! Have you got anything, Blake? Look here, you'd better lend me a hand in this. You're the only chap here with any sense."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "But I haven't any of Joe's socks or ties," said Blake. "I've got lots of sense, but I haven't the kind of scents that Towser will follow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Look here," exclaimed Wally, fishing in his pocket. "Here's a handkerchief. Try him with that, Herries."
 "Good!"

Herries took the handkerchief and held it out for Towser to sniff. Towser made a snap at it and tore it away from Herries.

"He's got the scent!" said Herries. And he stood expectant, waiting for the bulldog to take up the trail. The juniors stood grinning. In spite of their anxiety for Joe, they could not help grinning. They had not the least expectation of seeing Towser follow any trail, but Herries evidently had.

"Bai Jove!" said D'Arcy. "I considah—"

Herries held up his hand for silence. "Shut up!" he said. "You'll disturb Towser if you talk."

"Weally, Hewwies—"
 "Do dry up!"

D'Arcy lapsed into indignant silence. Towser had snatched the handkerchief, apparently under the impression that it was something to eat. If that was the case, he was quickly undeceived. He contemptuously tossed the torn handkerchief aside, and after a sniff or two lay down.

"He's getting the scent," said Herries. Towser's eyes closed.

"Bai Jove! He's goin' to sleep!"
 "Oh, dry up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wally. Towser's eyes opened and closed again.

Herries gave the Third Former a savage glare.

"If you can't keep quiet—" he began. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"We haven't looked in the woodshed yet," said Manners.

"Shut up, Manners!"
 "But, you see—"
 "Quiet, ass!"

Herries looked anxiously at Towser. The bulldog had his head resting on the ground, and was breathing regularly, with his eyes closed. The grins of the juniors grew broader.

Towser was really asleep!

CHAPTER 10.

Not in Tracking Form.

HERRIES turned very red. There was no denying that Towser had gone to sleep, and that was not exactly what was to be expected of a keen bloodhound-like animal like Towser—that is to say, not what was to be expected by Herries; the other fellows were not surprised.

"Bai Jove! I—"

"Oh, dry up!"

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No. 5. Vol. 1 (New Series).

Flying Squad Reports

RIVALS ON RHYL

School House Flying Squad challenged by New House section to boat race on Rhyll. Chief Air Marshal Merry ordered intensive training. Training marred by crash in mid-stream with Knox of the Sixth, who was practising solo. Knox nose-dived into water. Dragged out half-drowned by Flying Squad. Knox not a bit grateful—got School House Squad detained! Tom Merry informed Figgins. Figgins interviewed Dr. Holmes—challenge explained, and, thanks to Figgins' sportsmanship, detention postponed. School House and New House squads left starting-post neck and neck, rowing evenly. New House led at half course by two lengths. But School House spurred and snatched victory right on post.

FAGS IN PERIL

Herries brought news that fags had seized Flying Squad boats and taken to water. At boathouse, Flying Squad found Wally D'Arcy & Co. "practising" for boat race among themselves! Two oars broken already! Tom Merry ordered out scaplanes—outboard motor-boat belonging to Monteith serving in emergency. Wally & Co. overtaken dangerously near weir. Fags panicking. Squad zoomed alongside in nick of time. Going hard astern they held racing shell back from weir. Wally & Co. quite contrite, for once! Flying Squad always on spot when needed!



Cut out the Flying Squad badge and mount it on cardboard. This makes you a full member of Tom Merry's Flying Squad, and entitles you to carry out flights and organise a squadron.

When you have got three of your chums to become members of the Flying Squad, you rank as a Squadron-Commander, and to signify it you are entitled to colour the centre of the badge yellow.

When you have got four chums to join, you rank as an Air Commodore, and you are entitled to wear the badge with the centre coloured green.

When you have got five of your chums to join, you rank as an Air Vice-Marshal, wearing the badge with the centre coloured blue.

When you have got six chums to join, you rank as a full-fledged Air Marshal, and you are entitled to colour the centre of the badge red.

All members of the Flying Squad greet each other with this salute: Raise the right arm, bent, so that the hand comes level with the head. The hand should be presented edgewise to your fellow member, parallel with the side of your head, and should be brought into position smartly. Try it! The unbreakable rule of the Flying Squad is:—

Be ever ready to fly to the assistance of your friends.

(Signed) TOM MERRY
 (Air Marshal in Chief).

LOOK THROUGH OUR TELEVISOR

GEORGE FIGGINS SPEAKING

Very pleased to meet you, chaps. Speaking for myself, I think it's about time a New House man said a few words. We've had four School House specimens so far—one of them a master, Mr. Railton, against whom I wouldn't say a word. I only wish we had him as Housemaster instead of old Ratty! But D'Arcy, Tom Merry, and Manners, while excellent fellows, are, of course, just ordinary members of the School House casual ward, and I shouldn't like any reader to go away with the impression that they really represent St. Jim's.

Oh dear, no! If you want the best of everything, come to the New House. We lead both in sport and study. I admit that occasionally Tom Merry's men lick us at footer or cricket, but that is only because we haven't quite got our team into shape yet. The material is there, and I'm coaching my men, so that very soon Tom Merry will be in danger of losing his exalted position as junior captain of St. Jim's!

Not that I've anything whatever against Merry. A finer, more gallant leader you'd never find. But when it comes to sheer ability—New House every time. In Fatty Wynn we have the best junior goalkeeper and "googly" bowler the school has ever known. In Kerr we have one of the best scholars St. Jim's has possessed. Some of the rank and file could do better, though—and that's why we lost the last House match. We don't repine, however!

Just a personal note or two to finish. I've been asked to explain why I'm a champion footballer, cricketer, and boxer, and to state which I like best. I'm sorry I haven't an answer to these questions, unless it's that I believe in keeping fit not just in spasms but all the time. And I couldn't choose a favourite sport—I like them all.

CALIBAN'S PUZZLE CORNER

Watching some fellows moving from one study to another, I remembered a problem which takes a bit of thinking about. There

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Week Ending March 17th, 1934.

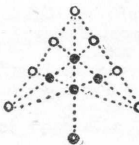
MONTY LOWTHER CALLING



Hallo, everybody! came the voice from the loudspeaker to the shipwrecked mariner on the lonely isle. Talking of music, an eminent musician says music has an uplifting influence. Gore's saxophone certainly makes me jump at times! Buck Finn was swanking over his ability to ride horses. Do you like steeplechasing? he asked Blake. Don't know—I've never chased any! answered Blake. Yorkshire, is Blake! An enterprising window-cleaner called at the New House and asked old Rateliff if he could clean the windows. Ratty bellowed: No! Keep your air on, gov'nor! responded the window-cleaner. Can I give your spectacles a wipe over? Ratty's reply is not on record! A man was sent to prison recently for taking a few photographs. Oh yes. They had silver frames on them! As the bell said to the belling-ringer: You're tolling me! I asked Kerr if it is true that football originated in Scotland because of the free kicks? Kerr didn't reply. The Head was asking his gardener how to make a rock garden. May we suggest he should go out in it at night and play a saxophone? The House dame engaged a new page last week, but he had no "go"—so he went! Here's a better one: Mr. Linton said he is going to write a book about the early days of motoring. An auto-biography, what? You don't—well, how's this? Mr. Rateliff had a touch of gout, but his phone bell kept on ringing. At last he snatched it up, listened for a moment, and then bellowed. No, I'm not 456 Hop! Mr. Selby took Curly Gibson to task in the Third Form Room yesterday. What shape is the earth? demanded Selby. Square, answered Gibson. What? exclaimed Selby. It's square! responded Gibson doggedly. I heard a chap on the wireless say he was broadcasting to the four corners of the earth! Gore and Skimpole were discussing a melodrama they saw at the Wayland Hippodrome. I didn't like the three murders, said Skimpole. Oh, I like a play with a bit of life in it, grinned Gore! Lively fellow, Gore! I can play a wind instrument without using a single breath! boasted Wally D'Arcy. What instrument? demanded his listeners. A concertina! grinned Wally. I'll be seeing you!

are six rooms, with doors leading into each, as shown. A cabinet, piano, table, sofa, and bookcase are in the rooms shown. Each is so big to allow of two articles of furniture being in the same room at the same time. The puzzle is to move the articles into the vacant room, round and round, until you have made the piano and the bookcase exchange rooms. Do it, of course, in the least possible number of moves. Try it with counters on a sheet of paper!

Solution of last week's puzzle.



ST. JIM'S BOAT RACE ON RHYL

CLOSE FIGHT FOR SILVER CUP

Eric Kildare's Running Commentary

The crews competing for the silver challenge cup presented by a Governor of Rylcombe Grammar School are representative of the best talent of their schools. Having watched Merry and his men at practice, I rather favour their chances, but I have seen Gay's eight out once and they shaped impressively enough to ensure that this will be a very keen race.

Here they come—the Saints, as the challenged crew, taking the water first. Merry is a sound stroke. Nothing disturbs or dismays him. They are off now—pulling steadily up to the starting-post. Here come the Grammarians, led by Gordon Gay, a handsome youngster from Australia. He sets a steady stroke. His men look remarkably cool.

Are you ready? Go! They're off! Up, St. Jim's! A few quick, fierce strokes and then steadier, settling down into a swinging pace. St. Jim's have got away well together, but the Grammarians put rather more into their initial effort, and they have a lead of a foot or two. They are increasing it! Gay sets a hot pace as stroke, and his men are backing up gallantly!

Half-way now—both crews taking it a little easier, but both grimly determined. Grammar School still in the lead, by a length now—watch them. Saints! Tom Merry seems quite unperturbed. Probably he is rowing to plan, always the wisest method.

Two thirds of the distance—now watch! Merry is quickening, faster, faster—what a pace! His crew are ready for it, though—this is no desperate, despairing effort, but a preconceived plan being put into execution! Striking much faster than Gay, Merry and his men forge through the water—level—level—level! Oh, well rowed! Gay takes up the challenge—he quickens, but his crew have not so much to give him—they have put what they had into the earlier part of the race!

The post in sight—Merry and his crew, rowing steadily at a spanking pace, are ahead of Gay and Co. by a length, and they have no bellows to mend! A well-thought-out race, Merry. Look, there they go—past the post—victory to St. Jim's! St. Jim's very deservedly win the race by two lengths.

CREWS.

St. Jim's: Lowther, Manners, Figgins, Noble, Blake, Kerr, D'Arcy, Merry (stroke), D'Arcy minor (cox).

Rylcombe Grammar School: Blane, Carboy, Tadpole, Monk, Wootton major, Wootton minor, Lacy, Gay (stroke). Stuart (cox).

A contingent of St. Jim's juniors are to watch the Boat Race this year. As H-ary Manners remarks, the Oxford and Cambridge affair is very nearly as thrilling as the St. Jim's v. Rylcombe Grammar School contest on the Rhyll.

"Towser mustn't be woke up," said Monty Lowther, in a hushed voice. "Sleep, baby, sleep! Did they wake the poor old doggie up?"

Herries glared. "You utter ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Herries jerked at the chain on Towser's collar. Towser woke up. He must have had a neck of iron if he had not awakened then.

