

"THE HOLD-UP AT PACKSADDLE!" THRILLING YARN OF WILD INSIDE.
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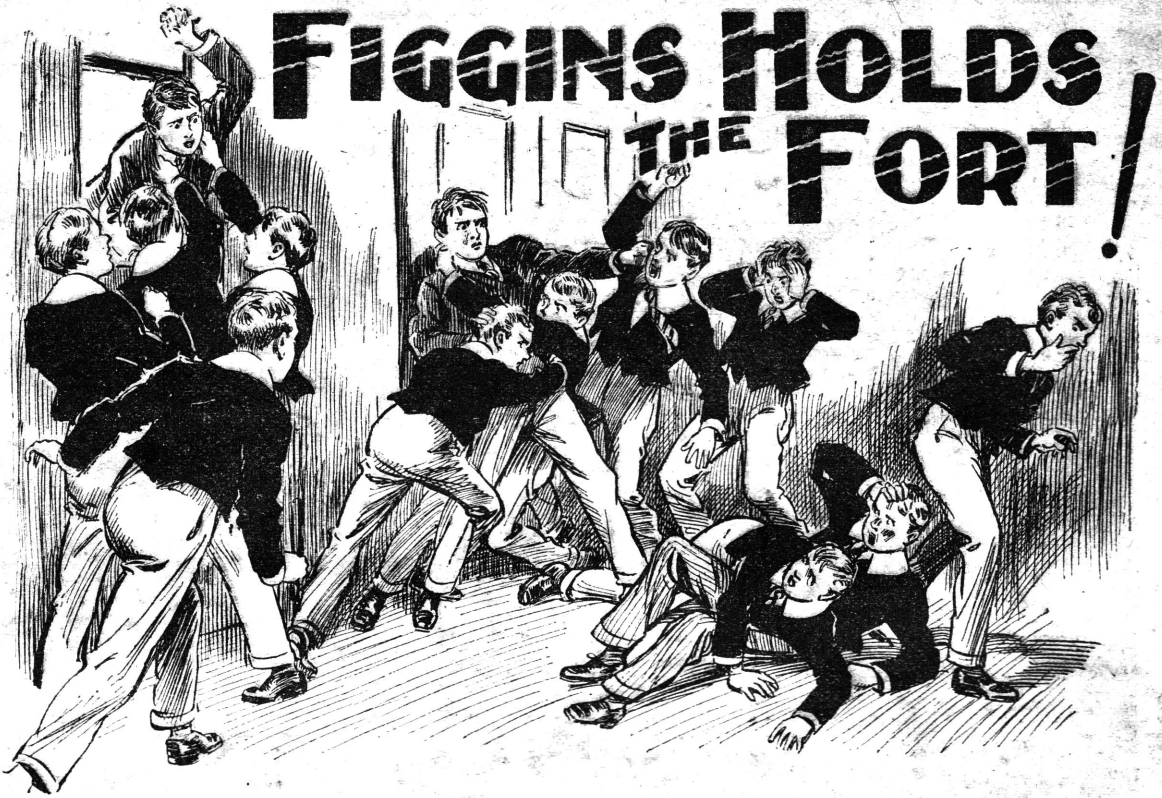
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*Water Welcome
for Taggles!*

REBELLION AT ST. JIM'S! READ THE GREAT SCHOOL STORY WITHIN.



CHAPTER 1. Too Thick!

"I'M not going to stand—"
"Sit down, then, Figgy!" said Fatty Wynn of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, pushing a chair towards the great Figgins, in perfect simplicity and sincerity.

Kerr chuckled softly. Figgins bestowed a glare upon Fatty Wynn, much to the astonishment of that plump youth. He had only meant to be kind. "You ass!" said Figgins. "I tell you I'm not going to stand—"

"Well, there's a chair."
"I'm not going to stand this any longer," said Figgins.

"Oh!" said Fatty Wynn. Figgins had just come into his study in the Fourth Form passage in the New House at St. Jim's. Figgins was looking very red and excited. He had his right hand tucked away under his left arm, and was squeezing it there, as if he were trying to alleviate some pain in it—as, indeed, he was. It was easy to see that Figgins had suffered under a very recent application of the cane.

Kerr had been doing algebra when Figgins came into the study. Fatty Wynn was thoughtfully busy upon cleaning out the last traces of a rabbit-pie from a large dish. Both suspended their occupations as Figgins strode in. Figgins & Co. were inseparable, and when one of them suffered the other two felt it almost as much as the sufferer himself.

"I'm not going to stand it!" went on Figgins. "It's getting too thick—Ratty's just given me two with the cane for whistling in the passage!"

"Rotten!" said Kerr.
"Beasily!" said Fatty Wynn.

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Figgins extracted his damaged hand from under his arm, and clenched it.

"I came jolly near giving him an upper-cut," he said.

Kerr looked alarmed.

"Steady on, Figgy! You can't punch a Housemaster, you know."

"I know I can't!" growled Figgins.

"That's the worst of it!"

"Better grin and bear it!" said Fatty

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*Mr. Ratcliff, the sour-tempered New House master, thinks he can rule his boys with a rod of iron. But the New House proves a "rod in pickle" for "Ratty"!*  
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Wynn. "Look here, Figgy, have some of these ham sandwiches, and forget all about it."

"Blow the ham sandwiches!"

"Some of the jam tarts, then," urged Fatty Wynn.

There was a fixed conviction in the fat Fourth Former's mind that jam tarts and ham sandwiches would cure any ills that flesh was heir to.

Figgins snorted.

"Blow the jam tarts! Look here, it's utterly rotten that we should have to stand it! Ratty is going too far, and he'll jolly soon get to the limit!"

Kerr nodded.

He fully agreed with Figgins, and sympathised with him. He was willing to agree that it was too "thick," and that Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, was getting dangerously near the limit.

But he did not see what was to be done. That was the difficulty in the situation.

Mr. Ratcliff was Form-master of the Fifth, and if ever a Form-master was detested Mr. Ratcliff was by the Fifth Form at St. Jim's. But the Fifth were seniors, and Mr. Ratcliff's unpleasant temper could not have full play in that Form. It was not in accordance with the traditions of St. Jim's for seniors to be caned by Form-masters or Housemasters. In a very serious case of a delinquent in the Upper School requiring that correction he had to be sent in to the Head.

Mr. Ratcliff did not like that; he preferred to do the punishing himself. Mr. Ratcliff was a sour-tempered man, and had never been known to risk spoiling the child by unduly sparing the rod.

All that he could not give to the Fifth he generously bestowed upon the juniors of his House. As Housemaster of the New House he had under his authority all the juniors who belonged to that House—Shell, Fourth, and Third.

And of all the New House juniors the three whom Mr. Ratcliff disliked the most were Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn.

Whether it was the independence of their spirit, or the fact that they were responsible for more mischief than any dozen fellows in the House, or that they were specially distinguished in keeping up the warfare with the School House—whatever the reason, Mr. Ratcliff was always "down" upon Figgins & Co.

They were used to that. But lately matters had gone from bad to worse. Mr. Ratcliff's sour temper had caused trouble in the Fifth Form. He had taken it upon himself to cane Lefevre of the Fifth. And Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth, bursting with indignation

—BAR OUT THEIR TYRANT HOUSEMASTER! EXCITING LONG STORY.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD**

CHAPTER 2.

An Easy Conquest!

"**H**A, ha, ha!"
Figgins & Co. roared.
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sat upon the study carpet in a little cloud of dust, blinking at the New House juniors.
"Bai Jove!" he gasped. "Ow!"
Figgins pointed a long, lean forefinger at the swell of the School House.
"Now you buzz off!" he exclaimed.
"And don't come here jawing at fellows who are down on their luck! Seat!"

"Ow! Weally, Figgins—"
"There are two ways of getting out of this study," Kerr remarked—"the door and the window. Which do you prefer, Gussy?"
"Ow!"

Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, glaring with wrath. He groped for his eyeglass, and jammed it into his eye, and stared at the three chums of the New House with immeasurable scorn.

"I wegard you as wank wottahs!" he exclaimed. "I came here to—"

"Do a loudspeaker turn!" said Figgins. "Yes, I know what you were going to do, but we're fed-up! Seat!"

"I wefuse to entah into any discush with you! I shall shake the dust of this study ffrom my feet!" said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"You'll have to shake some of it from your trousers, too!" said Figgins, with a chuckle.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy did not deign to reply to that remark. He retreated into the passage, and slammed the door behind him with a slam which showed that he had, for the moment, quite forgotten the repose which is supposed to stamp the caste of Vere de Vere!

The New House juniors chuckled.

"Well, that's some relief," said Figgins. "When a chap's fed-up, it's wonderful how it lets off steam to bump somebody else! It was really very kind of Gussy to come along just then. He's the right man in the right place!"

And Kerr and Wynn grinned. Arthur Augustus, in the passage, dusted down his elegant trousers, and snorted with wrath. Three youths came down the passage from the end study and stopped to regard the swell of St. Jim's as he was thus engaged. They were Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, the three new boys in the House—sometimes called the New Firm, because they had, to some extent, set up in opposition to Figgins & Co.

Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen had come to St. Jim's on County Council scholarships, but they were not, on that account, inclined to take a back seat in the life of the old school. Quite the reverse, in fact. They had made themselves very prominent.

"Hallo, my son!" said Redfern. "Have you been in the wars? Wherefore this thushness?"

"Weally, Wedfern—"

"Trouble with Figgins?" asked Lawrence sympathetically. "Figgys has just been through it in Ratty's study, you know. Ratty has been on the war-path lately."

"I came ovah here to do Figgins a good turn, and I have been tweeked with gwoss disvespect!" said Arthur Augustus. "I was considahwin' whether I ought to go back into the study and thwash all thwee of them."

The New Firm chuckled joyously.

"That's exactly what you ought to do!" said Redfern.

"Just the thing!" said Owen.

"We'll hold your coat!" chimed in Lawrence.

D'Arcy reflected.

"Upon the whole, pewwaps I owe it to my personal dig to inflict some chastisement upon the wottahs!" he said.

"Of course you do! Go in and win!"

Redfern opened the door of Figgins' study. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn looked round. Lawrence gently pushed D'Arcy into the study.

"You chaps made your wills?" asked Redfern.

"Eh?"

"If not, you'd better buck up. D'Arcy will hold off for a few minutes while you make your last wills and testaments," Redfern said.

"Weally, Wedfern—"

"Oh, buzz off!" said Figgins.

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'," Figgins!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, taking off his elegant Eton jacket and handing it to Redfern to hold. "I am also goin' to give Kerr and Wynn a feahful thwashin'!"

"One each?" asked Figgins humorously.

"Pway don't wot! Put up your hands!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned back his cuffs and advanced upon Figgins & Co. The three New House juniors regarded him with grinning faces. D'Arcy, in spite of his elegant ways, was an athletic junior, and he would have been a good match for any one of them. But it was hardly within his powers to tackle all three. But the swell of St. Jim's never stopped to count odds.

"Put up your hands, you wottahs!"

Redfern took out his watch.

"I'll time you," he remarked. "I'll ref, too. One-minute rounds and ten-minute rests. Gussy will need 'em!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Wedfern—"

"Time!" shouted Redfern.

Arthur Augustus rushed to the attack. Figgins & Co. exchanged a wink, entering into the spirit of the thing. Arthur Augustus smote Figgins on the chest, and Figgins fell heavily upon the carpet.

"Get up, you wottah!" shouted D'Arcy, warming to the work.

Figgins groaned.

"I—I c-can't!"

Bump!

Kerr guarded D'Arcy's heavy drive, but he fell all the same, and lay groaning beside Figgins. Fatty Wynn rolled over before D'Arcy's knuckles reached him, and groaned more than the other two.

Arthur Augustus regarded the three fallen juniors in astonishment. He had great faith in his own powers as a pugilist, but he was amazed at this sudden and complete collapse of three of the greatest fighting-men in the New House at St. Jim's.

"Get up, you wottahs! I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"You've gone and done it!" gasped Figgins. "Oh! Ow!"

Redfern began to count.

"One, two, three, four, five—"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"Six, seven, eight, nine—done!"

"Ow! Ow!"

"Gussy wins!" said Redfern solemnly, putting away his watch.

"Bai Jove!"

"Counted out!" said Lawrence.

"Hail, Cæsar, the doomed to die

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at such an insult to his great dignity as a senior, had appealed to the Head. And the Head had spoken very plainly to Mr. Ratcliff on the subject—so plainly that fellows who saw him come out of Dr. Holmes' study afterwards declared that he was quite green.

After that unpleasant experience, Mr. Ratcliff could not venture to use the cane again in the Fifth Form Room.

And with great injustice—though he never wanted for a plausible excuse—Mr. Ratcliff had visited his wrath upon the juniors.

Figgins & Co., as usual, bore the brunt of it; but there was hardly a junior in the New House who had not suffered during the last few days.

Mr. Ratcliff had, as a matter of fact, suffered what amounted to a defeat in the Fifth Form Room. The whole school knew it, and the whole school grinned over it. Ratty's autocratic methods were not popular. And the juniors of the New House rejoiced at the setting-down of their Housemaster as much as the Fifth themselves. And Mr. Ratcliff knew it, and he had taken measures to nip their rejoicings in the bud.

He had succeeded in that.

Lines and canings, canings and lines, were the order of the day, and the fellows had grown to dread the sight of Mr. Ratcliff's bilious face and greenish eyes.

A feeling of revolt was rising in the breasts of the New House juniors, and yet the impossibility of "backing-up" against a Housemaster held them in check.

"Something's got to be done!" exclaimed Figgins.

"All serene!" said Kerr. "But what?"

"I don't care what. I'm getting fed-up!"

"I think the whole school is fed-up," Kerr remarked thoughtfully. "The seniors can stand it, because he has to let them alone. But the Shell and the Fourth are ready for anything, I think. But what can be done?"

"Pway excuse me, deah boys—"

It was the sott voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form. Figgins glared at the School House junior. At the present moment he was not feeling in an amiable mood.

"I disappwove vewy stwongly of your wotten Housemastah," Arthur Augustus D'Arcy explained. "I have come ovah to tell you fellows—"

"You let our Housemaster alone," said Figgins, rather unreasonably, considering how he had just been speaking of Mr. Horace Ratcliff. "What the dickens do you mean?"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"I wegard you as an ass, Figgys—"

"Oh, bump him!" exclaimed Figgins, exasperated. "It's bad enough to have Ratty bothering us, without having a School House boulder jawing at us. Bump him! It will let off steam, anyway!"

"Bai Jove, I—"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy backed to the door, but it was too late. Three pairs of hands were upon him, and he was whirled off the floor, and bumped down upon the carpet with a bump that made the dust rise.

salute thee!" exclaimed Redfern. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I believe those wottahs are wottin', and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you know—— Ow! Oh—— yawoop!"

A hand from the floor had caught Arthur Augustus by the ankle, and in a twinkling he bumped down beside Figgins & Co. Then the three fallen heroes who had been counted out rolled over upon him and sat upon the elegant form of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The study rang with a yell of laughter. "Ow, ow! You uttah wottahs! I will give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Redfern & Co. yelled. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made a terrific effort and dragged himself up, with Figgins & Co. clinging to him, gasping with merriment. The four of them crashed heavily against the table, and it was hurled flying. Papers, inkpot, pens, and jam tarts crashed into the grate.

Crash!
Bump!
The struggling juniors rolled over on the carpet again. Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen staggered against the wall, shrieking.

"Bai Jove! Welsease me, you wottahs! Ow!"

"Boys!"

It was a sharp, acid voice. A tall, thin man, in gown and cap, was looking into the open doorway of the study, his thin, sour face dark with anger. The struggle in the study ceased as if by magic. Figgins & Co. and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scrambled in dismay to their feet, to face the cold, angry eyes of Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House.

CHAPTER 3. Six for Six!

MR. RATCLIFF looked at the juniors, and the juniors looked at Mr. Ratcliff.

Dismay had fallen upon the study. Any master but Mr. Ratcliff would have taken no notice of a little horseplay in a junior study, unless it became really serious; but Mr. Ratcliff was not like the other masters at St. Jim's.

He was much given to finding fault, and he had a prim and exact mind. He hated any kind of noise or irregularity. He did not like boys at all, but his ideal of a boy was the kind that approximated most to a machine. A boy's business in life, according to Mr. Ratcliff, was to learn his lessons meekly and sit down and be good.

"What does this mean?" said Mr. Ratcliff sharply.

"Ahem!" said Figgins.

"Bai Jove!"

"What is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?" asked Mr. Ratcliff. Figgins' eyes flashed.

"It was only a little fun, sir," he said. "And I don't see anything disgraceful in it, for one."

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes glittered.

"Then we differ very much in our views of the matter," he said acidly. "I regard this as disgraceful hooliganism D'Arcy, return immediately to your own House. I shall complain to your Housemaster of your coming here and making a disturbance."

"Weally, sir——"

"Not a word!"

"But, Mr. Ratcliff——"

"Leave the House at once!" said Mr. Ratcliff.

Ratcliff sternly. "Otherwise, I shall forget that you are under Mr. Railton's authority, and cane you myself."

"Oh, vewy well; but I wegard it as vewy unweasonable not to listen to a chap's explanation, sir," said D'Arcy. He quitted the study.

The six New House juniors were left to the mercy of their Housemaster. They were all proud of being New House boys, and all agreed to regard the New House as Cock House at St. Jim's. But just then they would have been very pleased to be under Mr. Railton, of the School House, rather than their own Housemaster.

"You will follow me to my study," said Mr. Ratcliff, turning on his heel. Figgins bit his lip.

"What for?" he asked. Mr. Ratcliff looked back angrily. "To be punished for making this disturbance, Figgins," he said.

"We weren't doing any harm, sir." "We didn't mean to, sir," said Redfern.

"Certainly not!" said Kerr. "You may not consider it harmful to turn a junior passage into a bear garden," said Mr. Ratcliff satirically,

"but our views differ on that point. As for you, Redfern, Lawrence, and Owen, you must learn that you cannot introduce the hooliganism of a Board school into this college."

The three fellows flushed scarlet. "You have no right to say that, sir," said Redfern.

"What?"

"You heard what I said, sir." Mr. Ratcliff gritted his teeth.

"I shall not tolerate your low-born insolence, Redfern. I shall punish you severely for what you have said. Follow me, at once!"

And Mr. Ratcliff strode away, with rustling gown. The half-dozen juniors in Figgins' study looked at one another irresolutely.

"He was a rotten cad to say that to you, Reddy!" said Figgins. "But it's just like Ratty to hit below the belt."

Redfern's brows knitted in a frown. "I've a jolly good mind not to go," he said.

"I suppose we must." "He's a rotten cad, and an outsider!" "But he's got the whip hand," said Lawrence. "We've got to knuckle under."

The juniors looked gloomily at one another. It was, as Figgins declared many times, getting altogether too thick. But what were they to do?

There was a step in the passage, and Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, looked frowning into the room.

"You kids are wanted in Mr. Ratcliff's study!" he said. "He's waiting for you. What do you mean by not going?"

The juniors were silent. "Come on," said Monteith, not unkindly. "You'll only get it worse for making him wait, you know. Come on!"

"I—I suppose we've got to," muttered Figgins between his teeth.

And the prefect herded the juniors out of the study and downstairs to Mr. Ratcliff's room.

Mr. Ratcliff was standing before his fire with a cane in his hand, an extremely unamiable expression upon his never amiable face.

"Why did you not come immediately?" he demanded.

Figgins made a desperate plunge. "Because we think there's a lot too much caning lately, sir, and too many lines!" he exclaimed, taking his courage in both hands, so to speak. "We think that it's time to draw a line, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff seemed petrified. "What?" he ejaculated. "What are you saying, Figgins?"