Herries glared. "Towser! Towser! Go on, old boy!" Towser blinked.

"We'd better look in the woodshed," said Tom Merry. "The bell goes for brekker in a few minutes."

"If Joe's in the woodshed Towser will jolly soon lead us there," said Herries.

"I don't think!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't jaw!" Herries jerked at the chain to get the bulldog started. Towser did not seem to understand. He made several attempts to settle down and go to sleep, but Herries jerked him too hard for that.

Finally the bulldog allowed himself to be set in motion. He trotted off lazily, and Herries, with a triumphant look at the other fellows, followed him.

"Come on!" called out Herries.

"Where are you going?"

"Towser's on the track!"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Lowther, you ass—"

"May as well follow," yawned Blake. "It won't waste more than a few minutes. I wonder if Towser is after a kipper this time?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, come on," said Herries crossly, "and don't jaw so much! You disturb Towser, and put him off his form. You can't expect a bulldog to stand it."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Towser waddled on. Herries followed him, and the rest of the juniors followed Herries. Towser led them round the School House, and the outbuildings behind it, in the direction of the stables.

"That's where Joe's hiding," said Herries confidently.

"I don't think!" Wally remarked.

"Shut up, you fags! Don't you jaw to your elders!" said Herries snappishly. "Joe's hiding in the stables—a most likely place."

"But Taggles would have found him—"

"Rats! He hasn't, or he'd have brought him in."

There was evidently no arguing with Herries. The party of searchers followed Towser. Before reaching the stables Towser changed his course a little, and quickened his speed.

"Oho! Joe's not in the stables, then," said Herries. "See how he follows the track! I think it's wonderful!"

"But where is he?"

"Towser will show us soon."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Don't talk, Gussy; it worries Towser!"

"You uttah ass—"

"If you fellows want Gussy to muck up the whole bisney by jawing—" began Herries, in a resigned tone.

There was a chorus at once.

"Shut up, Gussy!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Ring off!"

"Hallo! Towser's fairly on it now! Come on!"

The bulldog was making for the building where the St. Jim's fellows kept their pets. Certainly that was not a likely

place for a runaway to hide in. But Towser made directly for it, and entered, with Herries behind, and the juniors growing very curious, following him in.

Towser made straight for his kennel.

"My hat!" ejaculated Herries. "Joe must have seen us coming, and he's hiding in Towser's kennel!"

"It's not big enough," said Wally.

"He might be curled up in it."

"He might be," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, stooping down and adjusting his eyeglass to look into the kennel. "He might be, dear boy; but, as a mattah of fact, he isn't. The kennel's empty."

"Look out, Gussy!" roared Blake. "Mind your bags!"

Arthur Augustus made a wild spring to escape—in his mind's eye seeing the teeth of the bulldog tearing at his immaculate trousers.

Towser was not paying him any attention, however. D'Arcy turned his eyeglass upon Blake, who was grinning.

"Blake, you ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Towser wasn't going to bite me!"

"Of course he wasn't!" said Herries. "Towser's rather particular what he bites!"

"You feahful ass—"

"I never said he was going to bite you," said Blake, in an injured tone. "I only told you to mind your bags. You've often said yourself that a chap ought to mind his bags, or they'll never keep a good crease."

"You uttah fathead—"

Towser was making great efforts to enter the kennel.

Herries looked very much perplexed.

"Blessed if I can understand this," he said. "Joe isn't in the kennel, but he must have hidden there, because Towser seems determined to get in."

"Perhaps he wants to go to sleep again," Monty Lowther suggested.

Herries did not deign to reply to this remark. He tugged at the chain, and jerked Towser's head out of the kennel. The bulldog growled discontentedly.

"Towser! Towser, old boy!"

Towser plunged his head into the kennel again.

"Give him his head," suggested Manners. "Just see what he will do."

"Oh, all right!"

Herries slackened on the chain. Towser went into the kennel, curled up there, and closed his eyes. Monty Lowther's suggestion had been quite correct; he wanted, as a matter of fact, to go to sleep again.

The juniors grinned, and Herries' face became crimson.

"Towser isn't in form this morning," he remarked. "It's through Gussy talking so much, I suppose. When Towser has to listen to some silly ass chattering away, it always puts him off his form."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Herries, struck by a sudden thought, turned towards Wally, who was standing with an exasperating grin upon his face.

"D'Arcy minor!"

"Hallo!" said Wally.

"Are you quite sure that handkerchief belonged to young Frayne?"

Wally shook his head.

"That handkerchief—Frayne!" he repeated.

"Yes. Are you sure it was his?"

"Oh, that handkerchief wasn't Joe's," said Wally cheerfully. "It was Curly Gibson's. I put it in my pocket by mistake."

"What!" yelled Herries.

"You don't think I'd have given you one of my own handkerchiefs, or Joe's, for your silly bulldog to chew up, do you?" said Wally.

The juniors burst into a roar.

They did not believe in the wonderful tracking powers of Towser, anyway, but it was irresistibly comic to think of the dog attempting to pick up Joe's trail from somebody else's handkerchief.

Herries stood staring speechlessly at the cool and self-possessed ornament of the Third Form for some seconds. Then he made a wild dash at Wally, and Wally made a dash to escape. They disappeared round the School House at top speed, leaving the other juniors roaring.

CHAPTER 11.

Uncomfortable for Mr. Selby.

MR. SELBY was feeling very uncomfortable. The news that Joe Frayne had run away from St. Jim's had come as a big surprise to him.

Mr. Selby was a dry, formal gentleman. He lived entirely by rule and compass, and anything unusual always disturbed and worried him. His view was that

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things ought always to happen exactly as they had happened before, and anything new was a worry and trouble, and really almost profanity.

That boys should be caned was right and proper. That they shouldn't like it was quite natural, though not so right and proper. But that a boy should run away from school to escape a severe caning was astounding. It seemed to Mr. Selby that after that the only thing to be expected was the Deluge!

Mr. Selby wondered, while he shaved that morning, what punishment was adequate for Joe's offence.

Expulsion and a flogging first seemed to him appropriate. Indeed, had Mr. Selby been a Japanese of older times he would probably have selected something lingering, with boiling oil in it.

But flogging and expulsion would meet the case, perhaps, Mr. Selby thought—if, indeed, the Head took the same view of it as Mr. Selby.

But then a doubt occurred to the master of the Third. Would the Head look at it as he did? He considered the Head extravagantly lenient in dealing with the boys.

Certainly the boys all liked and respected the Head, and there were few fellows at St. Jim's who would not have run miles to do him a service. All the same, Mr. Selby liked his own methods best.

If the Head failed to make an example of Joe—

Mr. Selby felt that in that case his duty would compel him to remonstrate very strongly with the Head.

He descended in that virtuous mood. He had received a message from the Head soon after rising, informing him of what had occurred, and asking him to come into the Head's study as soon as he could.

He found the Head looking very worried.

Dr. Holmes had not breakfasted yet, and the news of Joe's escapade was weighing heavily upon his mind. Mr. Railton had given him the letter Joe had left for Tom Merry, and the Head felt that that letter required some explanation.

"This is a most unfortunate occurrence, Mr. Selby," said the Head, as soon as he saw the master of the Third.

"Most unfortunate, sir!" agreed Mr. Selby.

"One of your pupils has run away."

"A very depraved boy, I fear, sir," said Mr. Selby. "That boy has given me more trouble than any other boy in my Form."

"Naturally, considering his origin," said the Head. "I asked you, as a special favour, to be particularly kind and lenient with him, Mr. Selby."

"Quite so."

"The boy seems to have been punished severely yesterday. Of course, I do not desire to interfere with the Form-masters in carrying out their duties. I should be glad to know why Frayne was in such trouble, however."

"An outrage was committed—"

"You refer to the incident of the football in the Form-room passage, which Mr. Railton has explained to me?"

"Certainly!"

"A mere boyish freak, Mr. Selby, for which a hundred lines would have been sufficient punishment," said the Head.

"Besides, Frayne was not the guilty party."

"I had reason to believe that he was, sir."

"Merry has confessed that he kicked the football on that occasion."

Mr. Selby started.

"Merry of the Shell, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Selby."

"Very good, sir. I did not know that; but Frayne certainly did. He stated to me explicitly when I questioned him that he had seen the ball kicked, but refused to give me the name of the culprit."

"That was certainly wrong—yet, under the circumstances, he—"

"I regarded it as a direct defiance of my authority, sir, and I punished him accordingly."

"Very well; and that ended the case."

Mr. Selby flushed uncomfortably.

"No, sir. I regarded it as my duty to compel the boy to return to subordination by telling me the name of the individual who committed the assault."

The Head's brow contracted.

"You punished him again for the same offence?"

"For refusing to give me the name—certainly."

"Was not that very severe, Mr. Selby?"

"I am sorry you should think it so, sir," said Mr. Selby.

"And did that second punishment end the matter?"

"I gave him until this morning to decide to answer my question."

"And in the event of his refusing still to do so?"

"I intended to cane him again."

The Head was silent for a moment.

"As I have said," he observed at last, "it is against all my wishes to interfere with a Form-master in dealing with his Form. But I cannot fail to see, Mr. Selby, that this is not the method for dealing with boys in our days. The

day of heavy punishment is past, long past—and it is better so. I did not think there was a master at St. Jim's who was desirous of reviving the traditions of the cruel days of our grandfathers."

Mr. Selby's face flushed a dull red.

He seemed at a loss for words.

"Am I to understand, sir, that you take the part of this insubordinate boy against me?" he exclaimed at last.

"No, Mr. Selby. But I must say that you have been too severe—much too severe—especially considering my personal request to you to deal gently with this boy."

Mr. Selby was silent.

"I must ask you," went on the Head, quietly but significantly, "to modify your methods—to keep order in your Form with fewer punishments. If we cannot agree in principle it will be impossible for us to work together."

Mr. Selby gnawed his underlip. It was as plain a hint as he could need that unless he came round to the view of the headmaster of St. Jim's there would be no place for him at the school.

"Very well, sir," he said.

"This boy has run away now," went on the Head. "He left St. Jim's in the night—without money—and must have gone tramping away in the rain. What may have become of him? He may even die from exposure. I think in that case, Mr. Selby, you would be very sorry to have been so hard upon him."

The Form-master did not speak. But for a moment some trace of human feeling glimmered in his breast, and he wished he had not been so hard upon the poor lad.

"I have no more to say," said the Head. "I shall have the boy searched for, and found. He will be brought back to St. Jim's. The unfortunate part of the matter is that, under the circumstances, I do not see how I am to punish him. But that need not be discussed."

Mr. Selby left the study.

He was in a very uncomfortable mood indeed; the Head seemed to think that he was in the wrong, and a dim suspicion was forming in his own mind that he was perhaps in the wrong, just as the Head thought.

He was an unimaginative man. But he thought of the rainy nights, the wet fields, the dripping trees—and Joe out in it all.

What had happened to the boy?

Mr. Selby at that moment would have been glad—very glad indeed—if he could have undone the doings of yesterday, if he could have gone into the Third Form Room and found Joe in his usual place in the Form!

CHAPTER 12.

In Search of Joe!

ST. JIM'S was in a state of great excitement that morning.

The whole school knew about Joe's escapade before breakfast, and it was discussed by all the Forms from the Sixth down to the "babes" in both Houses.

Many things had happened in the history of the old school, but for a boy to run away was rare—very rare, indeed.

It was a nine days' wonder at St. Jim's—though no one expected Joe to remain away for nine hours, for that matter.

Joe Frayne had bolted.

That was the news that ran through the school, and set everyone talking and wondering.

After brekker Figgins & Co. came over from the New House to inquire into the matter. Tom Merry gave them full information.

Figgins & Co. were very sympathetic. They were in the Fourth themselves, but they knew Mr. Selby, and had a keen sympathy for anybody who happened to be in that gentleman's Form. They all liked Joe.

Joe might be a strange specimen to take his place in a Form at a big Public school like St. Jim's. But the little ragamuffin had a heart of gold. Figgins and Kerr and Wynn knew that, and they had always helped Tom Merry & Co. to back up the little chap, and make things easier for him at St. Jim's.

"It's rotten!" said Figgins. "But what a stunning little brick, you know, to take lickings like that instead of giving a chap away!"

"He's a giddy little hero!" said Tom Merry.

"By Jove, yes!" said Kerr. "Of course, he'll be found. I hope the Head won't be hard on him when he's brought back."

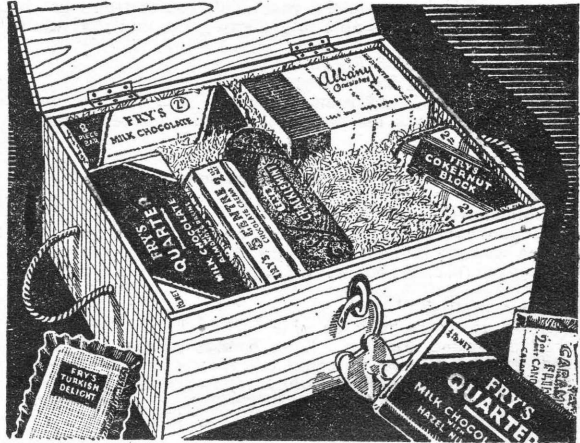
"Well," said Figgins, "the Head doesn't understand Selby as we do—and he may think he ought to make an example of Frayne. Of course, it's no good us pointing things out to the Head."

The juniors assented to that. Certainly it would not have been of much use for the heroes of the Fourth to talk to the

(Continued on the next page.)

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Head on the matter. They might have been made examples of themselves for their impertinence.

"It's rotten!" said Fatty Wynn, who had been very silent, with a deeply thoughtful expression upon his face.

"Yes, it's beastly!"

"You chaps know whether he took any grub with him?" asked Fatty.

Tom Merry grinned.

"Good old Fatty!" he remarked. "You were bound to think of that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, it's rather an important thing," said Fatty Wynn seriously. "He's out on the road, and you say he's got no money. He mayn't be able to get any grub, and that would be—"

"Awful!" suggested Figgins.

"Fearful!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, he'll be found soon, of course, and brought back. The Head has sent his description to the police station in Rylcombe already."

Figgins sniffed.

"Lot of good that will do! Look here, you chaps, I've got an idea!"

"Go ahead!"

"If Joe hasn't got any money, he can't have gone far; and he was too late for the trains, I suppose. And he may have taken shelter out of the rain, and so lost a lot of time."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, then, we may be able to find him. Suppose we try?" suggested Figgins. "It's a half-holiday this afternoon, you know, and we could cut the footer for once—the ground would be pretty sloppy, anyway—and spend the time looking for Joe."

"Bai Jove, I wegard that as a wippin' ideah!"

"Good!" said Tom Merry heartily.

"I considah it a most wippin' suggestion, Figgy, deah boy. Pevwaps it would be a good ideah for me to go and see the Head—"

"Eh?"

"To ask the Head for some assurance that Joe will not be punished, you know, so that he will be willin' to return—"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"We'll get off immediately after dinner," said Figgins briskly. "We may as well make up a party to go. Of course, Gussy won't be any good."

"Of course not!"

"Weally, deah boys—"

"We'll let him come if he promises not to talk," said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Good!" said Herries. "That will give Towser a chance!"

"Towser!"

"Yes," said Herries, with a gleam in his eyes that looked ominous for anybody who should contradict—"yes, of course, Towser will be very useful. He had no chance this morning, with that ass D'Arcy talking all the time, and that other ass D'Arcy minor playing silly tricks."

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"But it will be all right this afternoon," said Herries. "I've got a boot belonging to Joe, and Towser will track him down like anything."

"Towser will be more useful left at home, I should think," said Manners. "He looks so nice and peaceful in his kennel, and—"

"Chump!" said Herries.

"Look here, if you leave him at home I'll take his photograph for you," said Manners generously.

Herries glared at the photographer of the Shell.

"You ass!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I'd let you botch up Towser on your rotten camera? When I have Towser photographed I'll have it done by a chap with some sense. What do you know about dogs?"

"Look here, Herries—"

"Look here, Manners—"

"Oh, ring off, both of you!" said Tom Merry. "Let's go in to dinner. Shut up, and come in! Meet you here after dinner, Figgy."

"Right you are!"

The chums of the School House went in to dinner. Tom Merry noticed that Mr. Railton, who was at the Sixth Form table, was looking very thoughtful.

The Housemaster made a sign to Tom Merry when he left the dining-room.

Tom Merry joined him in the passage.

"Nothing has been heard of Joe Frayne, Merry," said the Housemaster.

"I feared not, sir."

"He has evidently left the school with the intention of

not returning to it," went on Mr. Railton, with a wrinkled brow.

Tom Merry nodded. He had no doubts on that subject himself.

"At the same time," continued the Housemaster, "I do not think he can really have gone very far. He has no money, for one thing."

"I know, sir."

"It is not easy to smuggle oneself away upon a train either—and the trains would be gone, too, at the time he left St. Jim's. He would hardly venture into the local railway station after daylight, when he would guess that his description was circulated. I have, therefore, every hope, Merry, that he has not been able to make the journey he probably intended—to London."

"Yes, sir."

"In that case, he may hide in the neighbourhood and wait for night."

"I thought it likely myself, sir."

"Then some of the juniors could not better occupy their afternoon's holiday than by making a search for him," Mr. Railton suggested.

Tom Merry smiled.

"We had already decided to do so, sir," he said. "About a dozen of us have arranged to go."

"Very good, Merry! It was a good thought, and I hope you will be successful," said the Housemaster.

"If you please, sir—"

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Yes?"

"Suppose we find Joe—"

"I have every hope that you may find him," said Mr. Railton. "But go on, Merry. What is it that you wish to ask me?"

"If we find him, sir, he may be unwilling to return."

Mr. Railton's brow grew severe.

"You will bring him back in any case, Merry."

"Yes, sir. But—"

"Well?"

"Suppose—suppose we find him—could we hold out some hope to him of—of having lenient treatment, sir?" stammered Tom Merry. "It wouldn't be pleasant for us to have a hand in bringing him back if he were to be expelled."

"I quite understand your feelings in the matter, Merry. I have discussed this with the Head, and he agrees to leave the matter entirely in my hands, as the boy belongs to my House."

"Yes, sir—"

"And I can undertake, Merry, that Frayne will not be expelled—and I shall make his punishment as light as possible, owing to the very peculiar circumstances of the case."

Tom Merry's face lighted up.

"Oh, sir! Thank you! We'll find him if we can, sir! We won't leave a stone unturned."

"I wish you every success, Merry."

And Mr. Railton, with a genial nod, walked away, and Tom Merry rushed off to join his chums and begin the search for Joe Frayne, the waif of St. Jim's.

The search party, including Herries and his bulldog, walked down to the gates. Towser kept close to his master's heels. D'Arcy gave them all a withering look through his monocle, and followed.

Figgins & Co. were at the gates waiting. Fatty Wynn had a lunch-basket in his hand. Wynne of the Fourth was not likely to neglect any precaution of that sort when setting out on an expedition.

The juniors grinned as they saw the lunch-basket.

"It's all right," said Fatty Wynn, with a satisfied smile. "If we get hungry, I've got enough here for a snack all round."

"Bai Jove!"

"You see, we may be led far afield looking for Joe, and it's no good running the risk of going hungry," Fatty Wynn explained.

"Weally, Wynn—"

"What is Herries bringing Towser for?" asked Kerr innocently. "He may be in the way if we have any tracking to do."

"Towser is going to track Joe down!"

"Ahem!"

"Look here, Kerr—"

"Oh, let him bring Towser!" said Figgins. "I don't suppose he'll track anything, unless it's the sandwiches in Wynn's basket."

"Fathead!"

"Hallo! Hold on a minute!"

An active figure came flying across the quadrangle. It was Wally of the Third, out of breath, with his cap on the back of his head.



With Tom Merry & Co. bringing up the rear, Towser raced through the woods as fast as Herries could follow him. The bulldog certainly seemed to be on the track of something. Could he have found the trail of Joe, the runaway, for whom the juniors were searching?

"You bounders!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "You were going off without me, weren't you?"

"Weally, Wally—"

"Blessed if I didn't forget your existence!" said Monty Lowther. "Can't remember every little thing, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You Shell duffer—"

"Weally, Wally, I considah—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! Let's get off! If Joe's found, I expect I shall be the chap that finds him."

"Rats!"

"Same to you! Let's get off!"

And the searchers got off at last.

CHAPTER 13.

Wet and Weary!

RAINY fields and trees, and a lowering sky!

The rain had ceased, but the ground was swamped with wet, and the trees and the bushes were weeping.

On the wet, gleaming road, under the watery sun of the wet afternoon, a forlorn little figure was tramping along.

It was Joe Frayne.

The fog of the Third Form at St. Jim's was wet and weary, muddy from head to foot, drenched to the skin with rain.

Joe Frayne had had many a rough time in London slums. He had spent whole nights in the open air in rainy winter.

But in London he had generally found a doorway or an arch to sleep in. It was not like tramping under the rain in the country.

Here there was no shelter.

Joe had lost his way—lost it hopelessly overnight. Towards dawn he had crept into a shed, and there, wet and weary, he had slept till the sun was high in the heavens.

It was past noon when he looked out of his shelter into the daylight.

It was day—a dark and dreary day—and Joe did not know in the least where he was.

Had he gone far from St. Jim's?

He did not know.

If he ventured out into the road in broad daylight, and was still, as he feared, near the school, he ran the risk every moment of being taken up—for he had little doubts that he would be searched for on all sides.

He thought it would be wiser to lie low until dusk fell upon the landscape once more.

He ate his bread and cheese, and shivered; but the question of remaining in the shed was settled by another, when a farm labourer came in and turned him out.

And now Joe was tramping on again.

Where was he?

During the short time he had been at the school he had made few excursions farther than the village of Rylcombe, and he did not know the surrounding country at all.

Was St. Jim's far or near?

Numbed and wet as he was, the lad kept a keen eye about as he tramped on, looking to right and left with the hunted eyes of a fugitive.