"We think it's rotten, sir——"

"Hold your tongue, you young fool!" muttered Monteith.

Monteith was something of a martinet himself, and not very popular among the juniors, but he fell very far short of Mr. Ratcliff's standard of severity.

"Hold out your hand, Figgins!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

He could not defy his Housemaster. All custom, all traditions, all experience was against such a thing.

Mr. Ratcliff brought the cane down with a spiteful swish, and Figgins gave a sharp cry, though he had not meant to make a sound.

"The other hand!" Figgins did not make a sound again. He set his teeth hard to keep it back, as he received six cuts upon his hands alternately. He was very pale when the infliction ceased.

Then the others went through it. Mr. Ratcliff's arm was quite tired when he had finished. Six juniors stood in the study, pale and red by turns, gasping with pain.

Mr. Ratcliff laid down the cane and pointed majestically to the door.

"Go!" he said. "And remember, unless order is kept in this House, you will be visited with more severe punishment. Go!"

The juniors went without a word. And a few minutes later, Mr. Ratcliff, having disposed of his victims, crossed the quadrangle to the School House to call upon Mr. Railton and complain of the heinous conduct of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form.

CHAPTER 4. The Cut Direct!

TOM MERRY & CO. were standing on the steps of the School House as Arthur Augustus came in.

The Shell fellows stared at the dusty and dishevelled swell of St. Jim's in amazement.

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

"Been arguing with Figgins & Co?" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothin' to laugh at, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus, jamming his eyeglass into his eye and turning it reprovingly upon the Terrible Three of the Shell. "I have been treated with gwoss diswespect."

"You look it!" grinned Manners.

"I went ovah to the New House to suggest to Figgins a way of puttin' his wotten Housemastah into his place, and we had a wow instead," D'Arcy explained. "It's wotten! The silly asses didn't listen!"

"Wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man regards it," said Manners sympathetically.

"Yaas, wathah! The worst of it is that old Watty caught us wovin', and he's comin' ovah to the School House to complain to Mr. Wailton."

"That's bad!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's wotten to be wagged for twyin' to help fellows, and then to be complained of to a chap's Housemastah," said D'Arcy. "Of course, I don't care for Watty's opinion; he's a wank outsiders. But I respect Mr. Wailton vewy much, and I don't want to have him down on me."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy entered the School House and went up to his study in the Fourth Form passage to

look for a clothes brush, which he greatly needed.

Blake, Herries, and Digby, his chums in Study No. 6, were there.

They stared at him.

"Been over to the New House?" chuckled Blake.

"Yaas."

"Had a row?"



"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus as Figgins & Co. rolled with him over the floor. "Welaase me, you wottahs!" "Boys!" It was a sharp, acid voice which the juniors knew only too well. The angry face of Mr. Horace Ratcliff, the New House master, was looking in at them from the doorway!

"Yaas."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause whatevah for wibald laughtah," said D'Arcy stiffly. "This is what comes of twynin' to help fellows. Where's my clothes bwush?"

"Shall I give you a brush down, Cussy?" asked Blake sympathetically.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Blake brushed down the unfortunate D'Arcy. Clouds of dust spread from D'Arcy's attire. He gasped and coughed.

"Bai Jove, it's wotten! Pway buck up, deah boy. I expect to be called into Mr. Wailton's study ewevy minute."

"Why, what's the row?" asked Digby.

"Watty's comin' ovah to complain."

"Beast!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kangaroo of the Shell put his head into the study as the brushing down was finished.

"Mr. Railton wants to see Gussy," he said. "Ratty's with him, and he looks as if he's been drinking vinegar."

"Vewy well," said D'Arcy resignedly. "The wottah!"

"Better not tell him that!" grinned Kangaroo.

"Well, you're not so dusty now," said Blake, ceasing to brush.

"Thank you, deah boy!"

Arthur Augustus, restored to something like tidiness, went down to his Housemaster's study.

Mr. Ratcliff was standing there, and Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, was at his table, looking considerably worried. For the sake of keeping up appearances, if for nothing else, Mr. Railton was bound to treat Mr. Ratcliff with courtesy, and listen to his complaints with patience. But his

patience was very much exercised by the petty and unending complaints of the New House master.

Arthur Augustus did not look at Mr. Ratcliff as he entered. He cut the New House master dead, so to speak, and fixed his eyes upon his own master.

"You sent for me, sir," he said.

"Yes, D'Arcy," said Mr. Railton.

"Mr. Ratcliff complains that you went over to the New House and caused a disturbance in Figgins' study."

"It is quite a mistake on Mr. Watcliff's part, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff frowned.

"Do you deny that you went to the New House, D'Arcy?" he asked.

D'Arcy did not reply.

"Do you hear me, D'Arcy?" thundered the New House master.

Arthur Augustus kept his eyes straight before him, and did not turn his head, or answer. He might have been quite deaf.

Mr. Ratcliff's bilious face assumed a kind of peculiar purple hue.

"Will you answer me, boy?"

Silence.

Mr. Ratcliff turned to Mr. Railton, his face distorted with anger.

"This is the kind of impertinence I am expected to tolerate from the boys of your House, Mr. Railton!" he said, his voice almost choked with passion.

Mr. Railton was frowning now.

"D'Arcy, why do you not answer Mr. Ratcliff?" he asked severely.

"I am here to ansawah you, sir," said D'Arcy firmly.

"You must not be impertinent to Mr. Ratcliff."

"No, sir."

"Why did you go to the New House?"

"To speak to Figgins and his fwiends, sir."

"Ah! You did not intend to make any disturbance?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"You see, Mr. Ratcliff, D'Arcy did not intend any harm," said Mr. Railton, with a propitiatory glance towards the master of the New House.

The latter frowned darkly.

"I have already severely punished Figgins and the rest for the disturbance," he said. "It was provoked by the presence of a School House boy, and I must, in justice, ask for the punishment of D'Arcy, who was struggling with the boys there when I saw him."

Mr. Railton caressed his chin thoughtfully. His own opinion was that Mr. Ratcliff was giving altogether undue prominence to a youthful lark, but he did not like to say so. He was in a very difficult position, for he had a very strong objection to punishing a boy for little or nothing, and at the same time, he did not see how he could refuse Mr. Ratcliff's demands.

"Does D'Arcy declare that the fault was wholly with Figgins?" demanded Mr. Ratcliff. "Do you say that, D'Arcy?"

Silence.

"Answer me, boy!"

Silence.

Mr. Ratcliff took a step towards the junior, his hands working. D'Arcy was giving him the cut direct, and ignoring his existence, in blissful carelessness of the fact that he was a senior master of St. Jim's.

"D'Arcy, answer me!" said Mr.

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Railton hastily. "Do you lay the blame of the disturbance upon Figgins?"

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Very well! You will take a hundred lines, D'Arcy, for being concerned in a disturbance in the New House," said Mr. Railton. "I think that will meet the case, Mr. Ratcliff."

Mr. Ratcliff almost choked.

"What—what? A hundred lines? I have severely caned the boys of my House who were concerned in the disgraceful scene!"

"I have no comment to pass upon the way you govern the boys of your House, sir."

"I request that D'Arcy be caned severely."

Mr. Railton shook his head.

"I hardly think that the matter is so serious," he said. "I have punished D'Arcy, and there the matter may drop. You may go, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir. Thank you, sir."

And still ignoring the existence of Mr. Ratcliff, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy walked out of the study.

Mr. Ratcliff clenched his hands hard. It really looked for a moment as if he would have liked to strike the master of the School House.

"Mr. Railton, I must insist upon that boy being severely punished."

"You have no right to insist upon anything of the sort, sir. I must be allowed to manage my own House in my own way," said Mr. Railton coldly. "I do not interfere with the management of your House, whatever my opinion of it may be."

And the Housemaster's tone indicated pretty plainly that his opinion of the management of the New House was not a high one.

Mr. Ratcliff gritted his teeth.

"I demand that D'Arcy be caned."

"I do not consider it necessary."

"You mean you refuse?"

"If you force me to put it so plainly, Mr. Ratcliff, yes—I refuse."

Mr. Ratcliff clenched his hands.

"It is this leniency," he said, in almost a hissing voice—"it is this easiness with the boys, that causes the riotous behaviour of the juniors of your House, and creates insubordination and insolence."

The School House master flushed.

"I have never noticed those faults in the boys of my House, neither will I listen to such comments upon their conduct," he said. "Mr. Ratcliff, I think that this interview had better cease."

"You refuse to punish D'Arcy severely?"

"I certainly refuse to do that."

"Very well! I regard your conduct as calculated to cause disorder in the school, Mr. Railton. I regard you as aiding and abetting insubordination and insolence towards another Housemaster," said Mr. Ratcliff, his voice trembling with rage.

"I am sorry you should think so. I hope you will change your views when you are calmer."

"I am quite calm now," said Mr. Ratcliff, though he did not look calm by any means. "Before I go, I shall tell you what I have long thought—that this House is a disgrace to St. Jim's, owing to the scandalous leniency of its master."

Mr. Railton rose to his feet.

"Will you kindly leave my study, sir?" he asked politely.

Mr. Ratcliff looked at him. The big Housemaster towered over him, and Mr. Ratcliff somehow felt unequal to carrying the argument further. He

left the study, and slammed the door behind him. Mr. Railton sat down at his table again with a sigh.

"If Mr. Ratcliff does not change his tactics there will be a revolt in the New House after the Head has gone on his holidays," the School House master said to himself. "Boys cannot be driven like animals. The man is a fool. I should very much like to tell him so."

Etiquette forbade any such plain speaking on the part of the School House master. He was glad that Mr. Ratcliff had gone; the scene had come perilously near a violent altercation, which both masters would have been very sorry for afterwards.

Mr. Ratcliff walked down the passage to the door of the School House. The Terrible Three were still standing on the steps, and they glanced at Mr. Ratcliff as he came out, and raised their caps. They did not respect Mr. Ratcliff—few fellows at St. Jim's did—but they knew what was due to a Housemaster's position, and their manner was respectful enough.

There was nothing in it to find fault with, but Mr. Ratcliff was not in a mood to be reasonable. He fancied that he detected a grin on Tom Merry's face—a grin of derision—and as he passed the chums of the Shell he halted for a moment, and boxed Tom Merry's ears.

The hero of the Shell was knocked spinning, his ears burning and singing. Mr. Ratcliff walked on, perhaps a little sorry for what he had done, for he had broken every law at St. Jim's, written and unwritten, by that hasty act. For although masters were allowed to cane juniors, such brutal and dangerous acts as boxing their ears were not permitted, and, in any case, Mr. Ratcliff had no right to touch a School House boy.

The thing was so utterly outrageous that Tom Merry could hardly believe that it had happened for a moment.

He stood rubbing his ear, and gazing blankly after the receding form of the New House master.

"My hat!" muttered Manners, while Monty Lowther whistled softly.

Tom Merry's eyes blazed.

"You cad!" he shouted after Mr. Ratcliff.

"Hold on, Tommy!" muttered Lowther hurriedly.

But Mr. Ratcliff affected to be deaf, and walked on towards his own House at a quick pace. He entered the New House in a mood that made it extremely unsafe for any junior to come into his path, as Pratt of the Fourth and Thompson of the Shell discovered to their cost!

CHAPTER 5.

Gussy's Great Idea!

"WELL?"

Blake, Herries, and Digby jerked out that monosyllabic query simultaneously as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy returned to Study No. 6.

The swell of St. Jim's smiled serenely. "It's all sewene, deah boys."

"Not licked?"

"Wailton is a bwick!" said D'Arcy. "I've got a hundred lines, but it was worth that to pull old Watty's leg. I wufused to speak to him in Mr. Wailton's study. I tweated him with contempt."

Blake roared. "Ha, ha, ha! I wonder he didn't treat you with a thick ear."

"I should have wufused to be tweated with a thick ear," said D'Arcy loftily. "Watty was in a feahful wage. But

"So this is what Jones minor was reading—"

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it's all wight. I am only sowwy that owin' to Figgins bein' such a silly ass I shan't be able to help him."

And Arthur Augustus settled down to do his preparation.

It was about ten minutes later that there was a tap at the door of the study, and Figgins came in. Arthur Augustus put up his monocle and surveyed Figgins with a decidedly disapproving air.

"Just looked in to say we're sorry we got you into a row, Gussy," said Figgins. "That's all. I hope Ratty didn't chivy your Housemaster into caning you?"

"Not at all, deah boy."

"I'm glad!" said Figgins.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's aristocratic countenance assumed a more friendly expression.

"Pway sit down, Figgy, deah boy," he said. "As you're here, I may as well explain to you what I came over to your study for."

"Gussy's got a first-chop, double-back-action idea to lend you fellows for nothing," said Jack Blake. "He makes no charge for it."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I hear your giddy Housemaster is giving you beans," said Blake sympathetically. "If we had a Housemaster like old Ratty—"

"You'd stand him the same as we do," said Figgins gloomily. "Don't talk out of your hat!"

Blake laughed.

"Well, I dare say we should, unless we adopted Gussy's brilliant idea," he remarked.

"I wathah considah that my ideah will help Figgy out of his pwesent difficult posish," said D'Arcy.

"What's the scheme?" asked Figgins curiously. "If you can suggest any dodge for cutting old Ratty's claws I'll be jolly well obliged. The Head's going away this evening to stay for a week, and we all know that Ratty will be worse than ever when he's gone. I believe he'll come down on seniors as well as juniors as soon as the Head's out of the way, and if he keeps on as he's started there'll be a giddy revolt in the New House. What's your wheeze, Gussy?"

"A wound wobin, deah boy!"

Figgins stared.

"But what's the good of a round robin?" he asked, puzzled.

Arthur Augustus condescended to explain.

"You see, if you chaps wemonstwate with Watty he'll only get worse, and the wingleadahs will get feafuhl thwashings."

"What-ho!" said Figgins.

"But if you all sign a wound wobin you can all sign your names in a wing, and no one will be more conspicuous than the othahs, you know. Watty won't be able to jump on ewevy giddy boundah in the House, and you can give him a general expression of feelin' on the subject without so much wisk. And when he's had a manifesto showin' him that ewevy juniah in the New House weghards him as a tywant, I should wathah think that he would pause and welflect."

"By Jove!" said Figgins. "That's a jolly good idea. We shall have to stop Ratty somehow, and a round robin from the whole House is just the thing. It may make Ratty understand that he's getting near the limit."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I am much obliged to you, Gussy, and I'm jolly sorry we bumped you when you came over, if that is what you came over for. But, of course, we

couldn't be expected to know that you had a good idea."

"Of course not!" agreed Blake, with a chuckle. "Gussy has never been suspected of anything of the sort."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"I'll jolly well buzz off and get the thing going," said Figgins, with growing enthusiasm. "We'll get it done to-night, and I shouldn't wonder if it stops Ratty making an ass of himself. Anyway, if there's trouble he can't say that he wasn't warned."

"Yaas, wathah!"

And Figgins, looking a little excited, hurried out of the study. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye and surveyed his grinning chums in a very lofty way.

"Figgins is a wathah sensible chap, affah all!" he remarked. "He knows a good thing when he sees it."

"And he can seize a good thing when he knows it," Blake remarked.

"Oh, pway don't be an ass!" Figgins hurried downstairs and out of the door of the School House. The Terrible Three were still there, and Tom Merry was rubbing his ear, which was not yet reduced to its natural hue.

"Here's Figgins," said Monty Lowther. "Let's bump him for having such a rotten Housemaster."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners.

Figgins held up his hand in a sign of peace.

"Pax!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, rats! Look here—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "Let Figgy alone. He has more to stand from the cad than we have."

"Ratty been going for you?" asked Figgins.

"He's given me a thump on the napper," said Tom Merry, flushing. "I can't go to the Head about it, but I'll make the bounder sit up, somehow."

"He is a worm," said Figgins frankly, "and he's going to be worse when the Head's gone, I'm afraid."

"The Head's gone already," said Manners. "He drove away to catch the six o'clock train."

Figgins whistled.

"Then Ratty will begin to let things rip, you bet. He's senior Housemaster."

"I wonder you chaps over there can put up with his rotten temper," said Tom Merry.

"We can't," said Figgins.

"There have been barrings-out in schools for less than Ratty does. He ought to be brought to his senses somehow."

"A barring-out is a big order," said Figgins. "But it may come to that yet. It will, I think, unless Ratty takes some notice of the round robin."

"The what?" demanded the Terrible Three, with one voice.

"It's Gussy's idea," said Figgins. "We're going to get up a round robin in the New House, and all the fellows will sign it, and it will show Ratty which way the wind blows. If he's got any sense he'll stop his rotten tricks."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"More likely to hand out lickings," he said.

Figgins' jaw became very square.

"Then there will be trouble," he said.

"Well, I wish you luck, old fellow."

Figgins nodded, and walked away in the dark towards the New House.

"A round robin," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I'm afraid Figgins won't find it work. It would be quite in Ratty's line to cane every fellow who signs it."

"Then there will be trouble," said Lowther.

"Yes, rather! And goodness knows how it will end. One thing's certain," said Tom Merry. "If there's trouble, we're going to back up Figgins & Co. all along the line."

And Manners and Lowther said: "Hear, hear!" very heartily.

CHAPTER 6.

The Round Robin!

F IGGINS burst into the study in the New House with great excitement. His chums, Kerr and Wynn, were at work.

"Got it!" shouted Figgins.

"Eh?"

"I've got it—the idea! We're going to put an end to old Ratty's tricks!" exclaimed Figgins. "It was Gussy who suggested it—Gussy! That's what he came over here for when we bumped him. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you know."

"What's the idea?"

"A round robin, signed by every junior in the House, telling Ratty that we're fed up," said Figgins. "It will stop him, if anything will."

Kerr whistled.

"It will mean trouble, I think," he said.

"There will be trouble, anyway, if Ratty doesn't draw a line."

"Yes, that's true enough."

"I think a round robin ought to stop him," said Figgins confidently. "It will have to be signed by every junior in the House—all the Fourth and the Shell, at any rate. No good having the fags in it."

"It's not a bad idea," said Fatty Wynn thoughtfully. "I suppose even Ratty can't cane the whole House?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he did," said Kerr.

"The House wouldn't stand it," said Figgins. "I know he wouldn't dare to try it if the Head were here, anyway."

"But the Head isn't here," said Kerr. "Every chap in the House is saying that old Ratty will get thicker and thicker as soon as the Head's gone."

"That's just what I want to try the round robin dodge for, to warn him off in time," said Figgins.

"Well, it might work," Kerr admitted.

(Continued on the next page.)



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"We'll try, at any rate. You begin to draw up the paper, and I'll rope in the fellows," said Figgins. "Redfern and his lot will sign like a shot, I know, and the rest will follow suit. I'm off!"

And Figgins whirled out of the study, to rouse up the New House juniors to the fray. By the time he returned to his study a crowd of fellows were there, and more and more were coming along the Fourth Form passage.

Thompson of the Shell and Pratt of the Fourth came in with Figgins, and they seemed equally enthusiastic. French, Redfern & Co., and Jimson, Dibbs and Craggs were already there; the crowd was growing thicker and thicker, and the accommodation afforded by Figgins' study was taxed to its utmost limit.

The idea of the round robin had evidently caught on with the New House juniors. All of them were smarting under a sense of injustice; all of them were ripe for revolt, if revolt had only been practicable. And a round robin to the New House master was the first step on the road to resistance.

It might be the last step, too, if Mr. Ratcliff took a sensible view of the matter. If he did not— But it was useless to think about that yet. Sufficient for the hour was the wheeze thereof.