A signpost at last.

Joe halted at the cross-roads and looked up at the finger-post, reading it with eager eyes to see if it could tell him anything of his whereabouts.

"To Wayland—To London," he read.

"My 'at!" said Joe.

He was still in the Wayland district. He cast a nervous glance about him.

There were three roads branching here—to Rylcombe, to Wayland, and to London. It was in the last direction that Joe decided to go.

He tramped into the road.

He had not gone a dozen yards from the signpost when he sighted a constable, mounted, coming slowly along the road towards him.

Joe Frayne halted.

The sight of a policeman, from his old association, always gave him a nervous and uneasy feeling.

To the dwellers in Blucher's Buildings, the constable had been a natural enemy—the foe to be tricked and eluded. And now, too, Joe knew that the police of the district might have been warned to look out for a boy who had run away from the school.

This very man might be in search of him at this very moment.

Joe hesitated only a few seconds, and then turned and ran.

The mounted constable called after him, probably surprised to see a boy suddenly run with no apparent reason.

Joe did not pause.

He dashed down the lane, crossed it, and plunged through the hedge into the wood in the direction of Wayland and St. Jim's.

He did not pause till he had run a quarter of a mile into the wood, and the wet, drenching thickets were all round him.

Then he came to a halt again, gasping for breath.

"Crikey!" murmured Joe. "That was a close shave! I wonder if he was arter me? I 'spect 'e was. I've done 'im now, anyways."

He listened intently.

There was no sound of pursuit from the road.

But Joe knew that if the mounted constable was really

WHAT DID DAD SAY?

Small Son: "Daddy, why do you close one eye when you aim with a gun?"

Father: "So that I may aim straight, my boy."

Son: "Then wouldn't it be better to close both eyes?"

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searching for him, he might be patrolling the lane, waiting for him to reappear from the wood.

As soon as he had recovered his breath Joe plunged deeper and deeper into the thickets.

Round him bushes and trees were weeping with late rain, but the outcast could not get much wetter than he was already.

It was only by keeping in motion that he could keep his limbs from growing numbed with the cold and his teeth from chattering.

"Crikey!" said Joe, more than once. "This is orlright—I don't think! I wish I was back in Blucher's Buildings!" He thought of the Form-room at St. Jim's, too.

But he did not wish to be there.

He remembered the hard, sour face of his Form-master—the cruel, lashing cane—the continual punishments that had been promised him.

Joe did not want to be back at St. Jim's at the tender mercies of Mr. Selby. Even the drenched thickets were preferable to that.

But weariness was overcoming the little vagrant now. His feet were heavy as lead, his limbs aching with cold and fatigue.

He felt that he must rest.

But as he tried to seek out a dry spot to lie down and rest, he found everywhere pools of water, drenched grass and bushes—nowhere a dry spot.

He tramped on and on, with growing weariness.

At last he stopped.

He could go no farther.

Overhead, watery gleams of sunlight came through dripping branches. It was well on in the afternoon, but there was little warmth in the sun.

The little ragamuffin threw himself down in the midst of the rain-soaked grass and fern.

He was worn out, and even the cold and wet in the grass was better than keeping upon his weary feet any longer.

Joe lay upon the rainy ground, and, wet as he was, he fell into an uneasy doze, half sleeping, to start every now and then into broad wakefulness with a cold shiver.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright in the fern.

From the distant woods came a sound to his ears—it was the howl of a dog! Joe started and listened.

For the first time it occurred to him that perhaps he was trespassing, and that some keeper might find him there.

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and either take him back to St. Jim's, or hand him over to the police.

But the boy could do no more; he was worn down with fatigue. Half stupefied by cold and misery he sat in the wet fern, waiting what his fate might be.

In the wood was a sound of footsteps and voices, and the sound was coming steadily nearer to the little ragamuffin.

Quite unknowingly, in his ignorance of the ground, Joe had lain down to rest close by a footpath through the wood.

He sat in the fern, listening.

Nearer and nearer came the footsteps and voices.

CHAPTER 14.

Found!

TOM MERRY & CO. halted at the cross-roads in Rylcombe Lane.

Herries dragged on Towser's chain. Towser was inclined to walk right on.

"Better come on," said Herries, looking round at the rest. "Towser seems to be on the track. You see how eager he is to get on."

"Wats, deah boy!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Towser doesn't want to sit on the wet ground," said Monty Lowther. "That's what's the matter with Towser."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Which way are we going?" Tom Merry said thoughtfully. "Shall we inquire in Rylcombe first if Joe has been seen there, or cut right over to Wayland?"

"Rylcombe's been drawn blank," said Blake. "Mr. Railton was down there inquiring this morning. My idea is that Joe would make for Wayland, and try to get into the express when it stops there in the night."

"If he did that, he's far away enough," Kerr remarked.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Yes, but the Head has wired to the London station about him. But my opinion is that he would be spotted trying to get into the train, and warned off."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"More likely he's tramping about the country, or hiding in the wood," said Tom Merry decidedly. "Running away from school isn't so jolly easy a thing as it sounds—especially when you've got no tin."

"Quite wight, deah boy."

"I think we ought to ask first at the station in Wayland whether any chap turned up there in the middle of the night," said Tom Merry. "We may get a clue that way."

"Good egg!"

"I wegard that as a wippin' ideah, deah boy. Shall we cut through the wood, or walk down to Wylcombe and take the twain?"

"Ass!"

"Chump! It will take less than half the time if we cut through the wood. What's the good of going miles out of the way?"

"I was thinkin' of the wet gwass in the wood. It will uttably spoil our boots, to say nothin' of makin' our twousahs damp and spoilin' the shape—"

"Fathead!"

"Weally—"

And D'Arcy relapsed into indignant silence.

"Hist!"

Herries uttered that exclamation in a very cautious tone about ten minutes later. The juniors had been tramping along the wet footpath, and had reached almost the heart of the wood.

Round them the trees and thickets shut out every other view, and the branches overhead cast a dusky shade upon them. From the wet boughs raindrops were still shaking.

The party halted.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom Merry.

"Hist!"

"Well, I'm histing," said Monty Lowther. "Are you histing, Manners?"

"Yes," said Manners. "I'm histing."

"Are you histing, Blake?"

"Yes, I'm histing!" grinned Blake.

And the juniors chuckled. Herries glared at them indignantly.

"Hist, you silly asses!"

"Well, we're all histing."

"It's a regular history lesson," Lowther remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hist!"

"Bai Jove, I wegard—"

"Shush!" said Herries.

"Shush!" repeated Lowther. "Are you shushing, Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, I'm shushing."
 "Are you shushing, Figgins?"
 "Yes, I'm shushing."
 "What's the next part of the game, Herries?" asked Lowther blandly. "We're all shushing."
 "You—you ass!"
 "Well, I only want to know, you know."
 "Shush!"
 "I tell you we are shushing. What's the next move?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries did not deign to reply to Lowther's frivolous remarks again. He stood with his head bent, listening. The juniors all halted, watching him. Towser was trying to pull away from the leash, and that was an infallible sign to Herries that Towser was on the track. It might have meant that Towser was on the track of a stoat or a rabbit, but Herries did not think of that.

"Well," said Lowther at last, "when you've finished doing the living picture bisney, Herries, perhaps you'll tell us what we're to hist and shush for."

"Towser's scented something."
 "No kippers here, either," said Monty Lowther, looking round and sniffing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Bai Jove! I considah—"
 "You'd better shut up and follow me," said Herries. "Towser's on the track. It's the scent of Joe's boot, of course, that he's following. Can you see any footmarks in the ground?"

The juniors scanned the ground for footprints. Tom Merry & Co. all had considerable practice as Boy Scouts, and if there had been a trail there, they would probably have been able to pick it up. But there was certainly no sign of a trail, excepting what they made themselves.

Herries kept a tight grip on Towser's collar, and looked into the thickets. The bulldog gave a howl, and rushed off the footpath.

"Bai Jove! He weally looks as if he's aftah somethin', deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Rabbits," said Lowther.
 "Most likely."
 "Yaas, wathah! Bai Jove!"
 "What's the matter now?"
 "If we go off the path, deah boy, we wun gweat wisks of gettin' our clothes spoiled in these beastlay wet bushes!"

"Rats!"
 "Weally, Kerr—"
 "Suppose we stop here and have a snack?" Fatty Wynn suggested. "Herries can run whatever it is down, with Towser, and come back, and—"

"Rats!" said Figgins. "Come on!"
 "I'm feeling a bit peckish!"
 "Bosh! This way!"

"I always have rather a keen appetite at this time of the year," said Fatty Wynn. "I've got sandwiches here, and— Ow!"

Figgins grasped his plump chum by the shoulder, and rushed him into the bushes after Herries.

Towser certainly seemed to be on the track of something, for he tore on as fast as Herries could follow him, and several times almost jerked the chain away.

But Herries held it fast. Whatever it was that Towser was tracking, Herries meant to be in at the death.

There was a howl in the bushes, and a lean, shaggy cur leaped into sight, and Towser, with a fierce growl, rushed upon him.

There was a roar from Wally.
 "Look out! Hold him off! It's Pongo!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "Towser's tracked Pongo down!"

"Bai Jove!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Wally rushed forward and caught Pongo up in his arms, just in time to save him from the teeth of the bulldog. From the safe shelter of Wally's arms, Pongo growled and barked defiance at Towser.

The juniors yelled with laughter.

Pongo had evidently got away, and followed his master into the wood, and Towser had scented out his old enemy. He was as far as ever from being on the track of the runaway.

Herries' face was a study for a minute or two.
 "Whither next?" asked Monty Lowther sweetly. "Towser still on the track, Herries?"

"Oh, shut up!"
 "Is it time to shush again yet?"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm willing to either shush or to hist, if it will do any good. But—"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Well, what—"
 Tom Merry had bent down, and was scanning the ground with keen and alert eyes. He was the chief of the Boy Scouts, and a good tracker.

In the soft, rain-soaked soil was the indentation of a boot—a mark recently made, and quite clear to the eye.

"Footprints! By Jove!" said Manners.
 "Not ours, either!" exclaimed Jack Blake excitedly.

"See, there they go—leading into the bushes! We haven't trodden there!"
 "Might be Joe; but—"

"Herries, old man," said Tom Merry, without looking up, "have you got that boot—Joe's boot that you brought with you?"
 "It's here," said Herries.

"Hand it over!"
 Herries handed the boot down to the junior, who was on his knees now, careless of the wet. Tom Merry fitted the boot to the track in the indented soil. It fitted perfectly.

"My flat!" said Figgins. "Joe's been here! It's his size of footprint!"
 "Yaas, wathah!"

Herries' face lighted up wonderfully. He patted Towser on the head.

"I knew Towser was on the track!" he exclaimed.
 "Towser!"

"Yes! Towser led us here, didn't he?" Herries exclaimed warmly. "And now you see for yourselves that we're on the track."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You cackling asses—"
 "We're on the track right enough!" exclaimed Tom Merry, rising to his feet. "That's Joe's footprint. He can't be far away!"

"Bai Jove! What a stoke of luck!"
 "Ass!" said Herries. "It's not luck! It was a mathematical certainty, from the moment I set Towser on the track!"

"Weally, Hewwies—"
 Tom Merry followed the trail of the footprints in the soft soil. The track was easily enough to be seen. The juniors followed him eagerly.

There was a sudden movement behind a mass of bushes, and Tom Merry uttered a sharp exclamation.

"There's somebody here!"
 "Look out!"

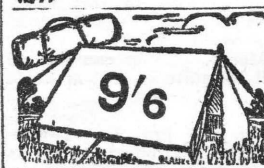
"Hurrah! We've found him!"
 They burst through the bushes.

Joe sprang to his feet.
 The runaway was found!

(Continued on the next page.)

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CHAPTER 15.

All's Well That Ends Well!

"**B**AI Jove!"
 "The young bounder!"
 "So we've found you!"
 Joe shrank away from the juniors. He made a movement as if to bolt into the wood, but they were all round him now.

"Crikey!" muttered Joe.
 "Bai Jove! I—"
 "What do you think of Towser now?" demanded Herries triumphantly.

"Wats!"
 "Chump!"
 "I—I—I—" stammered Joe. "I'm very sorry, Master Tom! I hope you ain't ratty with me. I—I thought I'd better go!"

"You young duffer!" said Tom Merry. "It's all right, as we've found you!"
 "Yaas, wathah! Come on, you young weckless boundah!"

Joe looked apprehensive.
 "I—I can't come back, Master Tom!" he gasped.
 "You must!"
 "But old Selby, he'll go for me wuss than ever," said Joe. "I—I can't stand the lickings, Master Tom. One, two, or three, I could stand; but I can't stand 'im keepin' on at me!"

"Why didn't you tell me how it was?" demanded Tom Merry severely. "I should have explained to Mr. Selby."

"But—"
 "Anyway, it's all over now. Mr. Railton has agreed that if we take you back you're not to be expelled or flogged."

Joe looked relieved.
 "But old Selby—"
 "The Head was talking to him this morning," said Blake. "He came out of the Head's study looking quite pink. I think Dr. Holmes has spoken to him quite plainly about it; and, in any case, Railton will stand by you."

Joe hesitated.
 "Now, Joe," said Tom Merry, "you must come back. We've found you, and you've got to come back. I don't think you'll find things very hard, but you'll have to face the music, anyway. You're not afraid?"

"No, Master Tom."
 "Gwin and bear it, deah boy," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy advised. "Face it like a little man, you know, and gwin and bear it."

"I'll do as Master Tom says."
 "That's right," said Tom Merry.
 "Must be awfully hungry, I should think," remarked Fatty Wynn, opening his luncheon basket. "Have some of these sandwiches, Joe?"

Joe accepted the sandwiches eagerly enough. He was faint with hunger.

The juniors watched him eat.
 "Jolly glad we've found him, anyway," said Kerr, "and it was thoughtful of you to bring the grub, Fatty."

"You can rely on Fatty Wynn to remember a thing like that," grinned Digby.
 "Yes, rather," said Fatty, whose mouth was as full as Joe's. "Besides, I get awfully peckish in this rainy weather, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Come on, Joe!" said Tom Merry. "You can eat as you go. You young ass! You'll be quite ill if you don't soon get a change into dry clothes!"

"Yaas, wathah, bai Jove!"
 Joe obediently tramped off with the juniors. Towser brought up the rear, still making occasional efforts to get at Pongo, whom Wally kept in his arms. Wally was undecided whether to welcome Joe—as a long-lost brother or to punch him for running away without consulting him.

"You young chump!" said Wally severely. "You'll be ill, as sure as a gun. If you get laid up with a cold, won't I jolly well lick you, that's all!"

And Joe grinned.
 There was a general crowding round of the fellows when Tom Merry & Co. entered the gates of St. Jim's with the recaptured runaway.

"Here he is!" shouted Kangaroo.
 Joe looked nervously and shamefacedly at the crowd of juniors. Tom Merry & Co. marched him straight on to the School House, amid all sorts of comments from the fellows. Knox, the prefect, was near the doorway of the School House, and he gave Joe a frown.

"What you want is a jolly good flogging," he remarked. "I'd jolly well give it to you, you impudent young beggar, getting out of the school at night."

"I wasn't the only one out last night," said Joe.
 Knox started and turned quite pale. He remembered his

own escapade, and that Joe might have seen him—in fact, evidently had seen him, from what he said.

The prefect turned away, and did not address any further remarks to Joe, and for some time after that he avoided the fag. He was afraid that Joe might blurt out something which it would not have been pleasant for him to let others hear.

"You can report to Mr. Railton while I take Joe up and get him some dry clothes, you chaps," said Tom Merry.
 "Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry rushed Joe up to the Third Form dormitory. Wally, having bestowed Pongo in safety, followed them up, and insisted upon giving Joe a rub down with a rough towel till the unhappy fag begged for mercy.

But Wally was inexorable.
 "I suppose you don't want to catch your death of cold!" he exclaimed.

"N-no," said Joe; "but—"
 "Well, you will if you don't have a good rub down—in fact, you will very likely, anyway. You've sneezed once!"
 "That was because you rubbed my nose hard."

"Rats! And you coughed!"
 "I was only trying to breathe. You were suffocating me!"

And Wally towelled away till Joe was in a red glow all over, and he felt as if Wally had been skinning him instead of towelling him.

But he certainly felt better when he stood in dry clothes, with his flesh all in a glow from the hard rubbing.

"Mind," said Wally warningly, "be careful! If you catch cold I'm going to give you the licking of your life."

Tom Merry took Joe's arm and led him from the dormitory. He took him down to Mr. Railton's study.

D'Arcy and Lowther were waiting outside.
 "You told him?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes; you're to take Joe in."
 "Right-ho!"

Tom Merry tapped at the Housemaster's door, and entered with Joe.
 Joe Frayne was red and confused. After his escapade he hardly dared to face the eyes of the Housemaster. But there was no help for it now. With downcast looks, Joe Frayne followed Tom Merry into the study.

Mr. Railton rose to his feet.
 "I am very glad you have been successful in your search, Merry," he said. "Frayne, I suppose, was willing to return with you?"

"He came quite willingly, sir, when I explained to him."
 "Very good, Frayne."

Joe turned white.
 "Ye-es, sir!" he faltered.

Mr. Railton looked kindly enough at Joe. He laid his hand upon the boy's shoulder.

"Frayne, I suppose you realise now that you have done wrong in leaving the school without permission?"
 "Ye-es, sir," stammered Joe; "Master Tom says so, sir."

"You are sorry?"
 "Yes, sir."

"Very good. As you are sorry for what you have done I shall not punish you; but you must give me your word, Frayne, that nothing of the kind shall occur again."

"Wery well, sir."
 "I hope," said Mr. Railton, "that you will get on better with your Form-master in the future. Mr. Selby has consented to say nothing further about the matter that caused the trouble. As I believe you will keep your word, Frayne, I shall say nothing about your having run away; but I expect you to show by your future conduct that you are deserving of this leniency."

The tears glistened in Joe's eyes. He could not find his voice for the moment, and when he spoke there was a falter in it.

"Oh, sir, I—I shan't never forget 'ow good you've been to me, sir! You and Master Tom is the best friends I've ever 'ad, sir, and I—I'd do anythin' for you, sir!"

Mr. Railton smiled kindly.
 "Keep to that, Frayne, and you will be all right," he said. "Nothing more will be said about this matter. You may go."

And Joe Frayne left the study. His eyelashes were wet, but his face was cheerful and smiling.

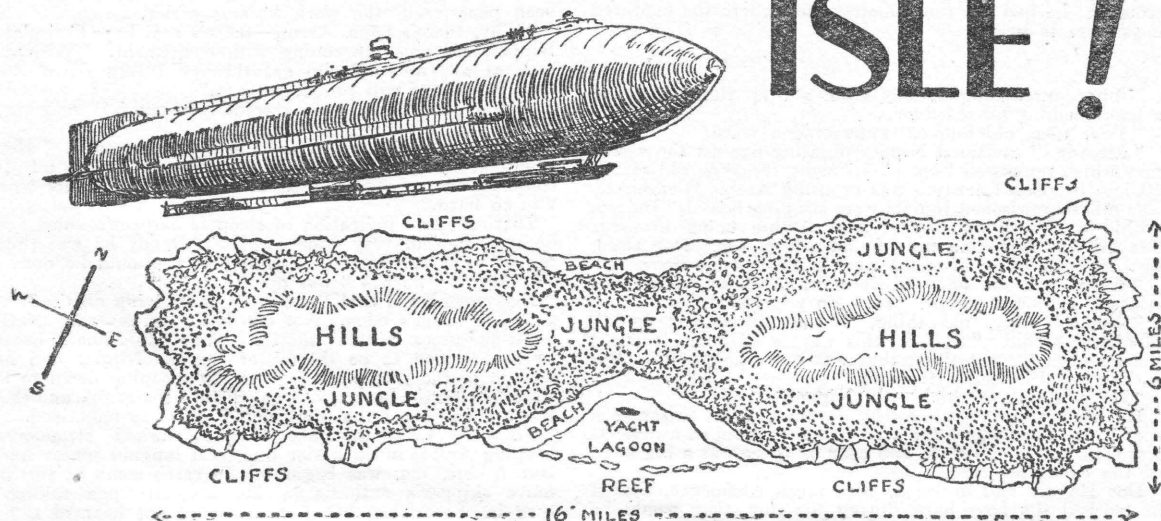
Wally, Jameson, Curly Gibson, and several of the Third were waiting in the passage. They could tell by Joe's looks that it was all right. The fags made a rush and seized Joe, and bore him away with them, and a little later there was a grand feed in the Third Form Room, with Wally presiding, and the guest of the evening was little Joe, the boy who ran away.

THE END.

("THE OUTSIDER!"—featuring our schoolboy favourites of St. Jim's—is the title of next week's best school story. Order your GEM early.)

EXCITING FIGHT BETWEEN ST. FRANK'S FELLOWS AND MUTINEERS!

TREASURE ISLE!



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

The Sky Wanderer, the airship school of the St. Frank's chums, lands on Tao-Tao Island, in the Pacific, in response to a message for help from Mr. Beverton, an explorer treasure-seeking on the island. It transpires that Doc Haynes and most of the crew of the explorer's yacht have mutinied to seek the treasure. To ensure his own safety from the airship school, Haynes, who is friendly with the cannibals, captures twelve of the St. Frank's boys. But Handforth and his two chums escape. They meet Nelson Lee and three companions, and in the night the whole party advance on Haynes' camp to rescue the nine prisoners.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

The Rescue Party!

THE night attack upon Doc Haynes' camp by Nelson Lee and his handful of staunch companions was a desperate venture. Every yard of the moist, warm jungle was fraught with danger. On the face of it, the mission seemed hopeless, for the raiding party numbered only seven, whilst Doc Haynes, in addition to his own piratical crew, had hundreds of Tao-Tao savages at his call.