Kerr had a sheet of paper before him, and a pen in his hand. Fatty Wynn was leaning over one shoulder, and Redfern over the other, giving advice. Round the table the other fellows were crowded, looking on, and also giving advice. And Figgins' study at that moment bore a strong likeness to the celebrated Tower of Babel, where confusion of tongues first fell upon mankind.

"Pitch it to him straight, Kerr!"

"Give him the facts!"

"Tell him we're fed-up!"

"Point out that we all think he's a cad and a rotter!"

Figgins pushed his way through the crowd and joined Kerr. He looked at what had been already written, and called for silence, and read it out:

"Whereas the undersigned juniors of the New House object to the excessive punishments which Mr. Ratcliff has seen fit to hand out lately—"

"Hear, hear!"

"They venture to call upon Mr. Ratcliff, with all respect, to stop it."

"Good!"

"That's plain enough."

"Ought to put in something about being fed-up," said Thompson.

"Can't use slang in a round robin to a Housemaster," said Kerr, with a shake of the head.

"Say we've had enough of it, then."

"Tell him we won't stick it."

"Order!" said Figgins. "Mustn't make the thing cheeky. We don't want to give Ratty the slightest excuse for getting his back up about this."

Redfern grinned.

"I fancy he will get his back up, all the same," he remarked.

"Well, if he gets his back up over a perfectly reasonable and respectful round robin, he must get his silly back up, that's all," said Figgins.

"Hear, hear!"

"Going to shove in any more?" asked French.

"No; I think that will do," said Kerr. "Sign your names all round the paper in a circle, so that he can't possibly detect which signed first. He would be only too glad to have somebody to pick on."

"Yes, rather!"

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"I'll sign first, all the same, as I started this wheeze," said Figgins; and he picked up the pen and dipped it in the ink.

"G. Figgins," in a sprawling hand, adorned the paper the next moment. Then Kerr and Wynn signed, and then, in order, came the rest. Fellows as they signed their names retreated from the study to make room for newcomers, and there was a constant procession in and out of Figgins' study.

In an hour's time every junior of the New House who belonged to the Fourth or the Shell had written his name upon the paper.

"Now it's only got to be taken to old Ratty," said Figgins.

And he surveyed with great pride the paper, which looked somewhat like a rough representation of a spider's web.

"Who's going to take it?" asked Redfern.

There was a pause.

That was not an easy question to answer. The junior who presented such a paper to the Housemaster was certain of a caning, whatever happened to the rest of the signatories.

"Ahem!" said Lawrence.

"Might leave it on his table when he's out of the study," Owen suggested.

Figgins brightened up.

"Jolly good idea!" he exclaimed.

"Make sure that Ratty isn't in his study, that's all," Kerr remarked.

"You bet!"

Figgins went downstairs with the paper in his hand. He caught sight of Mr. Ratcliff at the door of Monteith's study, evidently talking with the prefect within. The coast was clear. Figgins hurried to Mr. Ratcliff's study and entered, and laid the paper upon the Housemaster's table. He laid a paper-weight upon one corner of it, in case it should be whisked away, and glanced over it with a grin.

Then he turned to the door.

Just as he stepped towards it a thin form in rustling gown blocked up the doorway.

Figgins stopped dead. Mr. Ratcliff gazed at him with cold, searching eyes.

"Figgins, what are you doing here?"

CHAPTER 7.

The Result of 'the Round Robin'!

FIGGINS did not reply. He stood staring in dismay at Mr. Ratcliff. He knew that the Housemaster, whose eyes were everywhere, must have seen him come to the study, and have followed him there.

Mr. Ratcliff's little stony eyes glittered as he fixed them upon Figgins. He was wondering what the junior was doing in the study, and he meant to know before Figgins departed.

"What are you doing here?" he repeated harshly.

"I—I came—" stammered Figgins.

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes fell upon the paper on the table, held down at the corner by the paper-weight. He made a stride towards the table, removed the paper-weight, and picked up the peculiar manifesto that had been signed with so much enthusiasm in Figgins' study. He started as he looked at it, and his lips set in a thin line, and his eyes gleamed as they ran over the paper.

He read through the declaration and glanced over the crowd of signatures. Then he looked at Figgins again.

"Figgins, what is this?"

"If you please, sir—" began Figgins.

"What is it? What does it mean?"

"If you please, sir, it's a round robin."

"It is what?"

"A round robin, sir."

"Who wrote this paper out?"

"It was signed by all of us, sir."

"Who wrote it?"

"One of the chaps, sir."

"His name?"

Figgins was silent.

"Was it you who wrote this insolent message, Figgins?"

"No, sir."

"Who did?"

No answer.

Mr. Ratcliff scanned the paper, his eyes quite green now. He knew the handwriting of every boy in the House, and it did not take him long to ascertain that it was Kerr of the Fourth who had written the paper, though the signatures were in various hands.

"Kerr wrote this?" he said, looking at Figgins again.

Figgins did not reply.

"And it was signed by all the boys whose names are here?" asked Mr. Ratcliff.

"Yes, sir."

"Very well!" said Mr. Ratcliff. "You would like an answer, no doubt, to this piece of unheard-of insolence?"

"Yes, sir. We should like an answer."

"You shall have it, Figgins!" Mr. Ratcliff took the paper in his thin fingers and tore it across, and then across again. "Every boy who has signed this paper will be caned!" He threw the fragments of the paper into the fire. "That is my answer, Figgins! Every boy in this House who belongs to the Fourth or the Shell will be caned to-morrow morning after prayers! You can take the message to them from me! Every signatory to this paper will receive a dozen strokes with the cane, a thousand lines, and will have his half-holidays stopped for two weeks!"

"Oh, sir!"

"Now you may go, Figgins!"

"If you please, Mr. Ratcliff—"

"Not another word! Leave my study!"

Figgins left the study. He closed the door quietly behind him and walked away. On the stairs were a crowd of juniors waiting for him. They hurried eager questions at Figgins as he appeared.

"Did he catch you, Figgy?"

"What did he say?"

"Licked?"

Figgins did not reply till he had reached his study. He was pale and very grim. The crowd of juniors followed him to the study and thronged it.

"What's happened?" demanded Redfern.

"Has he read the paper?" asked Kerr.

"Yes."

"What did he say?" shouted a dozen voices.

Figgins' jaw set squarely.

"He says that every fellow who has signed the paper will be caned to-morrow morning after prayers—a dozen licks each!"

"Oh!"

"Anything else?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"A thousand lines each, and gated for a fortnight!"

"My hat!"

"Gated for a fortnight, a thousand lines each, and a dozen licks!" said Redfern, in a thoughtful way. "That's coming it rather strong, even for Ratty!"

"Jolly strong!" said Thompson of the Shell.

"The round robin is a bit of a fiasco!" grinned Dibbs, rubbing his

hands as if in anticipation of what was to come.

Figgins' eyes flashed.

"It will be rotten, certainly, if we stand it!" he said.

"I suppose we've got to stand it," remarked French.

"I shan't, for one!"

"What will you do?"

Figgins' eye ran over the crowd. Figgins was in deadly earnest, and the anxious juniors awaited breathlessly for him to speak.

"There's only one alternative," said Figgins slowly. "We've got to knuckle

Figgins. "We'll all refuse to be punished, in the first place! If we stand together, shoulder to shoulder, you know, he can't touch us. And if he starts the prefects on us, we'll bar him out, and hold out, too, till the Head comes back!"

"Phew?"

"Who's game?"

"All of us, I think," said Lawrence. "Hands up for the barring-out if Ratty doesn't come to his senses!"

Every hand went up.

"That settles it!" said Figgins. "We all refuse to be caned or gated for signing the round robin, and if Ratty

ceived orders to present themselves in Big Hall for a public caning.

As a rule, only punishments inflicted by the Head were carried out in Big Hall, but now that Dr. Holmes was away, Mr. Ratcliff had appointed it so.

The whole school was to be assembled to witness the punishment.

At the appointed time, the School House prefects saw that all juniors belonging to the School House were in their places in Big Hall.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, and Darrell, and Rushden, and the other prefects of the School House, were looking very serious. But they did as Mr.



As Mr. Ratcliff, in an angry temper, strode from the School House, he fancied that he saw a grin of derision on Tom Merry's face. He halted and brought his hand round with a hard smack on the junior's ear! Tom was knocked spinning, his ear burning and singing.

under to Ratty all along the line, or else—"

"Or else what?"

"Or else kick."

"How can we kick?"

"There's only one thing—a barring-out!"

"Phew!"

"I say, Figgy—"

"A barring-out! My hat!"

Figgins looked very grim.

"If we're going to get scared and knuckle under, we shouldn't have sent in the round robin," he said quietly. "After that, we've got to go on. We've got to show Ratty that we're not slaves! Now the Head's away he will get worse and worse, and we've had enough of the iron rod bisney! I vote that we don't stand it! Will you fellows back me up?"

"Yes, rather!" said Redfern promptly.

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll back you up, Figgy!"

"Then, if you all follow my lead, we'll stand out against this," said

carries the matter any farther, we bar him out! And as it's pretty certain it will come to that, we'd better get ready to-night!"

"Hear, hear!"

And that evening no preparation was done by the juniors of the New House. They were preparing for other things.

CHAPTER 8.

No Public Caning!

MORNING dawned upon St. Jim's.

To all appearances, it dawned as many other mornings had dawned. The old quadrangle was bright in the sunlight. The rising-bell clanged as usual to wake the St. Jim's fellows, and in the School House and the New House, they came down to breakfast as usual.

But there was suppressed excitement in all the Lower Forms, especially in the New House.

After prayers, Figgins & Co. had re-

Ratcliff bade them: As senior House-master, Mr. Ratcliff had the right to order an assembly of the school, and Mr. Railton did not oppose the step.

The seniors of the New House Fifth and Sixth came in in their places. So did the fags of the Second and the Third.

But in the ranks of the Fourth and the Shell there were gaps.

The New House fellows belonging to those two Forms were conspicuous by their absence.

Mr. Ratcliff came into the Hall by the door at the upper end, which was used by the Head on such occasions.

The master rustled in, and glanced over the assembly, not, for the moment, noting the absence of fifty boys among so many.

There was a breathless hush in the hall.

"My hat!" Tom Merry whispered to Manners and Lowther. "Nothing could have happened better than this to suit Figgins. They've got the whole House to themselves now!"

Monty Lowther grinned.
"Figgins won't let a chance like this slip by," he murmured.

"No fear!"

"Silence!" called out Kildare.

There was breathless silence. Everybody in the Hall, with the exception of Mr. Ratcliff, was perfectly aware that the "round robin" brigade had not come in, and they wondered what "Ratty" would say when he made the discovery.

"Monteith!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Send forward all the boys whose names I have given you."

Monteith looked uncomfortable.

"They—they're not here, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff jumped.

"What! Not here?"

"No, sir," said Monteith.

"What do you mean, Monteith?"

"They haven't turned up, sir."

There was a faint chuckle among the crowd of boys. Monteith's explanation was certainly simple enough.

"Monteith, I warned you that the whole school was to be present," said Mr. Ratcliff, frowning. "Did you not make it known?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then Figgins and the rest have deliberately refused to obey my order?"

"Apparently so, sir."

"This is—is incredible!" ejaculated Mr. Ratcliff. "You are sure that they had orders to come here, Monteith?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"I cannot understand it. It is incredible that they should deliberately disobey the orders of their Housemaster!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff.

Monteith was silent.

"Go to the House at once, Monteith, and bring them here—immediately!" said Mr. Ratcliff commandingly.

"Very well, sir."

Monteith walked down the Hall and disappeared out of the great doorway. Mr. Ratcliff stood waiting upon the platform, frowning darkly, his thin hand clutched tightly upon his cane. There was a breathless pause. That Figgins & Co. would not come was pretty certain. What would happen after that was still upon the knees of the gods.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to Blake. "Old Watty looks awfully watty now, you know."

Blake chuckled.

"He'll look more ratty still when Monteith comes back," he said.

"What-ho!" murmured Lumley-Lumley. "I guess Figgys will hold out."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Silence!" said Kildare.

And the muttering of voices died away.

But there was a buzz again as Monteith came into the Hall, his face very grave. Every eye was upon him as he walked up the Hall.

"Monteith, where are the juniors?"

"They refuse to come, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff seemed petrified for a moment.

"What, what!" he ejaculated. "What did you say, Monteith?"

"They refuse to come, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff stared at him blankly for a moment. Then he descended from the dais, and, with his gown rustling behind him, and his cane clutched in his hand, he strode from the Hall.

There was a clamour of voices behind him as he strode out. He had gone to fetch Figgins & Co.

"To the Form-rooms!" called out Kildare.

But no one appeared to hear him.
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The whole school crowded out of the doors into the sunny quadrangle—to see the fun.

CHAPTER 9.

The Barring-Out!

F IGGINS stood at the door of the New House, looking into the quad. His face was a little pale, but it was very determined, and his eyes were gleaming with a resolute light.

The juniors had returned an emphatic "No!" to Monteith's order to them to go to Hall at once and take their punishment.

The fight had begun.

And Figgins and his loyal henchmen were ready for it. The assembling of the school in Big Hall had given them the chance they wanted. The School House—the original building of St. Jim's—contained the Form-rooms and the school Hall—the New House was simply a boarding-house.

When the school was assembled the New House was deserted save for the maids below stairs. And so the assembling of the school, which Mr. Ratcliff had intended as a vindication of his authority before all St. Jim's, had given the rebels their chance.

No one remained in the New House excepting the rebels and the servants. And the latter had been gently but firmly marched out into the quad. The cook and the maids, much to their astonishment, had been told that a barring-out was intended, and that their room would be more highly prized than their company by the garrison of the New House, and, in spite of objections, they had been marched out of the House.

Only Figgins and the rebels remained. Every window had been closed and fastened, and every door had been locked and bolted, with the exception of the big door on the quadrangle.

There the rebels were massed, looking out, ready to shut the door and bolt it, and hold parley from a window if required.

There was a buzz as the lean figure of Mr. Ratcliff was seen striding across the quadrangle.

"Here he comes!"

"Better fasten the door," said Kerr. "He will try to get in, and we don't want to be driven into actually laying hands on a master if we can help it."

The advice was too good not to be followed.

The big door was jammed shut and the bolts were shot before Mr. Ratcliff was within a dozen feet of the steps.

There were windows in the Hall on each side of the door, and Figgins stood at one of them, looking out, as Mr. Ratcliff approached.

The New House master strode up the steps and smote the front door with a sounding blow from his cane.

"Open this door at once!" he shouted.

There was no answer from within.

Crash, crash!

The cane rang upon the door and split with the force of Mr. Ratcliff's furious blows, and he was left with only a fragment in his hand.

But the door did not budge, and there came no reply. Mr. Ratcliff, almost choking with rage, glared round him and caught sight of three or four faces at the window. He turned towards the window.

"Figgins!"

He was in so great a rage that he could hardly articulate the name.

"Yes, sir?" said Figgins from the open window as respectfully as he could.

"Open this door at once, Figgins."

"I am sorry, sir, but I cannot."

"What, what!"

"We delivered you an ultimatum last night, sir—"

"What, what!"

"There has been too much caning and too many punishments of all kinds, sir, in this House lately," said Figgins firmly. "We can't stand it, sir."

"What, what!"

It seemed as if the enraged and astounded man had lost the power of speech, excepting for the ejaculation of that monosyllable.

"It's a barring-out, sir!" Figgins explained.

There was a pause. Mr. Ratcliff tried to calm himself, and the juniors, crowded at the window, watched him in silence. Their hearts were beating hard; resistance to constituted authority was new to them, and strangely thrilling and exciting. And no one knew how it would end.

"Figgins," said Mr. Ratcliff at last. "I order you to open that door!"

"I cannot, sir!"

"You—you refuse to obey me—me, your Housemaster?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will be flogged and expelled from this, Figgins."

"I don't stand here alone, sir!"

"You are the ringleader—"

"We're all in this together, sir," said Kerr. "We all stand by Figgins, and whatever punishment he gets we shall get, too."

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Hear, hear!"

Mr. Ratcliff gritted his teeth.

"Open that door at once!"

"We don't open that door until our demands are granted, sir."

"Your—your demands!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff. "You don't dare to make demands of your Housemaster?"

"Everybody has a right to ask for justice, sir."

"Hear, hear!"

"Justice!" yelled Mr. Ratcliff. "I will give you justice! If you do not immediately return to your duty I will cane every boy in the House and stop all holidays for the whole term, and all the ringleaders shall get expelled from the school!"

"Then you can go ahead, sir. We are holding the fort!"

"No surrender!" yelled Redfern.

The cry was taken up.

"Hurrah! No surrender!"

"Figgins, Redfern, Kerr, you are the ringleaders! I know that well! You shall be expelled from the college. I will cane all the others. Now, open the door at once!"

"Good offers—any takers?" murmured Redfern.

And there was a chuckle.

Mr. Ratcliff came towards the window. It was not much above the level of his head, and he was speaking to Figgins face to face now. The Housemaster's face was white with rage; Figgins' was calm and deadly determined.

"I order you, Figgins, to admit me to the House."

"Do you grant our demands, sir?"

"Figgins!"

"We demand an amnesty, sir," said Figgins, rather proud of that word.

"That's a general pardon for all concerned in the bisney." It was probable that Mr. Ratcliff knew what an amnesty was quite as well as Figgins did, but Figgins was anxious to make it quite clear. "Nobody is to be punished, and all punishments already ordered are to be rescinded. And there are to be fewer lickings in the future."

"Hear, hear!"
 "Those are our terms, sir. Do you accept them?"
 "Certainly not!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "No!"
 "Then we cannot admit you to the House, sir."
 "If you do not immediately open the door, Figgins, I shall call upon the prefects to effect an entrance by force."
 "We shall resist, sir."
 "You will not dare to resist the prefects, you impudent young scoundrel!"
 "You will see, sir."
 "I order you—"
 "We cannot obey your orders, sir, unless you play the game," said Figgins.
 "Hear, hear!"

That was too much for Mr. Horace Ratcliff. He made a spring at the window and drew himself up on the sill, with the evident intention of forcing his way into the House. The juniors recoiled for a moment; the habit of discipline is strong, and if Mr. Ratcliff had been wise he would never have done anything to weaken it. But Mr. Ratcliff was not wise. If he had been wise in time there would have been no trouble in the New House at St. Jim's; but the trouble had come now, with a vengeance.

Mr. Ratcliff's head and shoulders were through the open window when Figgins rallied. He rushed to repel the attack, with the rest of the juniors backing him up. Many hands—whose hands could hardly be ascertained in the confusion—grasped Mr. Ratcliff, and he was pitched bodily back into the quadrangle.

Bump!
 "Oh!" gasped Mr. Ratcliff.
 The window was slammed and fastened.

CHAPTER 10.
The Attack!

MR. RATCLIFF scrambled up. He had not been much hurt by his fall, but he had been very much shaken up, and he was spluttering with rage.

Figgins in the House, breathed hard. The rebellion had started now with a vengeance!

Some of the rebels were looking a little scared, but not so Figgins & Co. They were grim and determined.

"We've shown Ratty that we mean business," said Kerr.

"Hear, hear!" yelled Redfern.
 "I wonder what he will do now—"
 "The prefects!" said Lawrence.
 Figgins laughed.
 "We're not afraid of the prefects," he said.

From the windows of the New House the rebels watched anxiously.

Mr. Ratcliff made no second attempt to enter the window. He had already sufficiently compromised his personal dignity, and on rising after his fall he had found the whole school looking on. Across the quadrangle, within easy view, the whole School House crowd was gathered to watch. Even the masters seemed to have forgotten that it was more than time for the fellows to be in the Form-room.