But Nelson Lee was counting upon the element of surprise to see him through—plus his own wit and ingenuity. Haynes, without question, was expecting no attack, and therefore his camp would be quiet, perhaps unguarded. And the nine captured St. Frank's juniors were somewhere on that beach, or near at hand.

The raiders moved with excessive caution, in single file. Umlosi, because of his experience in woodcraft, led the way. Close behind came Nelson Lee, then Dorrie, then Mr. Beverton. Handforth & Co. brought up the rear; and for once the usually noisy Edward Oswald was as silent as a clam.

The jungle path was narrow and tunnel-like. Overhead, the foliage formed a dense canopy, so that not a trace of starlight penetrated to the ground. Occasionally, sounds of movement would come from above—stealthy, mysterious. Then, perhaps, there would be a little sound of chattering, proving that the movements in the tree branches were caused by monkeys, annoyed, perhaps, because their rest was being disturbed.

Keen and alert as Nelson Lee was, he knew that he was no match for Umlosi. In such a situation as this, the mighty African chief was worth his weight in gold. There was no cleverer tracker in the world than Umlosi. In spite of his bulk, he could move through the undergrowth as silently as a shadow.

Lee suddenly became aware of a tension; a sense of danger came to him. Umlosi was still advancing, but his movements were slower, and he was crouching. Like a panther the African sprang, and Lee dimly saw that there

was a second figure. A Tao-Tao black had been stationed there—perhaps on guard. But Umlosi had made his attack before the savage had had time to make an outcry.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Lord Dorrmore had drawn close to Lee by now; and they both heard the sound of strong knuckles meeting against bone and flesh. For some seconds the undergrowth was threshed wildly, then came a jarring thud, heavier than the others.

"'Tis well!" murmured Umlosi calmly. "The path is clear, O Umtagati!"

Nelson Lee moved forward; he saw, vaguely, the shape which sprawled on the ground, just clear of the path.

"You killed him?" he whispered.

"Even as he would have killed me, my master," replied Umlosi simply. "'Twas his life or mine—his knife against my bare hands."

No other word was spoken. They pressed on silently, determinedly. And, as before, Umlosi led the way—ever ready to "smell" the presence of an enemy. And almost before they had realised it, they were free of the jungle, and before them stretched the sandy beach, with the phosphorescent lagoon glowing alluringly under the tropic stars.

The bungalow and the shacks stood out blackly. The bungalow's windows were brightly lit, and from one hut, too, came a glow of light. Human voices, clearly audible, sounded on the still, peaceful air. Indeed, it would have been difficult to imagine a scene of greater serenity. In the background there was the constant musical murmur of the surf.

No human figures were visible, and Nelson Lee was inclined to believe that the Tao-Tao savage, encountered in the jungle path, had been there by chance. After all, what need was there for Doc Haynes to set a guard? He feared nothing from the airship party on the other side of the island. Certainly, there was no watch set here on the beach.

The would-be raiders were thrilled. They were right within the enemy's camp now, and at any moment they might be required to go into desperate action.

"Where do we go from here?" murmured Dorrie.

"You and I will go forward with Umlosi," whispered Lee. "Beverton, I want you to remain here, and you must keep the boys quiet—"

"I say, sir, cheese it!" protested Handforth. "Aren't we going to—"

"Now, young 'un, a good soldier does not question the orders of his commanding officer," said Lee. "I dare say

there will be plenty of excitement soon. But we must not be rash. Beverton, you and the boys must lie prone in the sands—bury yourselves partially, so that you will not be visible."

There were no further protests. Mr. Mitchell Beverton and the boys obeyed orders, and Nelson Lee held a swift, whispered consultation with Dorrie and Umlosi. When they went forward, they did so in three different directions—Lee towards the main bungalow, and the others towards two of the huts. For the present, Nelson Lee was only scouting; he had not the remotest idea where the captured boys were in prison.

Nipper, awakening heavily from a deep slumber, found a hand shaking his shoulder.

"Your turn, old fellow," murmured a voice.

"Already?" muttered Nipper, fighting against the weariness which oppressed him. "All right, Travers, old man."

Close by, Bob Christine was arousing Archie Glenthorne. The other imprisoned juniors were sleeping heavily. Indeed, within a minute of Nipper and Archie being aroused, Travers and Christine were sound asleep, too. Dog tired, they dropped off even as their heads touched the floor.

"We've got an hour of it now, Archie," murmured Nipper, stifling a yawn. "How do you feel?"

"Well, frankly, old thing, I feel poisonously foul," admitted Archie. "In fact, this wheeze of yours is about the most unpleasant thing that was ever thought of. But I dare say I'll feel better soon."

"It's worth it, Archie," said Nipper.

He felt his way in the pitchy darkness of his prison to a spot in the floor where the sand had been scooped away. It was close to the end wall, and near by there was a big heap of the excavated sand.

Doc Haynes had declared, with much confidence, that if he worked the boys hard during the day, they would be so dog-tired that they would sleep like logs, with never any thought of escape. But Haynes had reckoned without the determination of Nipper. Nipper had been Nelson Lee's assistant long enough to acquire some of the great detective's own dogged perseverance. And after the night meal, when the boys had been locked once again in the stoutly-built shack, Nipper had suggested a plan of action.

It had not met with much enthusiasm, for all the boys were exhausted after their labours in the blazing heat of Death Valley; their hands were blistered, their limbs ached, and some of them fell asleep over supper, hungry as they were.

"We can't all work—that's impossible," Nipper had said. "We're too tired. But I'm going to suggest that we work in pairs—throughout the night. The first pair will work for an hour, then two more will be awakened, and they'll do their bit."

"What are we supposed to do?" Tommy Watson had asked.

"Scrape a cavity in the floor, near the end wall," replied Nipper. "There's only sand beneath us, and these walls don't go down far. It ought to be comparatively easy to burrow a way out. Not a tunnel, but just a hole under the wall."

"And then, dear old fellow?" asked Travers. "What are we supposed to do then? Swim for it in the shark-infested seas? Or run for it in the cannibal-infested jungle?"

"Time to talk of what we'll do when we've found a way out of this prison," replied Nipper.

His companions had agreed to the plan in a half-hearted way, for none of them could see that it would be of use, even if they escaped. They had drawn lots to decide which pair should commence operations; and Buster Boots of the Fourth, and Tregellis-West of the Remove, had been the unlucky pair. But, faithfully, in spite of their weariness, they had worked.

Several pairs had been at it since, and Nipper was gratified to find that the hole in the floor was of considerable size—much deeper than he had expected.

The sand at the bottom of this pit was fairly soft, and it was the task of one junior to scoop up handfuls of the sand,

and pass it to his companion. There was not sufficient room for both of them in the "pit" at the same time. Working in complete darkness it was a tedious, uninspiring business.

The pair who had worked first had deemed it impossible to make any progress at all. For although this hut was built on the sands, it had been standing for a considerable time, and the floor inside was as hard as baked clay—or so it had seemed. Their only tools were pocket-knives, and such like, yet, after the surface of rock-hard sand had been penetrated, the work became easier.

"Why, there's hope, Archie—there's real hope!" declared Nipper, his voice throbbing with excitement. "With any luck at all, we ought to get through before dawn. The next two chaps will probably do it."

"Good gad! You don't absolutely mean it?" murmured Archie.

"I do!" said Nipper, as he handed up more sand. "Here, where are you? Good! Feel how soft this sand is! It's coming away as easy as pie. It was only the surface which was so hard."

There was no indication of sleep in Nipper's voice now; he was, indeed, very wide awake. Already he was thinking of ways and means—scheming what should be done as soon as the "burrow" was opened.

He remembered that there were boats lying on the beach near the water's edge. Not one boat, but several. Native boats or canoes, it didn't matter. They would float. Escape by sea seemed to be the better course. Nipper had had enough of the jungle. Moreover, by creeping down to the water's edge the boys would not disturb the camp, and there was a good chance that they would get away unnoticed.

Fired by these thoughts Nipper worked strenuously, keeping Archie much busier than that languid junior liked. But Archie, too, was beginning to catch some of the Remove skipper's enthusiasm. He insisted upon taking a turn in the hollow, but Nipper would not hear of it. In that stygian darkness, Nipper was now burrowing well under the log wall of the hut. By the time his stipulated hour had elapsed he had made a veritable tunnel, and had to walk to and fro as he conveyed the loosened sand.

"I may be wrong, old cherub, but isn't it time we knocked off?" asked Archie. "The luminous dial of my watch says—"

"Never mind what it says, Archie!" panted Nipper, from the lower level. "You can wake up the next chap, if you like, but I'm carrying on. Great Scott! Don't you realise that we're nearly through?"

"Odd shocks and staggerers!" ejaculated Archie. "You don't absolutely mean that, old thing?"

"Come down here and see for yourself," replied Nipper tensely. "There's room now. The sides have caved in a bit, but I'm right underneath the wall."

He plunged back into the burrow, sand in his hair, in his ears, and in his mouth. But he did not care. With bare hands he scraped energetically, and at the first touch he sensed, rather than felt, a sudden collapse of the sandy roof and walls.

"Back!" he gasped.

He dodged back as he spoke, crashing against Archie. In the same second a great amount of sand came slumping down into the burrow, and Nipper was half buried—being at the time beyond the log wall. Sand came thudding down all about him, burying his legs, piling round his body.

Half choking he coughed, and it was impossible to prevent a sneeze. He opened his eyes, and nearly let forth a yell. For overhead there was a dazzling spangle of stars.

"Great Scott!" he gurgled. "We're through, Archie—we're through!"

He struggled madly, and managed, somehow, to force his way up through the loosened sand. He was outside the hut at the rear, and in the sand there was a hollow, where the burrow had collapsed. Scrambling and slithering, he crawled out. Archie, still half buried, was attempting to follow.

The coolness of the night air was like wine to Nipper. The very fact of being free in the open was a glorious feeling.

The rear wall of the hut faced the sea, and in that direction all was dark and quiet, except for the perpetual murmur of the surf.

Nipper crept towards the corner of the store hut, and at the first peep round he came within sight of the bungalow with its lighted windows. But all seemed quiet. He continued his advance towards the front, intending to pull back the heavy bolts which secured the door. He knew that there was no lock. Within half a minute the others would be free.

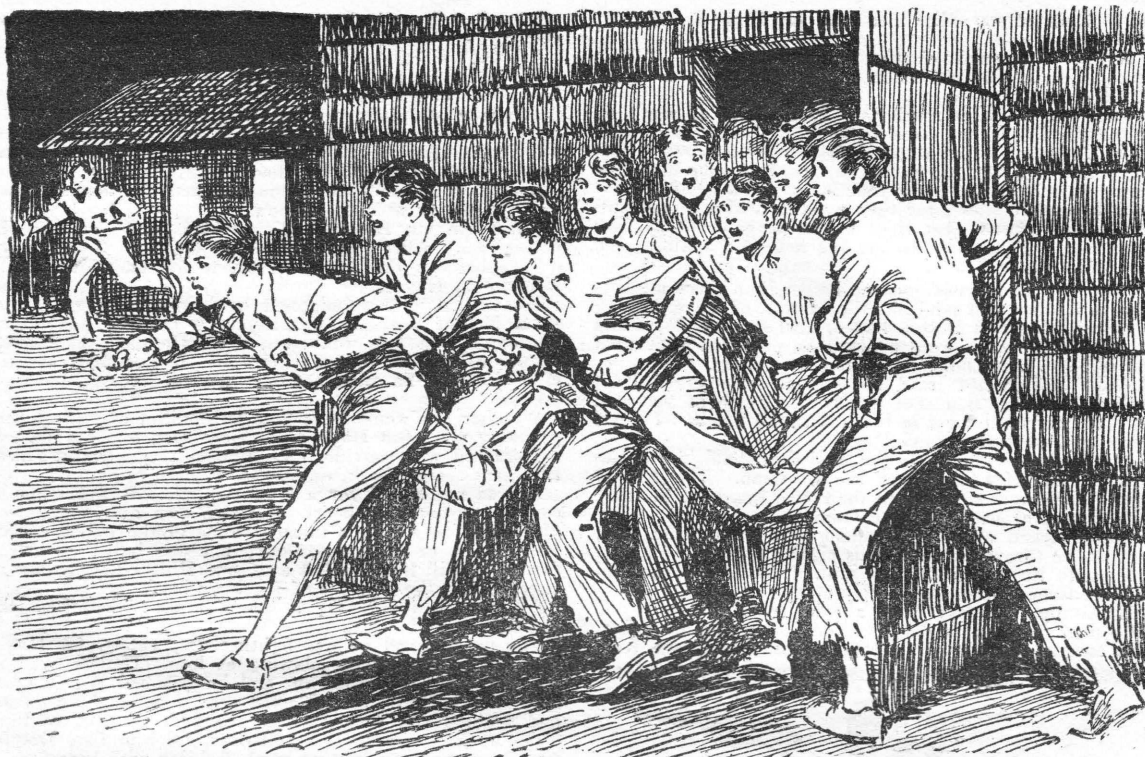
Nipper gulped; for suddenly, as though from nowhere, a burly figure had loomed up out of the blackness, and Nipper was face to face with Red Harker.

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(Three more portraits next week.)



McClure dashed to the door of the shack in which Nipper & Co. were prisoners, and in a moment he had it open. Then out ran the nine St. Frank's juniors, full of excitement and eager to join in the fight Nelson Lee and his companions were putting up against Haynes and his gang!

A Fight for Freedom!

IT was that unfortunate sneeze of Nipper's which had done it. Red Harker, on his way from the bungalow to his own sleeping quarters, had caught the sound, and he had thought it strange. For although the boys were locked within the shack, it had seemed to Harker that the sneeze had come from outside. Walking silently over the sand he had passed round one side of the building, whilst Nipper had been passing round the other, each unconscious of the other's presence until they came face to face.

"Hey, what the— Just a minute, you!" yelled the ruffian.

He reached out a hard, horny hand, and Nipper, thunder-struck by the unexpectedness of the encounter, was just a shade too late in dodging. Red's fingers closed over the lad's shoulders, and took a firm, cruel hold.

In that second Nipper's high hopes were shattered. He blamed himself for his own carelessness. He should have rounded the angle of the hut with greater caution. But there was no time to think. He was struggling, lashing out with his fists, crashing them into Red's ugly face.

"Hi! The blamed kids have got out!" howled Harker, with an assortment of oaths. "Doc, the kids have got out!"

The commotion was terrific, for Red was yelling at the top of his voice. Archie Glenthorne, too, was shouting, striving to awaken his companions, whilst he continued to struggle with the sands which hampered him. It was all very unfortunate.

At least, so it seemed at first; but if Nipper had only known it, his discovery by Red Harker was the finest thing which could have happened.

For Nelson Lee, stealthily approaching the bungalow, was instantly informed of the one fact he sought. He knew just where the boys were imprisoned. Nipper's voice and Archie's voice told him.

At the first sign of the commotion Lee fell flat on his face in the sand, and burrowed a little pit for himself, wriggling so that the sand closed over him. Lord Dorri-more and Umlosi, not far distant, did the same. For they knew that in a minute the beach would be alive with men. Farther back Mr. Beverton and Handforth & Co. were startled, for it seemed to them that discovery was inevitable. The alarm had been given, and they would be caught before they could put up a fight.

The burly figure of Doc Haynes appeared upon the

bungalow's veranda. He was half undressed, but the inevitable cigar was clenched between his strong teeth.

"What's wrong out there?" he bellowed.

"Say, Doc, you'd better come!" came Harker's yell. "It's these cursed kids! Some of 'em have broke loose!"

"Young fools!" said Haynes. "It won't do 'em no good. We'd better go along, Bill."

"Ay," said Bill Button, who had joined his chief.

Other men appeared, too, and from several quarters they converged upon the boys' prison. By this time Nipper was down—helpless in the strong grip of Red Harker. Some of those men passed within three or four feet of Lee and Dorrie, and the raiders were within an ace of being discovered. But luck was with them; they remained undisturbed.

Archie Glenthorne's shouts had by now aroused Travers and Watson and Christine, and these juniors fought their way out through the burrow. Coming upon Red Harker they leapt on him, and Nipper was freed. Harker went down, cursing. But it was a short-lived victory for the juniors, for Haynes and the other men were immediately on the scene, and the excited juniors were quickly grabbed and held.

"What's it's all about?" asked Doc Haynes, without a trace of anger. "Blame me, if you kids ain't got more spirit than I give you credit for! So you burrowed a way out, did you?"

"Yes; and if I hadn't met this man by accident, we should have escaped!" said Nipper defiantly.

"Mebbe you would," replied Doc Haynes, stroking his chin. "Seems to me I've got to take stronger measures with you. Well, we all make mistakes."

"Young swabs!" snarled Red Harker, wiping a smear of blood from his face. "Best thing you can do, Doc, is to rope 'em up! Just say the word, and I'll give this kid a dose of the whip!"

"Am I leader of this outfit, Red, or are you?" demanded Haynes, his voice suddenly changing from suave geniality to curt harshness. "There's going to be no whipping! I don't blame the kids for trying to escape. Good luck to 'em! If anybody's to blame, it's me—for taking it for granted that they wouldn't try no tricks." He turned to the disconsolate boys. "With just a bit of luck, kids, you'd have made it," he added, returning to his former tone. "Not as you'd got far. Open that door, Bill, and put 'em

back! Some of you other men had best fill in the burrow, too!"

"What's the good o' that?" growled Red. "They burrowed their way out once, and they can do it ag'in, can't they?"

"They can do it as much as they like, but it won't do 'em no good," replied Doc Haynes. "Understand that, kids? I'm goin' to put a guard of blackamoors round this hut, so it won't pay you to try any more of your mole-like stunts. As soon as you show your faces, you'll be seen."

The boys were silent, for they were sick with disappointment. They knew that they would never have another opportunity. Four men outside the hut—one against each wall—would be sufficient.

It took two of Haynes' men no longer than three minutes to heave the loosened sand into the burrow, effectively filling it. Meanwhile, Bill Button had opened the hut door, and the rest of the boys were ordered to push the excavated sand into the inner hole. They did so sullenly.

"Well, that's that!" said Haynes, as he emerged from the hut, and Big Ben shot the bolts. "One of you had best stay here until I get in touch with the blacks. I'll put a stop to these little games!"

There were five men with him, and they stood in a group for some moments discussing the situation. The rest of Haynes' men were sleeping in their own quarters, for they had not been aroused by the commotion.

Haynes looked upon the incident as a mere trifle, and, yawning, he threw the end of his cigar away.

"Time to turn in, boys," he said. "You'd best go and round up some blacks, Red—"

"Hands up, Haynes!" said a calm, steady voice. The modern buccaneer swung round, his jaw dropping. Oaths escaped the lips of his companions. As though from

nowhere, a figure had appeared, and there was a gleam of starlight on the metal barrel of an automatic pistol.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Haynes.

He saw other figures—five or six of them. They came up like ghosts of the night.

It was a complete surprise. Nelson Lee had passed the word to Dorrie, and Dorrie had managed to communicate the plan to Umlosi, Beverton, and Handforth & Co. And at the crucial moment they had swept up.

"Kind of sudden, ain't you?" asked Haynes, his own voice as steady as Nelson Lee's.

"Put 'em up, Haynes! You others, too!" ordered the detective. "We're fully armed—"

"Mebbe, but you ain't the sort to fire on white men!" interrupted Haynes.

He backed up his judgment by leaping like an animal upon Nelson Lee. It was a plucky act, for he had no guarantee that Lee would not fire. He took the biggest chance of his life, and he knew it. If Lee fired at such close quarters, he could not have missed.

Crash!

Whether Lee would have fired is a matter of conjecture—probably not. But Haynes got there first, and his massive fist crashed with terrific force against the detective's jaw. Lee went reeling back, dazed, his knees sagging.

It was the signal for a wild struggle. Red Harker, a callous murderer at heart, drew his own gun and blazed away ruthlessly. By a miracle, none of the bullets struck Nelson Lee or his companions; but one bullet opened a furrow in Bill Button's left arm, and Bill, with a bellow of rage, kicked the gun out of Harker's hand.

"What are you trying to do—kill me?" bellowed the mahogany-faced rascal.

The next second he was fighting desperately, for Handforth and Church were clawing at him. Umlosi, well in his element, had dashed in, and he grabbed Red Harker and whirled him aloft. Harker was screaming with fear, and suddenly he went shooting through the air, to thud down upon the sands and roll over. Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and Beverton were fighting hard—fighting with bare fists in the good, old-fashioned way. Even now the noise had not awakened the rest of the pirates, for they were sleeping in one of the shore huts, some distance away—sleeping heavily.

Everything happened at lightning speed. It was McClure who heard, through the din, the frantic shouting of Nipper from within the hut. For Nipper had heard his beloved guv'nor's voice. McClure dashed at the door, wrenched at the bolts, and shot them back. And out poured the nine St. Frank's juniors, bubbling with excitement, and eager to join in the fray.

They joined in to good purpose. Reinforcements at such a time completely turned the tables.

Recklessly the boys attacked. They hurled themselves at the enemy, and Doc Haynes, already fighting grimly with Lee, went down sprawling in the sand. The boys fell on him, holding him down.

It was the same with Bill Button and Fred Benson and the others. They stood no chance. They were overwhelmed. Harker was stunned and out of commission.

"Well done, boys!" panted Nelson Lee, his voice rock steady. "Anybody hurt?"

"No, sir!" went up a chorus.

"That's all you know!" growled Dorrie. "I think my left ear is missin' an' my nose is about twice its normal size. By glory, these beggars can fight, though!"

"Carry them into the shed!" said Lee briefly.

His mission was accomplished, and now his only thoughts were of escape. These favourable circumstances could not last for long. Haynes' other men or the blacks were certain to be on the scene soon. Such a commotion could not have escaped notice. The fight had been brief—it had not lasted more than a minute or two. At the moment the odds were in favour of Nelson Lee and his companions. It was up to them to take advantage of their good luck.