Mr. Ratcliff limped away.
 "Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Figgins & Co. are going it now, and no mistake, deah boys!"

"Good luck to them!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Bravo, Figgins!" roared Blake.

And the cheer was taken up.
 Mr. Railton came out of the School House.

"Silence!" he exclaimed.
 The cheering died away. Mr. Railton was too popular a master for anyone to wish to show him the slightest disrespect.

"The boys will now go into their Form-room," said Mr. Railton. "All School House boys go in at once!"

"Very well, sir."
 The juniors went in reluctantly. They would greatly have preferred to see the siege of the New House, but it was hardly likely to be over before morning lessons finished. There would yet be plenty to see.

The Fourth and the Shell, and the Third and the Second crowded in to their Form-rooms. But there were many vacant places in the Fourth and Shell rooms. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, noted down the absentees with a frowning brow. Mr. Linton did not quite approve of Mr. Ratcliff, but he approved still less of Shell fellows staying away from classes. A third part of the Shell boarded in the New House, and every one of them was with Figgins.

In Mr. Lathom's room—the Fourth—the gaps were even more numerous. Every Fourth Former who belonged to the New House was with Figgins & Co. Little Mr. Lathom shook his head solemnly, and began the instruction of his diminished class. But his words fell upon inattentive ears. The juniors were listening for sounds from the quadrangle.

In the quadrangle Mr. Ratcliff was not idle. He called upon the prefects of St. Jim's to help him; but he found, to his surprise, that the prefects were by no means enthusiastic in backing him up.

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, was the least enthusiastic of all.

"The Fifth and Sixth will go into their Form-rooms," said Mr. Ratcliff. "All the prefects, however, will remain here—I shall want them. Mr. Railton, you will perhaps be so good as to take charge of the Fifth as well as the Sixth this morning, as I am likely to be busy for some time."

"Certainly!" said Mr. Railton.
 "You, Kildare—"

"Excuse me, sir," said Kildare quietly. "I am not a New House prefect, and I do not consider that I am called upon to interfere in a purely New House matter."

Mr. Ratcliff glared.
 "You will obey my orders, Kildare!"
 "I do not wish to interfere here, sir."
 "It is not what you wish, but what I wish, that matters," said Mr. Ratcliff acidly.

"I appeal to you, sir," said Kildare, turning to Mr. Railton.

Mr. Railton was frowning.
 "I shall not order the prefects of my House to assist you, Mr. Ratcliff," he said. "I do not think it is required of them to do so."

Mr. Ratcliff gritted his teeth.
 "You are aiding and abetting this extraordinary rebellion, then?" he said.

"Nothing of the sort. But I shall certainly not interfere in it, or allow any boy under my orders to interfere," said Mr. Railton calmly.

"That is the same as aiding them."
 "I do not think so, and since you force me to speak, I must remark that I do not think things would have come to this pass, Mr. Ratcliff, if you had exercised a little more tact and a little more humanity."

(Continued on the next page.)



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MONKEY-LIKE.

Vegetarian: "Ever since I've given up eating meat I have had a desire to climb to great heights."

Bored Friend: "And look for nuts, I suppose?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Johnson, 104, Marlborough Road, Dagenham, Essex.

* * *

HIS REWARD.

Cyclist: "Yes, it's taken me two weeks to learn to ride my machine."

Pedestrian: "And what have you got for your pains?"

Cyclist: "Liniment!"
 Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Cross, 29, Vaudrey Crescent, Congleton, Cheshire.

* * *

ON THE WATCH.

Lowther: "Why is a sentry like a minute?"

Gussy: "Bai Jove, I give that one up, deah boy!"

Lowther: "Because he is always on the watch"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to J. Bennett, 54 Leominster Road, Wallasey, Cheshire.

* * *

WAITING FOR THE FUN.

A man was sitting on a seat in a park, and near by, on the grass, sat a boy.

"Why don't you go and play with the other boys?" asked the man of the boy.
 "Oh, I'm just waiting to see," said the boy.

"To see what?"
 "You, when you get up. That seat was painted this morning!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Howe, 2, Albert Cottages, Bedford Place, Harrogate, Yorkshire.

* * *

FLOWERY!

Lady (to gardener): "And how is my Sweet William this morning?"

Gardener: "Oh, I'm all right, madam—but call me Bill!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Wheeler, Limecroft, Portsmouth Road, Milford, Surrey.

* * *

AN APT ANSWER.

Tom: "Why is the inside of a chicken-ru whitewashed?"

Ted: "To stop the chickens pecking the grain out of the wood!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to G. Stow, 16, Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford.

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"Sir!"

"School House prefects will go in at once," said Mr. Railton.

And the School House prefects went in, and the School House master followed them.

Mr. Ratcliff opened his mouth as if to say some very bitter things, but he closed it again with the unpleasant words unuttered. It was useless for him to infringe upon Mr. Railton's orders.

The New House prefects remained at the orders of their Housemaster. There were four of them, and they did not look very pleased with their prospects.

Mr. Ratcliff turned to them. By this time only Mr. Ratcliff and his four prefects remained in the quadrangle. The rest of the school, with the exception of the rebels of the New House, had gone in to classes.

"What do you want us to do, sir?" asked Monteith.

Mr. Ratcliff pointed to the New House.

"You must make an entrance there," he said.

"If they try to keep us out, I don't see how we're to get in, sir," said Baker.

Mr. Ratcliff frowned darkly.

"It is not for you to argue, Baker, but to obey my orders," he said. "Go and do as I tell you at once!"

"Come on!" muttered Monteith.

And the four Sixth Formers made their way unwillingly enough to the New House. They were very angry, though more with Mr. Ratcliff than with the junior rebels.

"They're coming!" said Redfern from the window.

"How many?"

"Four—Monteith, Baker, Wood, and Sefton, the prefects."

"Four!" grinned Figgins. "And we're nearly fifty."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Defiant faces crammed the windows as the prefects came up. Monteith & Co. were looking and feeling somewhat irresolute. They hardly knew what to do. Unless the juniors would open the doors when ordered to do so, the prefects did not seem to have much chance.

And they were not likely to obey prefects when they had disobeyed a Housemaster.

The New House could not, like Jericho of old, be taken by sound alone.

Monteith rapped on the window.

"Open the door at once, Figgins!"

he exclaimed. "There's been enough of this foolery—you'd better chuck it!"

"Sorry, Monteith, it can't be done!"

"You'd better do as I tell you, Figgins!"

"Has Ratty accepted our terms?"

"No, you young ass!"

"Then we're holding the fort."

"Look here, if you don't let us in you'll soon have to open the door and come out for your meals!" said Baker.

"You can't live without eating."

"We're fixed all right for grub, Baker," said Figgins cheerfully, "and we'll starve sooner than surrender—that's flat!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Some of you will be expelled for this," growled Wood.

"We're sticking together, old man, and we're not going to surrender till it's promised that no one shall be punished at all."

"Look here," said Sefton, "will you let us in?"

"No!"

Monteith and his three companions backed away. Mr. Ratcliff came striding up, his face purple with rage.

"They won't let us in, sir," said Monteith.

"Break in, then!"

"I don't see—"

"You will not be responsible for any damage done," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I order you to break in the windows and effect an entrance."

"Very well, sir."

The Hall windows were the most accessible in the New House. The assailants gathered there. Figgins & Co. were ready for the attack. Figgins had posted a sentry at every window on the ground floor, ready to give the alarm if there were a surprise attack, and that left him ample forces for the

defence. Fellows had gathered up cricket stumps and pokers, and stuffed socks as weapons, and they meant to use them if necessary. It was soon evident that it would be necessary.

Crash!

Fragments of glass fell into the House.

The window had been shattered by a heavy blow from without.

"They're coming!" yelled Lawrence.

"Line up!"

Through the smashed window came a hand to unfasten it. Figgins raised a cricket stump, but he did not like to hit the defenceless hand. Instead, he grasped it round the wrist and held it fast. It was Monteith's hand, and Monteith's other fist lashed in and caught Figgins upon the nose.

Biff!

Figgins gave a fearful yell and staggered back and sat upon the floor, with a red stream bursting from his damaged nose.

Monteith, with a herculean effort, dragged himself through the broken window and jumped down into the House. Baker came clambering in after him.

CHAPTER 11.

The Defeat of the Prefects!

REDFERN gave a shout. Figgins was sitting on the floor, dazed, his hand to his nose.

"Collar him!"

There had been a momentary pause among the rebels but it was only momentary. They followed Redfern fast. Seven or eight juniors threw themselves upon Monteith and bore him to the floor with a crash.

Five or six more fastened upon Baker as he came clambering through the window.

Sefton and Wood, outside, ran along to the next window, and there was a crash of breaking glass.

Two heads came in at the broken window.

"Collar them!"

"Sock it to them!"

"Sit on that cad!"

Monteith was struggling desperately, hitting out with all his strength. Redfern had fallen, his eye closed by a heavy blow—Kerr had dropped across him—Owen was reeling away. But the juniors did not falter. Five or six were grasping Monteith, and he was rolling over again, and they held his arms and legs, and Fatty Wynn sat on his chest, and the head prefect of the New House gasped helplessly.

Baker, in the window, was held by every pair of hands that could get at him. Baker was a popular prefect, and the juniors would have been sorry to hurt him; but they did not intend to let him get in to the aid of Monteith.

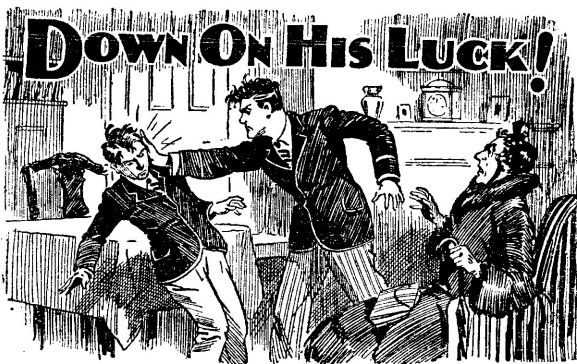
At the other window Wood had rolled in. But he was instantly pinioned by half a dozen fellows and dragged down, and the captors sat upon him promptly and held him pinned down in spite of his furious struggles.

Sefton was less lucky. Sefton was a bully, and the juniors were not sorry for a chance of paying off old scores. Pratt of the Fourth rushed to repel him with a cricket stump, and it rang across Sefton's head, and he dropped back into the quadrangle with a terrific yell.

He did not return to the attack. He sat in the quad rubbing his head.

"Let me gerrup!" yelled Monteith.

"You're a prisoner of war, my son,"



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said Redfern, rubbing his eye, but grinning good-humouredly. "Take it calmly."

"You young scoundrels!"

"Get a rope, somebody, and tie him up!" said Figgins grimly. "Now then, Baker, are you coming in or going out?"

"I'm coming in, you young sweep!" gasped Baker.

"You'll come in on your head, then."

"And go out on your neck!" grinned Lawrence.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Baker was dragged in by so many hands that he had no chance of fighting. He was bumped on the floor, and as many juniors as could find room sat upon him. He could do nothing more than gasp for breath, and he found some difficulty in doing even that with the weight of the juniors upon him.

"Tie the bounders up!" gasped Figgins.

There was cord in plenty. Monteith and Baker were tied up with as much cord as if they had had as many legs as centipedes.

Wood was struggling in the grasp of the juniors, but the numbers were too great, and he was quickly tied up like the others.

"Got 'em!" gasped Redfern.

"Hurrah for us!" yelled Kerr.

Three of the prefects were bound prisoners, gasping on the floor, and the fourth could be heard outside, groaning and threatening vengeance.

Figgins ran to the window. Mr. Ratcliff had advanced to it.

"You shall pay dearly for this, Figgins!" he said, between his teeth.

"Rats!" said Figgins.

Mr. Ratcliff jumped.

"What—what?" he ejaculated.

"And many of 'em, sir!" said Figgins cheerily. "You've driven us into this, and it's all your fault. Rats!"

"Rats!" yelled the rebels from the windows.

Mr. Ratcliff almost staggered.

"Chuck those giddy prefects out!" said Figgins, turning away from the window. "We don't want 'em here. We can't afford to keep prisoners of war. Chuck 'em out!"

"Look here——" began Monteith.

"Sorry—no time!"

"You young rascal——"

"Chuck him out!"

Monteith, bound as he was, was lifted bodily through the broken window. The fragments of glass cut and tore his clothes, and he did not venture to struggle, lest his skin should suffer in the same way.

He was dropped into the quad on his feet, and lay there panting and gasping.

Baker was dropped out in the same way, and then Wood. Sefton had taken good care not to attempt to enter a second time.

"Beaten them!" cried Fatty Wynn.

"Hear us smile!" shrieked Redfern.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Outside, Mr. Ratcliff gazed in speechless rage at the helpless prefects. He motioned to Sefton to untie them, and Sefton obeyed. The dishevelled, bruised, and breathless seniors staggered to their feet.

"Get in again, at once!" said Mr. Ratcliff, finding his voice.

The prefects exchanged glances.

"It's no use," said Monteith.

"It can't be done, sir."

"There's too many of them," said Wood.

"I order you——" began the New House master.

Monteith's face set obstinately.

"It's no good ordering four chaps to

JUST MY FUN

Monty Lowther Calling



Hallo, everybody! It's far-fetched. What is? An egg from China. "Can you tell me how to make a hen coop?" asks Figgins. No, but I can show you how to make a chicken run! What's that? Did I ever see a saw-fish? No, but I once saw a sea-fish! What's the difference between a dromedary and a hippopotamus each riding a bicycle? None—neither of them can do it! "What's the best way to beat a Scottish football team?" asks Blake. Keep dropping pennies in their penalty area. They will "pay the penalty" for "picking up." In a Christmas speech, the Head said he remembered the days when Christmas puddings were stuffed with sovereigns. "Golden" days, indeed. Did you hear about the English sweep who won the Irish Sweep? His outlook is no longer "black." "I wouldn't referee a Cup Final for fifty thousand pounds," declares Pratt of the New House. Well, nobody's offering that much! "The boy who never reads good literature is only

fight fifty juniors, sir," he said bluntly. "We can't do it, and it's no good trying. I've had enough of it, for one."

"And I for another," said Baker.

And the prefects walked away with savage, sullen faces, leaving their Housemaster speechless with rage.

CHAPTER 12.

Wet!

IT was after dinner that day when Taggles, the school porter of St. Jim's, came towards the New House, with a dubious expression upon his weather-beaten face, and a heavy axe under his arm.

Mr. Ratcliff was following him, his face white and set. The Housemaster had evidently resolved upon desperate measures.

The bell had rung for afternoon lessons, and the School House fellows were all in the Form-room—all the school, in fact, excepting the rebels of the New House.

The New House rebels had eaten dinner in the kitchen below stairs, and the juniors had made a much better dinner than they were accustomed to. Some of the provisions were of a perishable nature, and it was considered advisable to get them eaten, and every fellow was willing to help, as far as that went.

Mr. Ratcliff and Taggles had the quadrangle to themselves. The New House prefects had gone in with the rest of the Sixth. They had had enough of the contest.

"Here comes Taggy!" muttered Redfern from the window. "He's got an axe!"

"Ratty means business," said Figgy, with a chuckle. "Have you got that syringe ready, Kerr?"

"Here you are!"

"Good!"

Figgins took the garden syringe in his hands and stationed himself at one of the windows beside the doorway. A pail stood beside him, with a mixture of

half alive," states Mr. Linton. Many juniors think freedom is the "better half" of existence, though. I hear that as Clifton Dane wants to become a racing motorist, his father has decided not to stand in his way. A wise "move"! Fatty Wynn tells me that Frankfurter sausages are so named for special qualities. "Hot dogs" with pedigrees! "Use imagination," says Wynn, "in making sandwiches." Yes, that's been the chief ingredient of some we've tasted! "Do you think you are really fit for hard labour?" asked the employer, surveying the applicant keenly. "Well, sir, some of the best judges in the country have thought so!" responded the applicant. Like the man who committed a robbery because he thought the Law was elastic—and ended up by doing a long "stretch." Then there was the ambitious young fellow who was found heading a truck late at night, with his eyes fixed on the starry heavens. He said his employer had told him to "hitch his wagon to a star." "Happiness," observed Mr. Lathom, "is the pursuit of something—not the catching of it." "Have you ever missed a train, sir?" asked Blake. Skimpole has just looked in to ask if he should publish a book of poems under an assumed name. Certainly not—think of the innocent fellows who might be suspected! I hear M.P.s are paid in advance. Sort of shilling-in-the-slot before you get any "gas"! Oh, did you hear about the Scot who was invited to a party, and told to bring something? He brought his relatives. Cheerio, chaps!

soot and water in it. From the window, which was now innocent of glass, but which the rebels had boarded up. Figgins had a good aim at the doorway, and Taggles was not likely to break in the door unscathed.

Figgins filled the syringe and waited. It was a big syringe, a couple of feet long, and usually used for garden work. A jet of sooty water from it would come as a far from pleasant surprise to the assailant.

"You fellows be ready," said Figgins. "If they get the door open, mind, you're to fly like thunder. If Ratty gets in he's to be chucked out again. At a sign of the door giving way, drag the furniture out of the studies and barricade it. Ratty's study first, and then the senior's things, and then the dining-room furniture. Leave our own studies till the last."

"Ha, ha, ha! Right-ho!"

There was an audible grunt from outside as Taggles stepped upon the steps of the House. Mr. Ratcliff's thin, spiteful voice was heard.

"Break in the lock immediately, Taggles."

"Yes, sir."

"Waste no time, please! I'm waiting for you."

"Werry well, sir!"

Crash!

Taggles' heavy axe descended upon the lock, and the door shook from top to bottom. Figgins looked between the boards that were nailed across the broken window, and took aim with the garden squirt.

Swish-h-h-h!

The jet of water flew with deadly aim. It caught Taggles full in the face as he sent the axe into the door again.

"Yaroo!" roared Taggles.

The school porter fairly jumped in the air in his surprise. Sooty water was streaming over his face, and his hair, and his collar. The axe fell with a crash.

"Yow-ow! Yarooogh!" roared Taggles. "I'm wet! Yowoo!"
Mr. Ratcliff gritted his teeth.
"Break the lock, Taggles!"
"Groogh! I'm wet! I'm sooty! Ow!"

"Obey me at once, or I shall discharge you!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff.
Taggles grunted and groaned, but he picked up the fallen axe and returned to the attack.

Crash! Crash!
The door shook and rang again. Figgins had refilled his squirt—and there was no cover for Taggles!

Whish-h!
"Yarooooooop!"
"Taggles! I order you—"
"Orders be blowed!" roared Taggles. "I ain't standing there to be drenched—not if I know it! Yow! I'm soaking! I'm hoff!"

And Taggles was off. With sooty water running down all over him, the school porter strode away to his lodge. Mr. Ratcliff called after him, but Taggles did not even turn his head.

Mr. Ratcliff breathed hard.
He stooped and picked up the axe Taggles had dropped, and advanced to the attack himself.

"My hat! Ratty's going to chop!" muttered Figgins.

Crash! Crash!
Figgins hesitated. Rebels as the New House juniors were, it seemed a little too "thick" even to Figgins to drench a Housemaster with sooty water. But the door would soon give way under Mr. Ratcliff's terrific blows if he were allowed to go on.

"Mr. Ratcliff!" shouted Figgins, at last.

Crash!
"Will you go away and let that door alone, sir?"

Crash!
"If you don't, I shall serve you the same as Taggles, sir!"

Crash!
The blows descended in a savage shower. Mr. Ratcliff was putting an unexpected amount of muscular force into the attack. He did not believe for a moment that Figgins would dare to serve him as he had served the school porter. Mr. Ratcliff never could believe a thing till it happened.