One after another, the helpless men were carried to the hut and bundled in. Haynes was already beginning to shout, yelling for his other men. Lord Dorrmore got home a right-hand punch which reduced Haynes to something like silence.

Slam!

The door was closed, and the bolts were shot home. Nelson Lee and his little force were masters of the situation.

Seizing the Yacht!

NEATLY as the tables had been turned, Nelson Lee did not make the mistake of counting his chickens before they were hatched. Doc Haynes and his immediate supporters were helpless—but there were others. Never for a second did Lee forget the hordes of dangerous savages which were so close at hand.

"Quiet, boys—quiet!" ordered Lee. "We're still in a



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tight spot, and we've got to get away. Are you all here? Answer your names calmly—one after another."

They were so excited that they were all talking at once; but Lee's crisp orders restored their balance. They could see one another clearly in the starlight—and they could see, too, that the rest of the beach was empty.

The roll-call was quickly made, and it was satisfactory.

The twelve boys who had been originally seized were now together again, and all answered their names. Nipper and Travers and the rest were overjoyed to see Handforth & Co. Everything seemed to be coming right.

"Now that we're here, why not make a clean do of it?" asked Dorrie, with his usual recklessness. "Dash it, we've captured the enemy camp! It's ours, Lee! Why not hold it?"

"Yes, yes!" panted Mr. Beverton, his eyes gleaming. "All these stores are mine, Mr. Lee! Thanks to you, we have won—"

"I beg of you to realise the true position," interrupted Lee almost sternly. "We have gained a temporary success, but I must warn you that it is only temporary. It is madness for us to think of holding the camp."

"But why?" demanded Dorrie. "Man alive, why is it madness?"

"If you were less excited, Dorrie, you would not ask that question," retorted Lee, with some impatience. "We came here to rescue these nine boys. We have succeeded—thanks, mainly, to their own activities. We have succeeded in our task, and now it is important that we should disappear—just as mysteriously as we came. For the moment, Haynes and his men are helpless. But have you forgotten that there are other men in this camp? Have you forgotten the Tao-Tao savages? What if the blacks sweep upon us, Mr. Beverton? How do you propose to handle them?"

"You are right, of course," muttered the explorer. "We could never deal with the blacks."

"Haynes has dealt with them, and he has made them understand that we are their enemies," continued Lee. "Even now it may be too late for us to escape. But we must try. We must get back by the route we know of, for there lies safety. Later, perhaps, we might be able to find our way to the northern beach. Once we are with the airship party we can take the vessel into the air, for Haynes will have no hold over us."

"Go ahead, old man—I stand corrected," said Dorrie humbly. "I was an arrant ass to talk of remainin' here. We've done our bit, so let's vamoose."

"Listen!" exclaimed Nipper suddenly.

They were instantly silent, and in the still night air, above the murmur of the surf, they heard ominous sounds. Not only the shouting of men—at no great distance—but the steady, sinister, rhythmic beating of tom-toms.

"Time we were off, I think," said Beverton, once again the level-headed strong man he actually was.

"The time has passed," said Nelson Lee. "Look! The jungle is alive!"

The few moments of peace were at an end. Like a town awakening, the island had become filled with movement—at least, all that part of the island which was within the view of the adventurous party. Doc Haynes and his imprisoned companions were yelling, thudding against the shack's sides, and generally making a great din. One or two figures were at last appearing from another shack farther along the beach; yet another figure—probably a Chinese cook—was standing on the bungalow's veranda. And behind, in the blackness of the jungle, flaring torchlights were to be seen. The Tao-Tao savages, in considerable numbers, were coming out into the open. Somehow or other they had received the alarm, and they were coming on to the beach to Haynes' help.

"Corks!" ejaculated Handforth in dismay. "That's done it!"

They were trapped. The seven valiants who had braved the dangers of the crocodile nest knew that there could be no return by that route. For between the beach and the "escape hole" there were hordes of cannibals! To fight their way through such a body of blacks was impossible.

Even the beach was becoming dangerous, for Haynes' other men, as soon as they realised that the situation was acute, would not hesitate to use firearms. It seemed that the adventure was to end in disaster. Not only were the nine boys to be recaptured, but their would-be rescuers captured with them!

"The boats!" said Nelson Lee crisply.

"Eh?"

"It's our only chance," continued Lee, moving rapidly down the beach towards the surf. "Come on—all of you! Don't waste a second."

"Guv'nor!" gasped Nipper, clutching at Lee's arm. "It's glorious to see you again like this. We've hardly had a chance to say a word to one another!"

"And there's no chance now, either," retorted Lee. "We've got to move."

"But what's the good of getting out in the boats?" asked

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Nipper. "They're only cockle-shells—we can't hope to take them out against the Pacific breakers! We should be swamped in no time."

"Never mind that—do as I say," ordered Lee almost harshly.

Crack, crack, crack!

Rifle-fire sounded in the rear, and men were shouting. The tumult of the gathering blacks became greater and greater; the torch flares were congregating, and scores of men were sweeping down from the jungle on to the beach.

Glancing back, Dorrie did not fail to see two or three figures racing for the store hut. Within a minute Haynes would be free.

Nelson Lee was the first to reach one of the boats; it was a small dinghy, and with a wrench he ripped the small anchor out of the sands. Eager hands helped him to push the boat into the phosphorescent waves which lapped the sands.

"Now, boys—in with you!" said Lee tensely. "No arguing—no wasting of time! In with you!"

They tumbled in without a word, some grabbing at the oars. Now that the die was cast they did not hesitate. Within a space of seconds the dinghy, loaded with boys, was pulling out across the lagoon. Other boys got into a second boat, with Dorrie in charge. There were one or two native canoes there, too, and Lee commandeered one of these. Soon a little fleet of small boats went splashing noisily across the placid lagoon.

But Lord Dorrimore could not understand Lee's object. It seemed pointless. For the moment, it was true, they were escaping the enemy. Out on the lagoon they were rapidly getting out of range of gunfire, and they had seized most of the boats. Only one or two fragile canoes remained, and it was impossible for Haynes to bring a strong fighting force out upon the water to engage the raiders.

But what then? To east and west the lagoon was girt by sheer rocks. There was only this single slip of beach in the centre. Out to sea there was the reef, cruel, merciless, with the Pacific rollers beating and churning.

If Lee was thinking of doubling back, it was a forlorn hope. No matter where they landed, the enemy could get there first.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" yelled Dorrie, with sudden understanding.

He was hot with excitement. Why had he not thought of it before? Lee, with his usual shrewdness, had seen the one possible course—and he was taking that course unhesitatingly. His boat was making a bee-line towards Mr.

Mitchell Beverton's graceful steam yacht, which lay placidly at anchor in mid-lagoon!

"Keep back, you other boats!" warned Lee, lowering his voice. "Leave this to me at first—and come on when I give the word."

In his canoe he was accompanied by Umlosi and Beverton. The latter was full of questions, full of hopes and fears, but he said nothing. He could only stare at the shoreline, where the commotion was now tremendous. Haynes was free, for sure, and he was organising a chase.

But Nelson Lee, in spite of the acuteness of the situation, was carrying on calmly, for he had a set purpose in mind.

The canoe swept towards the silent yacht—towards the starboard side, where a ladder, painted white, was clearly visible. Already Lee had detected a reddish glow at the deck level—unmistakably the glow of a pipe or a cigarette.

"Aho, there, Corsair!" boomed Nelson Lee, giving the steam yacht her name. "Are you swabs lively?"

"Ay, ay, boss!" came an immediate shout.

And the men and boys in the boats behind gasped with sudden understanding. For Nelson Lee's voice was an amazing impersonation of Doc Haynes' voice! In the darkness it was impossible for the men aboard the yacht to know that the man in the canoe below was not Haynes himself.

"There's trouble," continued Lee, with an oath. "Get ready for action, boys! How many of you aboard?"

"Only me and Slim," said the man at the rail. "How many did you expect to find? Slim's asleep, Doc. We wasn't expectin' no trouble to-night. What's wrong?"

"Plenty!" replied Lee, as the canoe grated against the ladder. "All right, Red. You come up after me. You, too, Bill."

"Wau!" murmured Umlosi, in ecstasy. "Is it not true that thou art a great and mighty leader, Umtagati?"

He was right on Lee's heels as the latter mounted the ladder. Not until Nelson Lee was at the top did the man on deck know that all was not as it appeared.

"Funny thing, Doc," he was saying, "I never knowed you was in the boat. I could ha' sworn I heard your voice on the beach, yellin', not a minute ago— Why, what the— By cripes!"

Crash!

At the last second the man had seen that he was not face to face with Doc Haynes. At a short distance it had been possible to see only dim figures, but at close quarters the starlight was strong enough for him to know that the man on the ladder was a stranger to him. In a flash his hand went towards a gun, but he had no chance of getting the weapon.

Lee's fist, like a sledgehammer, crashed into his face, and the fellow turned a complete backward somersault, hurtling down on to the deck with a jarring thud which stretched him senseless.

At the same moment, another man—a huge, beefy ruffian who answered to the name of Slim—appeared from the companion, near by. He had no chance of even seeing what was wrong, for Umlosi was upon him—and Umlosi carried him to the deck, and the African's strong fingers were at the man's throat, choking the first gurgle of sound.

"Don't hurt him, Umlosi," said Lee. "We want no bloodshed."

"Let me, at least, throw the dog into the sea, my master!"

"To the sharks? No!" replied Lee. "Knock him on the head, if you like, but don't do him any serious hurt."

Umlosi knocked him on the head—by the simple process of crashing that same head against the deck planks. By this time Lee was at the bottom of the ladder again, giving crisp orders to the occupants of the other boats. He knew, thanks to his earlier inquiry, that the Corsair carried only the two watchmen.

Lee had guessed that this would be the case, for there was no earthly need for Doc Haynes to keep a big force of men aboard the yacht. Lee had half expected to find, in fact, that the vessel was completely deserted. However, he had dealt easily enough with the two guards, and now he had the situation well in hand.

"Everybody come aboard—as quickly as you can!" shouted Lee. "But be careful—don't fall into the water in your eagerness. There are plenty of sharks about."

There was a great amount of activity nearer the shore. The Tao-Tao blacks, at Doc Haynes' orders, had produced numbers of canoes. These were now sweeping out, and it was likely enough that Haynes himself was in the leading boat.

But Lee was calm—and confident.

At last all the fugitives were aboard, and they were running about the decks breathlessly, glorying in their freedom. The refinements of this splendid little yacht made the boys feel that they were once again at home.

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"The ladder, Dorrie!" ordered Lee sharply. "Mr. Beverton, this is your vessel, and you know the ropes. We've got to get this ladder up at once."

"Leave it to me!" yelled Beverton.

He gave instructions. They all helped, and in a very short time the ladder was raised.

"Now," said Lee calmly, "we have not escaped, but we are in a position to defy our friend Haynes. Dorrie, you'll go to the bows, and station yourself there with two or three of the boys. Mr. Beverton, you'll take the stern. I'll guard the starboard side, and Nipper will look after the port side."

Within a few moments all the men and boys were at their posts. They had seized the yacht, and they were determined to hold it.

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