"Buck up, Figgv!" shouted Redfern. "The lock's giving!"

Crash! Crash!
The lock on the door, strong and heavy as it was, flew into pieces. The bolts still held the door in its place, but they would not last long if the attack continued. Figgins made up his mind.

Whish-s-s-s-h!
The sooty stream from the garden syringe smote Mr. Ratcliff just under the nose.

He started back, gasping, and fell, and rolled off the steps into the quad.

"Ow! Ow! Wow!"
Thus Mr. Ratcliff.

Within the House the juniors chuckled rather breathlessly. This was "going it" with a vengeance. But Mr. Ratcliff had brought it upon himself. They could not feel that they were to blame.

"Ow, ow! You young scoundrels! Oh!"

Mr. Ratcliff jumped up. His thin, angry face was almost hidden under sooty water. His eyes were gleaming with rage. Forgetful of everything but vengeance upon the rebels, he rushed up the steps again. But Figgins was ready. There was no hesitation now.

Whish-s-s-h! went the garden syringe, and a fresh jet of sooty and inky fluid smote Mr. Ratcliff under the chin.

"Oh! Oh! Groogh!"
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He staggered, and as he staggered Figgins refilled the squirt quickly and drove a fresh stream upon him. Mr. Ratcliff fairly jumped off the steps and fled.

Figgins put down his weapon with a yell of laughter.

"He's hopped it! Ha, ha, ha! Hurrah for us!"
"Hurrah!"

The juniors watched from the windows. Mr. Ratcliff was gone, and he did not return. They did not see him again till school hours were over at St. Jim's, and the various Forms came streaming out into the quadrangle. Crowds of fellows—seniors and juniors—stood staring towards the New House, grinning and laughing and talking. Evidently the barring-out was the one topic of conversation at St. Jim's.

There was no fresh attack. But Figgins noted that Sefton and Monteith were stationed in the quad to keep School House fellows from coming near the House.

Mr. Ratcliff did not mean the rebels to hold any communication with the rest of St. Jim's.

"It's going to be a siege now," said Figgins, as he sat down to tea, with one eye on the window. "I suppose Ratty thinks he can starve us out. He doesn't know how much grub we've got. It will last us for days."

"Unless Fatty gets at it," remarked Redfern.

"Look here, Reddy—" began Fatty Wynn.

"Still, there's always Tom Merry & Co. to help us from outside" grinned Figgins. "They would smuggle in grub to us after dark if we needed it. Either Ratty is going to try to starve us out—which he can't do—or else make a night attack, after dark, and we shall be on the watch for that, you bet. We've done him!"

"But how's it going to end?" said Pratt.

"Blessed if I know! But we've done Ratty, and we won't surrender, excepting for a general pardon and all our terms granted. That's settled."

"Hear, hear!"
And the rebels of the New House had their tea—a very plentiful tea—in the highest of spirits. They had won all along the line so far, and they meant to hold the fort till the end.

CHAPTER 13.

Too Hot for "Ratty"!

TOM MERRY looked out of the door of the School House.

Night was black in the old quad of St. Jim's, but from the direction of the New House came a glare of lighted windows. Every electric light in the New House was burning. The House was lighted from end to end.

It was near bed-time for the juniors of St. Jim's, but it was very clear that the rebels of the New House were not thinking of bed.

"Bai Jove! They're goin' it, you know," Arthur Augustus remarked.

Tom Merry nodded.

"Figgy doesn't mean to be taken by surprise," he remarked. "Ratty has in."

been talking with the New House prefects this evening, and I think he means to make a raid to-night."

"Yaas, wathah! It wouldn't be a bad ideah to give old Figgy a word of warnin'."

"Good egg! I'll cut across the quad and tell him."

Tom Merry slipped down the steps of the School House and disappeared into the shadows. A couple of minutes later he was tapping at the boards nailed across the broken window.

"Hallo!" came Figgins' cheerful tones from within.

"It's all right, Figgy!"

"That you, Tom Merry?" asked Figgins, peering out.

"Yes."
"How's Ratty?" grinned Figgins.

Tom Merry laughed.
"He's raging!" he said. "He's had some words with Mr. Railton about not



Just for a second the hot poker in Kerr's hand touched the tyrant master! He gave a terrific yell, fell off the chair, and burnt! Oh—oh!

backing him up in this row, and he's asked for the School House prefects to help him, and Railton won't have it."

"Good old Railton!"

"Mr. Railton sent off a telegram to-day, and I think it's to the Head," said Tom Merry.

Figgins looked grim.
"There will be more trouble if the Head comes back on account of this," he said. "We're jolly well not going to surrender unless we get our terms."
"Rather not!" chimed in Redfern.

"Ratty and Monteith and the New House prefects are whispering over something," said Tom Merry. "We all think it means a raid in the middle of the night. You chaps had better keep some of your eyes open."

"That's all right!" said Figgins confidently. "We've arranged to have sentinels in turn all night, and if Ratty comes we shall be ready for him. We've got every blessed door and window nailed up, and I don't think he'll get

"Well, keep a good look-out, that's all. I thought I'd tell you."

"Thanks awfully!"

Tom Merry disappeared.

Figgins & Co. then had their supper, and they were very liberal with themselves. The enthusiasm of the rebels was still keen, but some of them were beginning to feel very sleepy.

Figgins told off the sentinels for the first watch, but it was not till after ten o'clock that any of the juniors went to bed. Then they did not undress, but lay down in their clothes, to be ready in case of a surprise.

The lights were extinguished one by one in the School House and the other buildings round the old quad. But in the New House the electric light blazed away all through the dark hours.

To stay up after the usual bed-time was a treat to most of the juniors, chiefly because it seldom fell to their

the light from the New House streamed into it.

"I wish they'd come if they're coming!" said Figgins.

"Yaw-aw-aw!" said Redfern. "I wish they would!"

Owen nodded off in a chair, and Redfern sat down and yawned, and soon began to nod, too.

Figgins leaned up against the wall and his head drooped.

But Kerr was wakeful.

The Scots junior moved about from one window to another, looking out into the quad every few minutes. In the Hall firegrate a large fire was burning, for the night was cold, and the juniors had no reason to be economical with the coal.

Kerr replenished the fire from time to time, and thoughtfully left the poker between the bars to get red-hot. It might be useful if the attack came.

One!

The stroke boomed out from the clock tower.

Figgins half-opened his eyes and yawned.

"Keeper goo' look-out!" he murmured.

Kerr grinned.

"All right, Faggy!"

Another hour passed slowly.

The sentinels were all fast asleep by this time, with the exception of Kerr, whose keen, unresting eyes never closed.

The Scots junior gave a sudden start at last.

There was a faint sound in the quadrangle. It was followed by the creak of a board. Kerr's eyes gleamed.

Someone was trying one of the boards at one of the nailed-up windows.

It was one of the broken windows, of course. The others could not be got at without smashing the glass outside, and the midnight assailants did not want to awaken the whole school with a terrific crash.

Kerr stepped towards Figgins and shook his leader by the shoulder. Figgins started out of a dream.

"Groogh!" he murmured. "Wharrer marrer? 'Tain't rising-bell!"

Kerr chuckled.

"No, it isn't rising-bell, you ass, and it isn't morning! It's the enemy!"

"Oh, all serene!"

Figgins was wide awake in a moment. "Doggo!" muttered Kerr. "If they think we're asleep, they'll show just where they are, and we can get at them."

"Right-ho!"

Figgins awakened Redfern and Owen. The four juniors, silent and keen, waited for the attack. Kerr twisted his handkerchief round the handle of the poker, and held it ready, the glowing point still between the bars.

Creak, creak!

The attack was coming. It was at the Hall window—the easiest to reach, as it were, and the nearest to the ground.

There was a sound as some tool from the outside prized at the nailed boards. Then a whispering voice:

"Careful, Monteith!"

"Yes, sir."

Figgins chuckled audibly, and strode towards the window and tapped on the inner side of the boards. There was a sharp exclamation from without.

"Hallo!" roared Figgins:

"Oh, they're awake, sir!" It was Monteith's voice.

"Yes, we're awake," grinned Figgins, "and quite ready. You'd better go back to your little bunks, my sons, unless you're looking for trouble!"

Crash, crash!

Heavy blows descended upon the nailed boards. The attacking party had given up all caution now, and they were using hammers. The boards tore away from the nails under the crashing blows, and Monteith's face was seen in the aperture.

"Now, Figgins," said the prefect between his teeth, "we're coming in!"

"You're not, my son!"

"If you lay a finger on me you'll get hurt, and it will be your own look-out!" said the prefect, as he put his head and hand through the window.

There was a cricket stump in his hand, and his look showed that he meant to use it.

"Look here, Monteith!"

"I'm coming in! Stand back!"

Figgins rushed forward, and the prefect made a savage slash at him with the stump.

Figgins jumped back only just in time.

Monteith grinned savagely and clambered through the window.

"Hold on!" said Kerr coolly.

He jerked the red-hot poker from the fire, and swung it round to the window, and the glowing point of it was within an inch of the prefect's nose.

Monteith started back so violently that he knocked his head on the window frame, and uttered a yell of anguish. He fell back into the quadrangle, and the window was clear.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Hear us smile!"

Kerr chuckled, and stuck the poker in the fire again. Outside, Mr. Ratcliff's acid voice could be heard urging the prefects to attack. But they evidently did not like the task.

"He's got a red-hot poker, sir!" said Monteith.

"Bah! Are you a coward?"

"I don't like getting my chivvy burnt, sir!" said Monteith sullenly.

"Nonsense! He would not dare to touch you with it!"

"Well, try yourself, sir!"

"Don't be so insolent, Monteith!"

"Well, I've had enough of it. If you think he wouldn't touch you with a poker, get in at the window, and we'll follow you, sir."

"Get ready, Kerr!" muttered Redfern.

"What-ho!"

Mr. Ratcliff's face appeared at the window, pale with rage. He put his hands on the ledge, his teeth set, and his eyes gleaming.

Kerr swung the red-hot poker round, and Mr. Ratcliff paused.

"Better keep out, sir," said Kerr politely. "You might get burnt, sir."

"Kerr, stand back at once!"

"Sorry, sir! Can't be done!"

"If you dare to touch me with that poker, sir—"

"I won't if you don't come in, sir. If you try to get in, I shall give you just a little dab on the nose, sir—only a little one, sir."

"Kerr! You insolent young villain! Stand back!"

"Rats, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff, mad with rage, started to scramble in. There was no help for it. Kerr poked forward with the poker and Mr. Ratcliff jerked himself back. Kerr followed up the advantage and poked at Mr. Ratcliff through the window. The extreme tip of the poker



...tip of Mr. Ratcliff's nose. That was enough for the and bumped down in the quadrangle. "Oh—oh—oh! I'm shrieked."

lot. But now that they experienced it the treat was not so enjoyable as they had supposed.

The fellows who were keeping watch felt very sleepy long before midnight sounded, and they would have been very glad to go to their dormitory.

The sentinels yawned and tramped about to keep themselves awake, and most of them began to nod after a time.

Figgins was in the second watch, realising that in the middle of the night the most keenness would be required.

Pratt woke him up, and he came down with Kerr and Redfern and Owen to keep watch, the earlier sentinels going off to bed gladly enough.

Figgins rubbed his heavy eyes and looked out into the quadrangle.

Half-past twelve had rung out from the clock tower, and the old school was very silent and still.

Not a light was to be seen in the great black mass of the School House. The quadrangle was dark, save where

touched for a second the extreme tip of Mr. Ratcliff's prominent nose.

One second was enough!

Mr. Ratcliff, who was standing on a chair, gave a terrific yell, lost his balance, and bumped down on the hard quadrangle.

"Oh—oh—oh! I'm burnt." Oh—oh—oh!"

"I told you so, sir!" said Monteith, rather tactlessly.

"Ow—ow! Oh! Yaroooh! Ow! Oh!"

There was a sound of retreating footsteps.

"What's the row?" came the voice of Lawrence, from the stairs. "Is it an attack, Figgy?"

Figgins roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! It was, but it's over!" And it did not come again. The remainder of the night passed undisturbed for the rebels of the New House.

CHAPTER 14.

Peace With Honour!

MORNING dawned upon St. Jim's.

Almost before the rising-bell had ceased to clang, the quadrangle was crowded with juniors staring towards the redoubtable New House.

Seniors and fags belonging to that House had been accommodated in the School House for the night, not without a great deal of overcrowding, and inconvenience, which did not make the general feeling towards Mr. Ratcliff any the more amiable.

The feeling of the whole school was against him, and though the masters and prefects could not uphold the revolt of the New House juniors, and were bound to condemn anything in the nature of a barring-out, they knew perfectly well that Mr. Ratcliff was to blame, and they let him see pretty plainly that they thought so.

Mr. Ratcliff was in an unenviable state of mind that morning.

It was dawning upon even his obstinate mind at last that he had gone too far, and that a rod of iron was not really what was needed in dealing with the juniors in his House. That he would ever reduce the New House to subordination again seemed impossible. He knew that Mr. Railton had wired to the Head the previous day, and he was relieved rather than otherwise at the thought of Dr. Holmes returning to take the responsibility off his hands.

It was certain, of course, that the Head would return the instant he heard of the barring-out in the school.

When Mr. Ratcliff appeared in the morning he was greeted with smiles. There was a huge blister on the end of his nose, and as the nose was already a very large-sized one, the big blister was given great prominence.

It hurt considerably, and Mr. Ratcliff caressed it tenderly from time to time. It caused broad grins wherever he appeared, and even after having their ears boxed for grinning, fellows would grin again.

It was about an hour after breakfast when a hack drove into the gateway, and the New House juniors recognised the station hack from Rylcombe. They saw it cross the quadrangle, and saw Dr. Holmes step out at the door of the School House.

The Head of St. Jim's had returned. Dr. Holmes went directly to his study. His face was very grave and stern. Mr. Ratcliff followed him there at once, and there was a grim silence

for a moment as the two masters looked at one another.

Mr. Ratcliff caressed his nose. Serious as the state of affairs was, the Head could hardly help smiling as he looked at it.

"Will you kindly explain what has happened during my absence, Mr. Ratcliff?" asked the Head coldly.

Mr. Ratcliff explained, with emphasis. He pointed out the rascality of the New House juniors, their wicked insubordination and insensibility to kindness, the backwardness of Mr. Railton and the School House prefects in lending him support, and his own uncommon patience, moderation, and general virtue as a Housemaster. The Head listened in silence till he had finished.

Mr. Ratcliff did not finish till he was nearly out of breath.

"I have more than once pointed out to you, Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head, at last, "that I consider your measures too severe with the boys of your House. I cannot blame Mr. Railton for refusing to be drawn into a dispute which did not concern him, and which he entirely disapproved of. What do you propose to do now?"

"I should expel half a dozen of the ringleaders, sir, and cane the rest without mercy!" said Mr. Ratcliff, through his tight, thin lips, and caressing his blistered nose again.

The Head frowned.

"That is hardly likely to bring content and order to the House," he said, "and I think I know these boys well. I do not think they will desert one another, and surrender, to allow their leaders to be punished so severely. Once a barring-out has started, Mr. Ratcliff, it is not easy to see where it will end. It is very fortunate that the movement has not spread over the whole school, and I owe that to Mr. Railton. You appear to have suffered some personal injury—"

"I was assaulted with a red-hot poker."

"I must say, Mr. Ratcliff, that I think it was injudicious of you to come into personal conflict with juniors."

"Sir!"

"You must allow me to speak plainly. This is a most serious matter, and will do St. Jim's incalculable harm if it continues and becomes known to the public," said the Head severely. "It must cease at once! As you have received an injury which is, to say the least, unsightly, I think you had better take a holiday—"

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"What!"

"And stay away from St. Jim's for a few weeks till this has blown over."

"Oh!"

"Meanwhile, the boys will settle down again. I really think this is the best thing to be done, Mr. Ratcliff. I have thought the matter out carefully, and I hope you have no objection to make."

The Head's tone was final. Mr. Ratcliff had plenty of objections to make; but he did not make them. He felt that if he spoke at all he would say things which would make it impossible for him to retain a position at all under the Head of St. Jim's. And he choked back his words and feelings.

Kildare walked across the quadrangle and stopped under the window of the New House, where a dozen faces were crammed together to watch him. Kildare's face was very stern, but there was a glimmer in his eyes.

"Any news, old man?" asked Figgins.

"Yes, the Head's come back."

"I know that."

"I've a message for you."

Figgins' lips set.

"It's no good asking us to surrender," he said. "We're not going to surrender without a free pardon for everybody. Oh, I know it's rotten form backing up against the Head, but we're not going to be flogged, and some of us sacked, and then be put under Ratty again, rattier than ever. It's not good enough!"

"Not by long chalks!" said Redfern.

Kildare smiled slightly.

"Mr. Ratcliff has left St. Jim's," he said.

"What!"

It was a general exclamation of surprise.

"He has suffered in his health from these rows, and he's going away for a rest," said Kildare. "He won't be back the rest of this term, I hear."

"By George!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, ripping!"

The satisfaction of the New House juniors was not complimentary to their Housemaster, but it was evidently very genuine.

"You young rascals!" said Kildare, laughing. "Well, he's gone now, and it's all over. You kids had better go into your Form-rooms now, as if nothing had happened, and the Head won't inquire into the barring-out."

"Is that understood?"

"Yes, of course. The Head couldn't approve of anything like this."

"Of course not!" said Figgins. "We know that—we're not asses! At the same time, he knows jolly well that it was Ratty's fault, but he can't say so officially. We savvy!"

"Never mind that," said Kildare. "I've just come over here to advise you to go into your places in the Form-room, and hold your tongues; and if you're wise, you'll do it!"

"You bet!" said Redfern.

Kildare walked away.

There was no hesitation among the rebels. The boldest of them had their doubts about continuing the struggle, now that the Head had returned, and all they wanted was an honourable peace—and they had it now.

In ten minutes the barring-out was a thing of the past, and Figgins & Co. were in their places in the Form-room.

THE END.

(Next week: "FROM FOOTLIGHTS TO FORM-MASTER!" Watch out for this sparkling long yarn, chums, telling of an amazing new master who came to St. Jim's.)

COME IN FOR ANOTHER CHAT, CHUMS!



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

HALLO, chums! I had a number one sized shock when my post-bag arrived this morning. It was the largest one I've had for many a day. But the reason for the sudden increase in my mail was obvious to me. "Ah," I thought, "the new story programme is responsible for this." Thereupon, I began reading the letters, and believe me, it was a pleasant morning's work. I had naturally assumed that our new programme and the different "make-up" of the pages would prove immensely popular, but I was not prepared for the showers of unstinted praise that each letter contained. I must say the GEM readers can hand out bouquets when they are deserving! Every reader had compliments to bestow on all our great yarns, and special mention was made of the new two-inch-wide columns. The change is hundred per cent popular. As one reader said: "The GEM took me much longer to read this week, and the stories were so thrilling that I had to read right through the complete number before putting it down." Which is clear proof that the GEM is offering unrivalled value in quantity as well as quality. Well, thanks a lot, chums, for your letters of congratulation. The GEM has set a high standard, and will keep to it.

"FROM FOOTLIGHTS TO FORM-MASTER!"

Next week's number contains another great programme of stories. There is a particularly bright and breezy yarn from Martin Clifford's pen, which is a follow-up to the sensational story in this number.

As Mr. Ratcliff has had to take a more or less enforced holiday, a new

master will have to take over his duties temporarily. In next week's story that new Housemaster arrives, but hardly has he been at St. Jim's five minutes before the juniors realise that they have got something entirely new in Form-masters. Mr. Wodyer is a scream, in more ways than one! Read all about the master who was a comedian on the stage. He "brings the house down"!

"THE TENDERFOOT'S TRIUMPH!"

The next yarn of the Packsaddle Bunch is a thriller, to say the least. Dick Carr, the tenderfoot British boy, is the butt of all the japes of his Wild West schoolfellows, and once again, in the next story, the laugh's on Dick. But it's no joke for the Packsaddle guys when their jape, later, actually comes true. Then it's Dick's pluck that scores!

In the next chapters of our best-ever St. Frank's serial—"The Secret World!"—the rescue party aboard the Titan have sensational adventures. Whirled about the Arctic in the raging storm, the Titan eventually sails into calmer atmosphere, and the St. Frank's adventurers discover that they are in a new world—a world in which many amazing adventures are to befall them ere they leave it again!

This big-thrill instalment, together with our usual features, completes next Wednesday's wonderful number. If you have not yet placed a standing order for the GEM with your newsagent, take

PEN PALS COUPON

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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, together with the coupon on this page, to the address given above.

Oliver Purvis, 28, St. Matthew's Avenue, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, wants to hear from readers who have made a hobby of the old copies of the Companion Papers.

Harry Wrigley, 23, Hyne Avenue, Bierley, Bradford, Yorks, wants pen pals in Australia, Canada, and U.S.A. interested in sport, cigarette cards, book exchange.

Charles E. McIntyre, 17, View Forth Place, Fort William, Inverness-shire, Scotland, wants a correspondent in South America; age 18-19; aviation.

Miss M. Howson, 14, Cornish Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wants girl correspondents; age 10-12.

Donald V. S. Martin, 4625, Wellington Street, Verdun,

my oft-repeated advice and do it to-day. Our programmes are much too good to miss.

THE TEN BEST YARNS.

I received recently a very interesting letter from Eric Fayne, the secretary of the Surbiton Modern School GEM Club, whose membership of readers numbers nearly thirty. At the club's end-of-term meeting all the members voted for the ten St. Jim's stories or series of stories they considered the best in 1934. The result of the ballot was that those two grand yarns, "A Shadow Over St. Jim's," and "The Boy Who Came Back" topped the poll. The "Congo" series came second, and the others in order of merit were: "The Outsider's Enemy," "Gussy's Cricket Party" series, "The House of Fear," "The Worst Boy at St. Jim's," "The Spectre of St. Jim's," the "South Seas" series, "Falsely Accused," and lastly, "Wally's Wily Wheeze." How does this list compare with the opinions of other readers? I should be interested to know.

Thanks for your letter, Eric. I like the club's New Year resolution—to get new GEM readers—and I wish the club and their resolution every success. Drop me a line again some time.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST CAKE.

Another interesting letter comes from C. J. Waugh, of Victoria, Australia, who tells me a few facts about the Melbourne-Victoria Centenary, which was recently celebrated. To mark Victoria's hundredth birthday, a huge cake was made, and it weighed no less than ten tons! (What a feed for Fatty Wynn!) It's the largest cake ever been made, and was baked in Melbourne. Portions of it were sold to aid hospitals. Among the ingredients used were 36,000 eggs, 1½ tons of sugar, 1½ tons of flour, 4½ tons of mixed fruit, and 2 ton of almonds. The cake was made in five tiers, with decorated icing which showed different stages in Victorian history, and a hundred candles were set in it.

Thanks for your letter and greetings, C. J. Waugh. I wish you all the best for the New Year!

TAILPIECE.

First Burglar: "Did you ever study geometry, Bill?"

Second Burglar: "Yes."

First Burglar: "Well, I wish you would tell me how to square a straight policeman!"

THE EDITOR.

Provinces Quebec, Canada, wants correspondents in India, China, Germany, and Malta; stamps and sports.

James D. Dawe, 446, First Avenue, Verdun, Province Quebec, Canada, wants correspondents; sports.

Miss Doris Parsons, 250, St. John's Road, Walthamstow, London, E.17, wants girl correspondents in America; sports, books.

T. Lamb, Peniston, Entry Hill, Bath, Som., wants pen pals; foreign newspapers, match brands, photography.

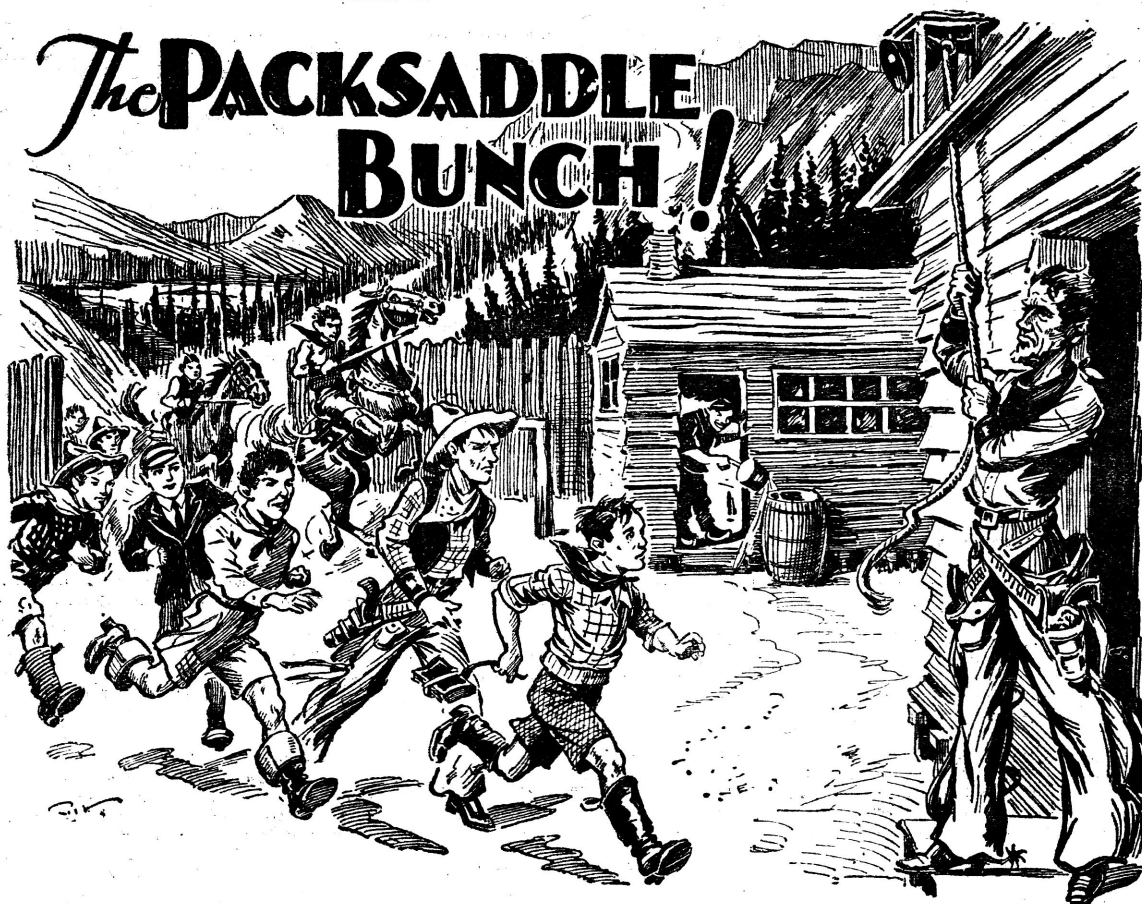
Eric Marshall, 26, Tanhouse Street, Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury, Yorks, wants pen pals; age 12-16; Near or Far East, France, Africa; wireless travel, general science, native customs, sketching.

Garfield Haslock, 14, Harold Street, Devonport, Tasmania, Australia, wants pen pals in England, Ireland, Canada, or Japan; stamps, model aeroplanes.

Miss Islay Daniel, 6/8, 133rd Street, Rangoon, Burma, wants girl correspondents in the British Empire, France, and Germany; age 10-22; sports, postcard collecting.

John Daly, 5, Sussex Street, Glenelg, South Australia, wants correspondents; interested in cricket, tennis, and football, English and Australian.

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Chuck!

CHUCK!" roared Bill Sampson, headmaster of Packsaddle School.

Dick Carr, the new boy in the cow town school, stared round at him.

Bill, with his quirt under his arm, and his ten-gallon hat on the back of his rough head, was staring in at the open window of the school bunkhouse.

Dick was inside, unpacking a suitcase that lay on his bunk.

He had in his hand a Latin grammar, an old school book that he had brought with him to Texas from his former home in far-off England.

"You hear me yaup?" demanded Bill.

"Eh! Yes," said Dick. "But—" "Chuck!" roared Bill.

Dick could only stare. He was new to Texas, new to America, and he was far from having mastered the language.

"Chuck," to him, had one meaning, which might have been defined in a dictionary as to hurl, or to throw. He could only suppose that Bill was referring to the volume in his hand. But why Bill Sampson wanted him to chuck that volume he could not guess.

"But—what—" stammered Dick. "Carry me home to die!" exclaimed the schoolmaster of Packsaddle. "I'll say you're some tenderfoot, young Carr! Yep! Say, don't you savvy what chuck means?"

"Yes; but—" "Waal, then, jump to it, pronto. This way! Chuck!"

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"Oh, all right!" gasped the new boy at Packsaddle.

Dick Carr might be a tenderfoot in Texas, but he understood plain English. The trouble was that he did not yet understand plain American. He did not yet know that "chuck" was supper; he was unaware that the Packsaddle bunch had already gone into the chuck-house, and that he was late; that Bill

toughest bullwhacker in the valley of the Frio could not have knocked Bill Sampson down. But the surprise did it. Bill sat down in the playground with a heavy bump, and a roar that rang almost from the Frio to Squaw Mountain.

"Whooo-hoop!" roared Bill, as he sat. "Say, you gone loco? Jumping painters! You watch out till I get you."

Bill scrambled up. He grabbed his quirt, which he used instead of a cane in the cow town school. With a face as red as the sunset over the Staked Plain, Bill hurtled in at the bunkhouse window.

"But—but you said—" gasped Dick.

He did not stay to say more! Why Bill was wrathful with him the tenderfoot did not know. But there was no doubt about the fact! The quirt was cracking round his legs, as he bolted along the bunkhouse. He tore past the bunks, heading for the door at the other end of the wooden building.

After him roared Bill. Dick Carr went out of the doorway like a bullet from a rifle.

It was sheer ill-luck that Small Brown, the teacher of Packsaddle, was passing the door as he came out.

Mr. Brown hardly knew what happened to him. He had a vague impression that a runaway bull from a herd had charged him. He flew in one direction, his horn-rimmed glasses in another, his hat in a third. He squeaked wildly, as he rolled on the ground, with the tails of the only tail-coat in Packsaddle fluttering in the air.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Dick,

THE HOLD-UP AT PACKSADDLE!

by

FRANK RICHARDS.

was telling him to step out by the window to save time. Unaware of that, the new boy obeyed his headmaster, and chucked the volume in his hand.

Whiz!

Thud!

It hit Bill on the nose.

Why Bill wanted him to chuck the book at him, the tenderfoot did not know. But when his headmaster said "chuck," and "this way," it was scarcely possible to mistake his meaning; and Dick was there to do as he was told! So he did it.

Bill, who meant something quite different, was not prepared for the sudden arrival of the Latin grammar through the window. It hit him on the nose quite unexpectedly.

He staggered back in amazement. The

—ALL-THRILLING TALE OF TEXAS SCHOOL ADVENTURE.

He did not stop! He staggered for a moment, then he leaped across the sprawling teacher, and bolted on. The next moment Bill Sampson was hurtling out of the doorway, and sprawling headlong over Small Brown.

Mr. Brown's ill-luck was good luck for Dick! It gave him a start! He tore across the playground, leaving Bill mixed up with Mr. Brown.

"Oooogh!" moaned Mr. Brown, as Bill gained his feet, planting an immense sinewy knee on Small Brown in the process.

"Say, you geek, what you spreading yourself around that-a-way for?" hooted Bill.

"Wooooooogh!" mumbled Small Brown. He had no breath left to explain; neither did Bill wait for an answer. Leaving Small Brown moaning, he rushed on in pursuit of the new guy.

There was a shout from the chuckhouse. Leaving their supper, the Packsaddle bunch crowded to door and window to stare at the chase.

"Put it on, tenderfoot!" yelled Slick Poindexter.

"Bill's got his mad up with the geek!" chuckled Mick Kavanagh.

"Burn the wind, big boy!"

"Hit it hard, you big stiff!"

Shouts of encouragement came from the bunch at the chuckhouse. Steve Carson, the oldest and biggest fellow at Packsaddle, rushed out to intercept the fugitive. Big Steve's face was in a highly-decorative state, from an encounter he had already had with the tenderfoot, who had proved that he could use his fists with great effect.

"Let up, Steve!" shouted Slick Poindexter.

"Lave him alone!" roared Mick.

Unheeding, Steve rushed into the tenderfoot's way. The next moment he wished that he hadn't! Dick had no time to stop and handle him, with Bill and the lashing quirt so close behind. He lowered his head and butted, catching Big Steve exactly where he had just been packing away his supper.

There was a horrible gurgle from Steve Carson, as he crumpled up and sat down. Dick Carr bounded on.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the bunch, drowning the suffocated gurgling of the bully of Packsaddle.

Right round the chuckhouse went the new boy, burning the wind in great style. But faster still the long legs of Bill Sampson covered the ground behind him, and a lick of the quirt told him that he was close at hand. Dick made a jump at the chuckhouse eaves, caught on, and clambered wildly up. In a few seconds, he was seated astride of the ridge, panting for breath.

Steve Gets the Stew!

BILL SAMPSON brandished his quirt, and roared with wrath. The Packsaddle bunch roared, too, with merriment. The whole crowd had poured out of the chuckhouse now, to watch. Only Steve Carson did not join in the merriment. He was still gurgling for wind. Even Tin Tung, the Chinese cook, stared on with a grin on his yellow face.

"Say, you gink!" roared Bill, "You coming down?"

"I'm jolly well not coming down to be whopped for nothing!" retorted Dick.

"Nothing!" hooted the cow town schoolmaster. "CARRY me home to die!

You call it nothing to heave books at your schoolmaster's nose, you pesky geek! You figure that you'll get by with it? Not in your lifetime, big oey."

"You told me to!" howled Dick.

"Told you nix!" roared Bill.

"You did!" yelled Dick.

"By the great horned toad, I'll say that that young geek is plumb loco!" exclaimed Bill Sampson.

"But what's he done, Bill?" asked Slick Poindexter.

"Done!" roared Bill. "I'm telling you I looked in the winder of the bunkhouse to say chuck—him being late, like the goldarned stoopid tenderfoot he are—and he heaves a book at me, like he was heaving a rock at a coyote!"

"Oh, great gophers!" ejaculated Slick. "Say, you, Carr, do you heave books at your schoolmasters in the Old Country?"

"No!" gasped Dick. "But I was told to. I thought he wanted the book when he said chuck, this way! What did he mean by chuck?"

"What did I mean by chuck?" roared Bill. "Jumping he-goats! Ain't you learned to speak yet? Don't you know that chuck means supper?"

"Oh crikey! Does it?"

"What the all-fired Moses did you think it meant?" shrieked Bill.

"It means throw in England," answered Dick.

Bill Sampson gazed up at him. He had been brought up on chuck, in the

The ways of the Wild West are new to Dick Carr, the tenderfoot of Packsaddle—but Dick has his own way of dealing with a bully and with a bandit!

sense of provender. He had never heard of chuck in its meaning of to throw. He had to assimilate this.

"Did—did you mean to be telling me that supper was ready?" gasped Dick Carr. He was getting it now. "I thought you meant that I was to throw the book I had in my hand. Of course, I thought you'd catch it, as you told me to chuck it—at least, I thought you did—"

"Great horned toads!" gasped Bill. His wrath faded away, and he burst into a laugh. "Say, if you ain't the world's prize boob, I'm a greaser! I guess you'll learn to speak at Packsaddle, and you'll sure learn that chuck's chuck! Come down, you young geek; I sure ain't going to hide you! Haw, haw, haw!"

Bill roared; he tucked his quirt under his arm and stalked away to the schoolhouse, still laughing. That little misunderstanding on the part of the tenderfoot seemed to strike Bill as funny. He was still sniggering as he disappeared into the schoolhouse, apparently having quite forgotten the bang on his nose.

Dick Carr slid down the slanting roof and landed with a jump among the Packsaddle bunch. They were all yelling with laughter.

"It's the boob from Boobsville, and so it is!" chuckled Mick Kavanagh, putting his arm through Dick's. "Mosey in to chuck, boob." He led Dick Carr into the chuckhouse, and the bunch followed, laughing. Steve Carson was still gasping as he followed the rest in.

There was a long trestle-table in the chuckhouse, with a bench on either side of it. The outfit at Packsaddle School was primitive. Wooden bowls were on the board. When, a year ago, Packsaddle School had been founded, crockery had been provided, but in a shindy in the chuckhouse it had all disappeared in fragments; now there were wooden bowls and platters. But there was an appetizing scent from the same. Tin Tung, the Chinaman, was some cook.

"Cold!" growled Steve Carson.

The stew had naturally gone cold during the interruption of "chuck." But Tin Tung had not yet served Dick Carr, as the new boy had not been present, and he brought along a steaming can to fill his bowl. Steve snapped at him across the table.

"Here, you doggoned Chink, you hand it this way, and I guess the new guy can have it cold!"

"Aw, can it, Steve!" said Slick Poindexter. "You give the new guy his chuck, Tin Tung."

Tin Tung, unheeding the bully of Packsaddle, poured the steaming stew into Dick's bowl and walked away with the can. Steve caught up a crust from the table and hurled it after him. It caught Tin Tung on the back of the head, and there was a yelp from the Chince. He skipped out of the chuckhouse and ran back to the cookhouse. Steve glared across the table at Dick.

"You hear me shout?" he demanded. "Put it across here, you geek! You can have mine if you like it cold!"

"I don't like it cold, thanks," answered Dick. "Keep it!"

"You honing for more trouble?" demanded Steve. As a matter of fact, it was Steve who was "honing" for trouble. The gunman's son could not get over having been knocked out by the new boy in the scrap in the playground.

"Oh, shut up!" answered Dick.

"You putting that chuck across?" roared Carson.

"No fear!"

Steve made a sign to two fellows on Dick's side of the table. They were Slim Dixon and Poker Parker, his two special side-partners. The three were a tough bunch, and always went together.

"Cinch him!" rapped Steve.

Before Dick knew what was happening Dixon and Parker had him by either arm—"cinching" him effectively. He jumped to his feet, but he could not wrench his arms loose.

"Now, you handing over that chuck?" grinned Steve.

"No!" roared Dick Carr.

"Dip his face in it!" said Steve.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick struggled frantically; but both the fellows who were holding him were as strong as himself. He was bent forward over the table, and his face approached the bowl of steaming stew.

"Guess again!" chuckled Steve. "Still time to hand it over, you boob! You putting it across to me?"

"Yes!" gasped Dick. "Let me go! Yes!"

Steve chuckled.

"I kinder reckoned you'd learn to jump at the word jump!" he grinned. "Give him a chance, you 'uns!"

Dixon and Parker, grinning, released Dick's arms. He picked up the bowl of steaming stew; his eyes were gleaming.

"You can have it, Carson!" he said.

"I've said that you can have it—and here it is!"

Up went the bowl. With a sudden jerk of his hands Dick shot the contents across the table full at Steve's grinning face.

Splash!

The grin was washed off Steve's face. It was replaced by hot, steaming, streaming stew! He gave a fearful yell and staggered back from the table.

Crack!

The wooden bowl followed its contents. It cracked hard on Steve's head, and he sat down on the earthen floor of the chuckhouse.

"Urrrrgh!" spluttered Steve, dabbing at streaming stew. "Gurrgh! Owl! I'm scalded! Gurrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Poindexter. "You asked for it, Steve!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the bunch.

Dick turned a wary eye on Parker and Dixon; but they were roaring with laughter like the rest.

Steve staggered to his feet, clawing at stew. His face was thick with it, his hair and neck full of it. He had asked for it and got it, though not in the way he wanted it. Spluttering wildly, Steve rushed out of the chuckhouse to put his head under the pump.

Howls of laughter followed him. Dick Carr sat down to a cold supper; but he enjoyed the stew cold more than Big Steve enjoyed it hot!

The Man Behind the Gun!

STICK 'em up, Bill Sampson!" The headmaster of Packsaddle gave a convulsive start. Dick Carr jumped clear of the floor.

It was near bed-time at Packsaddle. Bill had sent for the new boy to his office, as he called it, in the schoolhouse, to chew the rag a piece, as he would have expressed it, with the tenderfoot. The door was shut, but the window was open, and outside the window the glorious starlight of Texas streamed down from a velvety sky.

The cool, clear, but menacing voice came from the window. Bill Sampson's impulse was to reach for the big Colt in his belt as he turned. But he did not. He reached for the air, instead, and his hands were over his head as he stared at the head and shoulders framed in the open window. A man of small stature, strong and wiry, with a red moustache and stubbly red beard, looked in at him over the levelled barrel of a six-gun. The finger was on the trigger, and had Bill reached for his gun, instead of for the upper air, Packsaddle would have wanted a new schoolmaster. But Bill knew the moves in the game.

"Red Ike!" said Bill, between his teeth.

"You've said it!" agreed the man at the window. "Keep 'em up! You young geck, stand agin the wall, and don't spill anything!"

Dick gazed at him dumbfounded.

This was a Texas hold-up. He knew that, and it sent a thrill through him from head to foot. It was strange, startling, almost incredible to the boy fresh from England. But he knew that there was death in the levelled revolver, death in the cold, hard eyes that glistened over it. Bill's action showed him that if he had doubted it. He had seen enough of the Packsaddle schoolmaster to know that he was no lamb. But he was tame and quiet as a lamb at the order to stick them up, though his eyes were burning.

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Red Ike stepped in over the low sill. Keeping the schoolmaster covered with the revolver, and the tail of his eye on the boy, he crossed to the door, and with his left hand lifted a bar and dropped it into the sockets. He was safe from interruption now.

Dick made a movement. The gunman's eyes glittered. Bill, hands over head, snapped a word to the boy.

"You young geck, back on that wall, and freeze to it! Don't you know better'n to argue with a gun?"

"Yes!" gasped Dick.

"I'll say you want to snap to it, kid, if you ain't tired of life!" said Red Ike grimly.

Breathless, Dick backed on the wall, standing silent. It was not for him to act when Bill Sampson was taking it like a lamb.

Red Ike stepped to Bill and hooked the Colt from his belt. He dropped it carelessly under Bill's desk. Then he jerked down Bill's lasso that hung on a nail on the wall.

"Hog-tie him, young 'un!" he snapped to Dick.

It was a new word to Dick, but he understood. His eyes turned questioningly on Bill. He had never seen Red Ike before, or heard of him, though evidently Bill Sampson had. But he knew that the red-bearded man was a desperado, ready to shoot if he was crossed. All the same, the boy looked to his schoolmaster for orders.

"You hear me sing?" hissed Red Ike, his eyes gleaming. He was master of the situation in Bill's office, but he was risking his life every minute that he stayed there.

"Am I to do it, sir?" asked Dick calmly, though his heart was thumping. Bill stared at him.

"I say yep!" he exclaimed. "You loco? I guess if you wasn't a goldarned tenderfoot, you'd jump to it, without chewing the rag. Get to it, you gink!"

Thus adjured, Dick got to it. He took the lasso, and under the watchful eye and revolver of Red Ike, he bound the schoolmaster's hands behind his back.

Then Red Ike holstered his gun, and taking the lariat, bound Bill's legs also. With the end of the same rope he tied Dick hand and foot.

"I guess that lets you out!" said the gunman.

Bill choked.

"You got me by the short hairs, you Red Ike! But I guess I'll see you strung up for this, you border thief. You figure you'll get away?"

"Sort of!" said Red Ike.

"You never came on a cayuse—I'd have heard you!" muttered Bill, his eyes gleaming. A man on foot had little chance of escape, once pursuit was up, in the cow-country where every man was a horseman.

Red Ike grinned.

"You said it!" he agreed. "I guess I came a-crawling, like an Apache Injun, Bill! But I'll say I'm going to borrow a hoss from your corral to get away on. Your black bronco will suit me fine. You ain't saying nope, I guess."

Bill writhed with rage. Even at the risk of instant death he was tempted to shout, and give the alarm. But it was not good enough. Red Ike, the border bandit with a hundred robberies and shootings to his credit, hunted up and down Texas by the Rangers, was getting away with this daring raid, as he had got away with many a one before.

"Where d'you park the dust?" asked Red Ike quietly.

For a moment Bill was silent. Then, as the gunman's eyes gleamed like cold steel, he gave a nod towards the desk.

A few moments more and the schoolmaster and the boy were gagged. Red Ike opened the desk and rooted in it. A roll of greenbacks rewarded him. His eyes glittered as he hastily counted the bills.

"Five hundred dollars!" he grinned. "I guess I called on you about the right time, Bill."

Bill's eyes burned at him, but he could not speak. The bandit thrust the roll of bills into a little leather sack that was fastened to his belt with strap and buckle. The leather sack was already fat, looking as if this was not Red Ike's first successful raid.

The gunman turned out the swinging lamp, and stepped from the window. A moment and he was gone, as silently as he had come.

Bill Sampson struggled desperately with the lariat and the gag. Dick Carr followed his example. But they strove in vain. Red Ike had done his work well and securely.

A few minutes later there came a distant sound from the plains; the staccato beat of a horse's hoofs dying away in the distance.

Bill groaned behind the gag with fury. Red Ike was gone on the back of Bill's black bronco, the finest cayuse in the Frio valley, worth almost as much as the dollar-bills the ruffian had taken, worth much more to Bill, who loved that cayuse almost like his own flesh and blood.

But there was no help for it. It was an hour later that Small Brown, looking for Dick to herd him off to bed in the bunkhouse, knocked at the door. Receiving no answer but mumbling and scuffling, Small Brown in amazement came round to the window. Then the schoolmaster and the new boy were released—and in about a minute Bill Sampson was on a horse, riding, with a gun in his hand, and in five minutes a dozen citizens of Packsaddle were riding after him. But the dark prairie had swallowed up Red Ike, and they rode in vain.

Lost on the Prairie!

DICK CARR started violently. He would have cried out in his startled alarm, but a hand was clapped over his mouth, silencing him.

It was pitchy dark in the bunkhouse. The Packsaddle bunch had long been in bed. Dick heard the sound of deep breathing, and a snore or two, as he opened the door and peered in. Bill Sampson was gone. Small Brown, in a state of twittering excitement, was barring windows in the schoolhouse, rather like locking a stable door after the horse was stolen. Dick had gone to the bunkhouse by himself, long after the bed-time of the bunch. In the doorway he had been going to strike a match. And then suddenly, from the darkness hands reached and seized him.

His arms were gripped, a hand was over his mouth. Three unseen fellows had hold of him, and Dick jumped to it at once who they were—Steve Carson, Poker Parker, and Slim Dixon. They had waited up for him and some rough joke was coming.

Hardly able to stir a limb, let alone struggle, in the grasp of three pairs of muscular hands, Dick was lifted off his feet and carried away from the bunkhouse.

He was dumped down by a high fence, which he knew to be the corral wall. There was a sound of horses within.

"Cinch him!" He knew the whispering voice of Steve Carson. "I guess Bill's helped us in this stunt, by keeping him so late. I'll say it'll be later, a few, before he gets to his bunk."

There was a chuckle.

Dick's hands were tied together. A neckcloth was bound over his mouth to silence him. One of the dim figures vanished in the starlight. He heard the sound of a horse, the clink of bridle and stirrup.

He knew that he was going to get

left behind, but in a moment or two they were out of sound and sight. Steve Carson headed for the open prairie at a gallop.

He did not speak a word as he rode. Dick Carr was still in the dark as to his intentions. All he could be sure of was that this was some rough and savage practical joke.

How many miles the galloping bronco covered Dick did not know. But Big Steve pulled in at last. He halted so suddenly that Dick, losing his hold,

Dick stood panting.

In a few minutes he shook the loosened cord from his hands, and was free.

The hoofbeats of Steve's horse had died away. Deep silence was round him.

He stared over the dark prairie. Faintly, looming against the stars in the west, he could make out the massive shape of Squaw Mountain. But he could see nothing else but waving grass glimmering in starlight.

"Good heavens!" breathed Dick.



"Stick 'em up, Bill Sampson!" came a cool menacing voice from the open window. The headmaster of Packsaddle and Dick Carr both gave a start, and stared at the red-bearded man looking at them over the barrel of a six-gun. "Red like!" said Bill, reaching for the ceiling. "You've said it!" agreed the bandit. "Keep 'em up!"

hard measure from the bully of Packsaddle, but he could not begin to guess what was intended.

He was lifted to his feet and forced away along the corral wall by the two that remained with him. He was led through a gate in the school fence. Outside Parker was holding a horse.

Steve Carson leaped into the saddle and gathered up the reins.

"Stick him on!"

Dick was lifted to the horse's back behind him.

"Hold on, you guy—I'll say you'll get hurt a few if you tumble!" grinned Steve. "Let her go, Poker!"

The horse dashed away. With his wrists tied it was difficult enough for Dick to hold on to Steve with his hands. But he held on, gripping the horse's flanks with his knees. He heard a chuckle from the two fellows who were

rolled from the horse's back and tumbled heavily into the long grass.

There was a chuckle from Steve.

"Say, you guy! How long you figure it'll take you to pick your trail back to Packsaddle?" he jeered.

Dick panted. The neckcloth had slipped from his mouth and he could speak.

"You cur! You're not leaving me here?"

"You get me!" answered Steve coolly.

He dismounted, picked off the neckcloth, and loosened the cord round Dick's wrists. Then he leaped on the horse's back again.

"So-long, tenderfoot!" he shouted mockingly.

"You rotter!" roared Dick.

The beat of the horse's hoofs answered him, dying away swiftly over the starlit prairie.

He could hardly believe that the toughest bunch at Packsaddle meant to leave him there, stranded at night on the trackless prairie.

But it was only too certain.

It was the roughest of rough jests, such as a thoughtless bunch of cow-punchers might have played on a newcomer. It was entertaining to Steve and his friends to think of the tenderfoot wandering at wild random over the dark prairie, unable to find his way till daylight—perhaps not even then! They knew how helpless a stranger to the prairie would be in such circumstances.

For several long minutes Dick Carr stood overwhelmed with dismay. But it was useless to remain where he was, and he started to try to find his way back to Packsaddle.

He knew that he had miles to cover. That would not have mattered so much if he had known the direction to take and had been able to keep to it. But he had no clue to the way.

He tramped and tramped because it was futile to keep still, but with little hope of seeing Packsaddle again that night.

The prairie was rugged and rough, full of unexpected inequalities and hidden gopher-holes. The grass was thick and wiry. Again and again the hapless tenderfoot stumbled, and several times he fell.

But he scrambled up and tramped on, hour following hour, weary and worn; but determined to keep on as long as he could.

Utter weariness overcame him at last. A dark mass of shadow loomed before him. It was timber—one of the "prairie islands" that dotted the undulating plain. To tramp his way round it, or to thread a path through jutting trunks and trailing creepers was almost impossible in his fatigued state—and he was not at all sure that he was heading in the right direction.

He made up his mind to it at last. There was no getting back to Packsaddle School that night. He had to wait for dawn—still hours distant. Wearily he crept under the shelter of the trees, sank into a mass of fallen Spanish moss, and closed his eyes—and slept the moment they were closed.

Tenderfoot's Luck!

"**D**OGGONE the critter! Quiet, you!"

Dick Carr was dreaming as he lay in the heap of Spanish moss in the black darkness under the cottonwood trees. Red Ike, the rustler, mingled in his dreams, and as he started and awoke it seemed that he was still dreaming, for the hard voice of the border bandit was in his ears.

He lay staring into the darkness. Surely he was dreaming! Or was it the voice he had heard menacing Bill Sampson at Packsaddle School that he could now hear?

"Goldarn the cayuse! Say, you got a noo master now! And, by thunder, if you don't keep quiet you get the quirt!"

It was no dream! Dick sat up silently in the moss, his heart beating like a hammer.

There was the sound of a horse near him—a tethered horse, that jerked at the trail-ropes. All was darkness; the boy could see nothing. But he could hear. There was the sound of a swish, of a hard and heavy blow falling on a horse's flank, the startled whinny and squeal of an animal in pain. The growling voice of the rustler, followed:

"Forget it, durn your hide! Quiet, you!"

The horse whinnied faintly, but there was no further sound of straining rope or rustling thicket. That savage blow had quietened the captured animal. Dick heard the sound of a man rolling himself in a blanket again and sinking on the ground.

Red Ike had returned to his slumber, broken by the effort of the stolen bronco to escape. The horse was quiet now, and Dick listened in vain for a sound. He might have been utterly alone in the timber island, as he had supposed when he crept into the trees for shelter.

He breathed hard, his heart fluttering. From the sounds he knew that

Red Ike and the horse were hardly a dozen feet from him.

A thrill of excitement, not unmingled with terror, ran through him. How far this timber island might be from the cow town he did not know. But even if he had tramped in the wrong direction after Steve had stranded him he could not be more than ten miles from Packsaddle. Red Ike, it was clear, had covered the distance on the stolen horse before camping for the remainder of the night in cover of the timber. By the sheerest chance the schoolboy lost on the prairie had struck his camp. Had he gone deeper into the timber he might have stumbled on the sleeping rustler.

If Red Ike found him there—

He remained very still, silent. Long minutes passed, and there came a stirring sound of the horse. Bill Sampson's bronco was not sleeping. Possibly, with the keen instinct of an animal, he knew that someone was at hand. It was clear that the bronco hated the change of masters, and but for the trail-ropes would have fled from the rustler. His effort to escape had awakened Red Ike once, and might awaken him again.

Dick, as he sat silent, with beating heart, was thinking first of waiting till he was sure that Red Ike was asleep, and then, creeping on tiptoe out of the timber. But other thoughts followed.

If he could get the horse!

The thought made his heart jump. He knew only too well that if the border rustler woke he would shoot. But the thought grew and fixed in his mind. On a horse he had a chance of getting away—ten to one the animal would head direct back to Packsaddle if released from the tether. But that was not all. Left on foot, the rustler would almost certainly be run down and caught, and Bill's five hundred dollars recovered. The Packsaddle bunch would open their eyes wide at such an exploit of the "tenderfoot." Dick grinned at that idea.

He could hear, from moment to moment, a faint uneasy stirring of the stolen horse. But the animal was quiet, subdued by the savage lash from the rustler's quirt. Red Ike was sleeping.

Dick rose to his feet at last.

He tried to still the hurried beating of his heart. Softly, groping his way inch by inch, he crept farther into the timber. Through an opening of the heavy branches overhead there came a glimmer of the bright stars of Texas. Faint as it was, it was light enough, now that his eyes were accustomed to the darkness.

Dimly he made out a figure rolled in a blanket, bedded in ferns. Close by it the horse was standing; it had not lain down. Dick could see that the bronco was still saddled and bridled—in readiness for the rustler's instant flight if pursuit awakened him. He saw the horse's head turned towards him; the animal had scented if not heard him.

But there was no movement from the figure rolled in the blanket. Dick prayed that the horse would make no sound. There was a revolver in a hand that showed under the edge of the blanket. Red Ike slept in readiness for enemies.

Dick made soothing gestures as he approached the horse. He caught the glimmer of the bronco's eyes. He wondered if the intelligent animal understood that it was a friendly hand that

was stretched out to him. The black bronco stood quite still, watching him.

He reached the horse, and with the gentlest touch smoothed the glossy neck. The black muzzle brushed on him. Dick's hand glided to the trail-ropes. One end was pegged close to the sleeper. Silently he took out his pocket-knife and opened the largest blade. Almost without a sound he sawed through the strong rope.

Taking the reins from the horse's neck, Dick drew the animal away. There was a rustle of a branch, a shaking of pendant Spanish moss. Red Ike stirred, grunted, and sat up in his blanket.

"You doggoned cayuse! I guess—"

The ruffian broke off. His eyes, wide open, were fixed on the spot where the horse had been. His hand groped at the trail-ropes. He leaped to his feet, with a roar of rage.

Dick Carr panted.

Further caution was useless. He ran the horse out of the timber, running by its side. He heard the ruffian plunging through the trees behind him. Clear of the timber, Dick swung himself to the bronco's back. A second more, and he was riding madly.

Gallop! Gallop!

Red Ike at first had doubtless fancied that the bronco had somehow loosened itself from the trail-ropes. But, as he plunged furiously after it from the timber, he saw the figure of the rider in the starlight. A roar of fury came from the ruffian.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

He fired as fast as he could pull the trigger.

But the hot lead flew wide and wild. Yelling with fury, Red Ike blazed away his last shots as the horseman dashed on over the dim prairie.

Dick shouted aloud in sheer glee as he galloped. When he looked round the timber island had sunk into the dimness of the prairie.

But he slackened speed at last. The faintest, palest glimmer in the east told him that dawn was coming. But it was still dark on the prairie, and he was still as hopelessly lost as ever—but for the horse. He trusted to the animal's instinct. And he was right! As soon as he no longer felt a guiding hand, the bronco changed his direction and trotted away on a course of his own, and Dick did not need telling that he was heading for home.

Half a mile after mile over the rugged prairie; mile after mile through the tough grass that gradually whitened as dawn came. The rising sun was gleaming on the high summit of Squaw Mountain in the west; eastward, Dick had a glimpse of the glimmer of the Rio Frio. Packsaddle was not in sight. But the bronco loped on; he knew his way.

The glimmering of corrugated-iron roofs in the loop of the Frio caught Dick's eyes at last. Shacks and shanties and the high roof of Larsen's store came in view. Nearer the river was the frame schoolhouse, with its high fence, corral and bunkhouse and chuckhouse clear in the dawn. The gate stood wide open.

Dick gave the reins a shake. He could make out a staring crowd in the school playground. He grinned, and waved his hat. With a jingle of bridle and a thunder of hoofs, the tenderfoot dashed up to Packsaddle School.

(Next Wednesday: "THE TENDER-FOOT'S TRIUMPH!" another thrilling complete story of the Packsaddle pals. Don't miss it.)

DISASTER OVERTAKES THE ST. FRANK'S ADVENTURERS IN THE ARCTIC!

The SECRET WORLD!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

All Serene!

A PARTY of St. Frank's boys and Moor View School girls are spending the last days of the Christmas holiday at Handforth Towers, when they learn that their old friend, Lord Dorrimore, the millionaire globe-trotter, has planned a trip by airship to the Arctic in search of a missing explorer. The juniors and girls clamour to go with him, but Dorrie firmly refuses. He agrees, however, to show them over the Titan, his super airship. When the party, which includes Nelson Lee, the schoolmaster detective, and Umlosi, Dorrie's negro companion, is aboard, the airship suddenly leaves the mooring-mast, and the engines start to throb. Lord Dorrimore then springs a big surprise on his young guests. He is taking them with him to the Arctic. The boys are wildly excited, but the girls are dismayed when they realise that they have only the clothes they are wearing. They take Dorrie to task, but his lordship is highly amused.

"That's good!" chuckled Dorrie. "Carried off! Once aboard the lugger, by gad! It's next door to kidnappin', isn't it?"

"Dorrie, you're a rascal!" said Nelson Lee severely. "Don't take any notice of him, girls—he's only teasing you. If you go into your cabins, you'll find as much clothing as you need—and all the

other little things which you may require on a month's trip. I'm sure Lady Handforth knows all your little individual fancies, and she superintended the packing of your trunks, and they left the Towers early this morning. You were in such a hurry to get away that you never noticed the depleted conditions of your wardrobes. I may tell you that Lady Handforth and her maids were up nearly all night—just to please Dorrie's little whim!"

Handforth's mater was hostess at the Towers for the Christmas holidays, General Handforth being a bachelor.

The girls' expressions changed. "Oh, then—then we're all right?" asked Irene breathlessly.

"As far as I know, you're all fixed up—the boys included," smiled Lord Dorrimore. "I wrote to all your people individually on Sunday, and got sheaves of telegrams on Monday, so that there's nothing to worry about. All your people know where you are, and they've all given permission. I thought it better to arrange everythin' on the quiet, so that it would come as a nice little gift from the gods."

"Good old Dorrie!"

"Hurrah!"

"We're off to the North Pole!" roared Handforth. "Three cheers for Dorrie!"

"Steady—steady!" interrupted his lordship. "Not so fast, Handy! I didn't say you were goin' to the Pole, did I? Oh, no! I couldn't expect your

parents to agree to a proposition like that!"

Handforth looked dismayed, and the others ceased their excited talk, too.

"Then where are we going, sir?" asked Tommy Watson.

"Well, I think you know the good old Wanderer, don't you?" asked Lord Dorrimore. "She's lyin' at the farthest possible point North, an' I'm going to use her as a base. We shall fly straight to the yacht, an' then you'll all occupy your usual state-room and have a good time."

"But—but how can you transfer us to the Wanderer?"

"Easy," smiled his lordship. "You see, I've had a special mooring-mast rigged up, an' we shall simply hitch on, an' you'll all disembark. You mustn't expect that you're goin' to the North Pole! Isn't there any end to your greed, you young beggars?"

But the juniors were thoroughly satisfied—and so were the girls, particularly after they had rushed to their state-room, and had found an ample supply of their personal belongings.

They were going on the airship to Lord Dorrimore's base—the good old Wanderer—and they would be on the spot when the Titan came back from her various dashes.

So everything was quite satisfactory. Not a single member of that excited party dreamed of the startling events which lay in store!

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Northward Ho!

THE rest of that day was a long period of one thrill after another.

The airship had passed over Handforth Towers, and the St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls had seen many waving hands. After all, this trip was not regarded as anything perilous. It wasn't much different from a short sea voyage, for the passengers would soon be on the Wanderer. If there were any perils to be encountered, they would only be risked by strong men.

The airship was as steady as a railway train. There was hardly the faintest suspicion of motion, and scarcely any vibration. She sailed steadily onwards, and life on board was very much like that of an ocean-going yacht.

From the windows one could look straight down upon the ever-changing landscape, and although this was exciting enough for a while, Handforth's restless spirit soon grew rather bored. His brain was at work again—and in the same strain as before.

"What's that queer thing hanging down the port side, for'ard?" Church was asking, as he stood looking out of one of the saloon windows. "Do you see it, Handy?"

"It's one of the hitched-on aeroplanes, of course," said Handforth.

"No, I don't mean that," said Church. "This other thing—nearer."

"How should I know?" said Edward Oswald. "Look here, I've heard that Dorrie expects us to reach the Wanderer by about dawn to-morrow. He's going slowly all the way—in fact, at under half-speed—as the skipper doesn't mean to take any chances. Besides, it wouldn't be any good getting to the base before daylight, anyhow."

"But we needn't bother about that now," said McClure. "Come and have a look at this thing hitched to the airship, Handy. It looks like a boat, but that's silly. It can't be a boat—"

"And why not?" inquired Lord Dorrimore, as he came to a halt near the window. "If it'll satisfy you in any way, young 'un, let me inform you that that object is a specially constructed motor-boat."

"But what's it for, sir?"

"To keep us afloat, in case we drop into the water!" said Dorrie solemnly.

"What do you think a motor-boat is for—except to ride in? I've come prepared for every emergency, an' that little craft might come in very handy in a tight corner. Not that we're expectin' any tight corners," he added, smiling. "This ship is safer than the old Wanderer."

He strolled off, and Handforth drew his chums away from the window.

"Come to the cabin," he said softly.

"What on earth for?"

"Because I tell you to!" retorted Handforth. "Any objections, my lads, and I'll punch you on the nose!"

So they humoured him, and went to the cabin.

"It's jolly decent of Dorrie to take us all as far as the base, and to dump us all on the Wanderer," said Handforth. "And it may satisfy some of the chaps. But it won't satisfy me."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Church.

"What's the trouble now?"

"There's no trouble, but we've started on this adventure, and we're going to carry right through with it," declared Handforth. "I'm trying to think of some way in which we can stow ourselves away—instead of going down to the yacht with the rest!"

"There's no satisfying some people,"

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said McClure crossly. "You ought to be boiled, Handy! Dorrie acts like a brick, and he gives us a whacking great surprise, and even that's not enough for you!"

Edward Oswald waved his hand.

"We've got to be on the spot when Dr. Hammerton Powell is rescued," declared Handforth firmly. "Don't you realise, you chumps, that I'm going to write up a whole record of this trip? And how can I make it complete without including a description of the actual rescue scene?"

"Oh, all right!" said Church promptly. "If you want to stow yourself away, go ahead and do it. Mao and I know when we're well off, and we're not going to take a hand in this rot!"

"Not likely!" agreed McClure.

They went out, and left Handforth alone. There were many times when his little ways palled upon them. And it was certainly thick to suggest stowing themselves away, after Dorrie had been so jolly decent.

When darkness came, they had lost sight of the earth for some little time, owing to ground mists. Or perhaps they had been over the sea—none of the juniors could tell. And now there were electric lights gleaming everywhere, and one had the impression, more convincing than ever, of being aboard ship.

The saloon and the lounges were warmed, and extremely cosy. There were magazines to read, and there was even the wireless to listen to—for there were several loudspeakers installed, and it was easily possible to pick up the London Regional and the National programmes.

And dinner was served exactly as though they were on solid earth, instead of cruising through the night sky at a height of seven or eight thousand feet—where the temperature was below zero. Without any question, this airship was the last word in scientific construction.

As the Titan was expected to reach her base soon after dawn, all the guests were advised to get to bed early—as, of course, they would be required to be all ready for disembarkation, together with their belongings.

"Why, it's hardly a trip at all!" said Reggie Pitt, with a grin, as they prepared to retire. "Before we know where we are, we shall have travelled right up into the Arctic region, and we shall be on the Wanderer. It's pretty marvellous, when you come to think of it."

"By Jove, rather!"

They were all ready for bed, although there was too much general excitement for sleep. A rumour had got round, too, that the wind had strengthened considerably, and that they were actually fighting a minor gale. But there was no difference in the going of the great airship, except for an occasional quiver, and perhaps a little downwards dip, which caused a queer sensation in the pit of the stomach.

Lord Dorrimore, having seen all the young people off to bed, mounted the main stairway, and passed along the corridor which led up and down the whole length of the vessel. It was electrically lit all the way, and somewhat resembled a Tube subway, only much smaller. It went right into the distance, and Dorrie walked right to the end and arrived at the navigation-room, in the very front of the great vessel. He descended a narrow staircase, and found himself in a little wonderland which the juniors had not yet seen.

The control-room was quite big—and Captain Waring, one of the most skilled airship pilots in Great Britain, was at the wheel. Another officer was watching the instruments, and was in constant telephonic communication with the engineers in the gondolas.

"Hallo, Lord Dorrimore," said the skipper, glancing round. "Everything trim for the night?"

"Yes, the officer has just been round, an' I think all's well," smiled Dorrie. "How are we goin'? Shall we hitch on at dawn do you think?"

Captain Waring, who was a man of about forty, stroked his chin as he glanced at a fearsome assortment of dials.

"I'm not so sure," he replied. "The weather's not what it was, sir. We're hitting a nasty cross-wind just now, and we're already several points off our course. Once the wind gets strong enough, we can't do anything else but go a bit astray. Still, there's nothing to worry about. We're doing fine, on the whole—although our speed is much less."

Lord Dorrimore glanced at the dials. "What's this?" he asked. "This indicator pointing to 27? That's not our speed, is it?"

"I'm afraid it is."

"But, hang it, aren't the engines workin' properly?"

"Not a trace of a misfire," smiled Captain Waring. "But when we're heading into a forty-mile-an-hour gale, it just takes forty miles an hour off our speed. Every yard we travel, we're forcing our way against the wind. She's behaving beautifully, sir—never piloted a steadier craft. You can sleep comfortably."

And Dorrie took the skipper at his word, and when he went off to his own state-room he tumbled into bed and went off to sleep without the slightest qualm. He did not awaken until a steward brought his tea in the morning. It was daylight, and the airship was forging on her course, although no higher than a thousand feet.

"It's some time after dawn, isn't it?" asked Dorrie.

"Over three hours, my lord," replied the steward. "We're having a bit of a fight against the gale, it seems. Steady, sir! Can't take any chances with a teacup just now!"

Dorrie had placed it on the bed, but the next moment it tipped over, and crashed to the floor. The Titan, with a sideways lurch, had dipped downwards in a giddy swerve, only to right herself the next instant.

"By the Lord Harry!" said Dorrie. "She's gettin' tricky!"

"Been like that this last three hours, my lord," said the steward.

And when Dorrie turned out, he found everybody else up, and lining the saloon windows. Staring down upon the sea, they were interested in the curling foam and the big waves. The air, too, was filled with the whistling of the gale. It was apparent to everybody that the airship was battling valiantly.

"How's everybody?" asked his lordship genially. "Any case of sickness?"

"No fear, sir!" went up a chorus.

"Anybody getting windy?"

There was a general laugh at this question, for the thought of danger had not occurred to anybody. Most of the passengers, indeed, were enjoying the fight. It was more interesting than a cruise through still air.

Some of them were rather disappointed. They felt that it was a swindle to fly so close to the sea, when there were heavy banks of clouds overhead.

How much better it would be to go right up into the upper air, and to look down upon the sunlit clouds.

But there was a reason for the skipper's move.

"There's land over there, sir!" shouted one of the juniors, pointing. "Yes, by jingo, and there's a ship anchored in that bleak-looking bay."

Dorrie pulled out a pocket telescope and levelled it.

"Thought so!" he said with satisfaction. "The Wanderer! We shall just have time for breakfast, an' then we shall have to hitch on!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Wanderer!"

"We're not so very late, after all," said Nipper. "Will you make any flight to-day, Dorrie?"

"I don't think so," replied his lordship. "I just had a word with one of the navigation officers, an' it seems that the weather is gettin' a bit dirty. So we shall probably hook up the old gas-bag, an' wait for clearer conditions."

"Still, she's done wonders, sir."

"You're right, Nipper—she has," said Dorrie. "Still, we can't expect too much of her, you know—and there'll be no sense in startin' off in a smother like this. We need clear weather for our

Disaster!

ALTHOUGH the breakfast-table was the scene of light chatter and laughter, everybody felt that there was a certain tension in the air. Nobody said anything, but there were very few who missed that sensation of thrilling uncertainty.

For the great airship was now fighting hard—making attempt after attempt to secure a hold on the mooring-mast. Again and again the Sh. Frank's fellows had caught a glimpse of the Wanderer

And then, at last, came a complete change.

The vibration in the saloon ceased, but the rocking of the airship increased—until, indeed, it was getting difficult to keep one's cup and saucer from falling off the table.

"What's happened now?" asked Church, rather fearfully.

"Engines have stopped!" murmured Handforth.

"Do you think there's anything wrong?" asked Irene steadily.



"Catch hold!" exclaimed Nipper, swinging face downwards from the doorway. "Handy! Grab my hands!" Handforth, clinging desperately to the broken girder which dangled by a cable from the airship's nose, released one hand and gripped one of Nipper's. "Good man!" he gasped.

One of the airship officers appeared, and saluted Lord Dorrimore.

"Everything ready, sir," he announced. "We're on the hook!"

"Good man!" said Dorrie. "I don't mind admittin' I was scared stiff!"

The young officer grinned.

"We've had worse tussles at Pulham, sir," he said calmly. "It was made somewhat difficult here on account of the mast being unstable. The yacht is rocking a bit, and it was tricky work for a few minutes."

"Then we're all right?" asked a dozen eager voices.

"Right as ninepence!" smiled Dorrie. "An' this is where we disembark."

"It's pretty wonderful how they managed to get her hooked up," said Handforth.

He seemed to have an idea that the airship had pushed her nose against the mooring-mast, and had engaged an enormous hook into a correspondingly big "eye." In reality, of course, the Titan had dropped cables, and these had been secured, the airship being hauled into her anchorage by steam winches.

Church and McClure haunted their leader like a shadow during the next five minutes—for they had no intention of allowing him to play the part of stowaway. In fact, they dropped a hint to Nipper and one or two of the others that Handy was inclined to be obstinate, and the unfortunate Edward

job, if we're goin' to spot poor old Powell an' his aeroplane."

"I suppose the weather will be worse farther north?"

"That's what the captain says, anyhow," nodded Dorrie. "Well, let's hustle over breakfast—we don't want to be ordered out before the meal's half over."

And everybody sat down in the dining saloon. The Titan, at reduced speed, and dropping lower and lower, headed for her temporary mooring-mast,

just below. Again and again the airship had manoeuvred for position, only to be forced out of it again by a caprice of the gale.

It was snowing now, too—enormous flurries sweeping down and blotting out everything.

It seemed that the wind had veered round and was increasing in violence with every minute that passed. But there was not the slightest need for apprehension. It was only like a sea-going vessel attempting to force her way into harbour against an unfavourable sea.

Oswald had no chance whatever of putting his plan into execution—if, indeed, he had ever formed any actual plan.

Perhaps he had abandoned it on hearing that the airship was to remain at her anchorage all day. That meant that Lord Dorrimore and all the others would spend their time in the yacht, so there wouldn't be much fun in staying behind in the airship entirely on his own.

"You boys had better lead the way," said Nelson Lee briskly, as they all crowded round the main saloon. "It's pretty cold outside, so you've got to wrap up well. Go straight below, is my advice."

"An' good advice, too," said Dorrie. "It's snowin' like old boots, an' I don't think you'll be particularly charmed with the temperature."

So a move was made without any further delay.

"You first, Handy!" said Nipper politely. "You shall have the place of honour, and be the first to go down the mooring-mast."

Handforth beamed.

"Good man!" he said. "Glad you realise my importance."

Nipper grinned as Handforth turned his back. The idea, of course, was to see Edward Oswald safely off the airship, so that he couldn't get up to any of his little tricks. And they went along the interior gangway, and at last reached the doorway in the nose. It was open, and a bitterly cold wind was shooting straight in—for the airship, swinging at her moorings, was directly facing the powerful gale.

"By George, it's a wind all right!" gasped Handforth, as it caught him between the teeth.

He could see two or three of the yacht's officers standing on the platform at the top of the mast, ready to receive the passengers as they came off. It was not such a high mast as that at Pulham, of course, but it was of very much the same design, except that the platform was exposed, and that there was no lift. Above the platform rose the steel girders, which finished in a point—the airship's nose being drawn up close.

As Handforth hesitated in the doorway a great flurry of wind came shooting down, and the Titan swung sideways, and her whole enormous body quivered. She slowed round, and at the same moment there came a series of startling metallic cracks from the mast. The officers on the platform stared upwards, aghast.

"Go on, Handy!" said one of the other fellows. "Afraid to cross the gangway?"

"You hopeless ass!" roared Handforth.

He strode out of the airship, and at that moment the disaster took place.

It seem to Handforth that the gangway beneath him—the only thing which joined the airship to the mooring-mast—was smashing to splinters. A girder of heavy metal swung down, and narrowly missed him. He caught hold of it, hardly knowing why he did so. But that very action saved his life.

For the gangway dropped away from under him, and he was left hanging in mid-air. Nipper, standing in the open doorway, felt his heart nearly stop beating.

"Handy!" he gasped, in horror.

But there was no time for him to take any action. As the great airship swung round again, hit by another squall, the entire top of the mooring-mast came away with a series of reports like gunfire. The platform was mercifully left

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intact, although the Wanderer's men had an extraordinary escape. The airship drifted away, borne with terrific speed by the gale.

The cables sang madly, and then snapped with truly fearsome sounds. The wreckage of the mast-top was hanging down, held by the loose cables. And to one of the broken girders Handforth was clinging!

He swung there, with death at close quarters.

The topmost girders had broken away from the mast, and were still attached to the nose of the airship—with Handforth in deadly peril. At any moment he might be jolted off—to fall into that icy sea, from which there could be no rescue!

Adrift!

NIPPER gave no thought whatever to the airship's plight, or to any possible danger to himself. Edward Oswald Handforth was just below him—clinging to that swaying girder! He turned, and found Church and McClure near him, their faces as pale as chalk.

"Quick!" he shouted. "Hold my feet!"

"But Handy, he—he dropped——" began Church.

"He didn't!" roared Nipper. "He's just below here; but he can't last for more than a minute in this cold! Hold my feet I tell you!"

"Oh!" muttered Church with a choke in his throat.

Nipper flung himself full length, and while the other juniors eagerly clutched his legs, and held on for dear life, Nipper swung face downwards from that doorway in the airship's nose.

Handforth was below him, swinging about madly.

"Catch hold!" exclaimed Nipper. "Handy! Grab!"

"Good man!" gasped Handforth.

And Edward Oswald released one hand from the broken girder, and caught at the Remove skipper's wrist. He held tight, and a moment later he was holding with both hands.

"Up!" shouted Nipper. "Steady, you chaps—pull!"

Even now the peril was still deadly, for those broken girders were swinging to and fro in the most dangerous manner, crashing into the airship's nose, rending the fabric, and doing other damage.

And, from somewhere far astern, something else had happened during this minute of tense peril. Nobody knew what it was, but they had heard a splintering crash, and they felt certain that some further disaster had happened. As a matter of fact, the great airship, swung helplessly round at the moment of the accident, had collided with the mooring-mast. With engines silent, she had been unprepared for any manoeuvring. And the gale was veering round from one point of the compass to another with bewildering rapidity. The mooring-mast had not only shattered the propellers of the starboard engine gondola, but had half demolished the gondola itself. By amazing luck the engineers had already left it, as their work was over.

Handforth was gradually hauled up into safety. As Nipper was dragged higher and higher, Reggie Pitt and one or two other juniors crowded in the doorway and bent over—hardly realising the dreadful peril they ran. A sudden lurch, and they would pitch out to certain death.

But pluck won in the end, and Handforth found himself in that rocking subway, and somebody had sufficient presence of mind to close the door and to push over the locking catch.

"Handy!" breathed McClure. "We—we thought——"

"Never mind what you thought!" panted Handforth. "By George! What about me? What about what I thought? Nipper, old man, put it there!"

He gave Nipper's hand a warm clasp.

"That's all right, Handy!" said Nipper.

"You saved my life——" began Handforth huskily.

"Don't be an ass! What else do you think I could do, when I saw you flopping about down there like a spider clinging to a twig? Handy, old man, I thought it was all up with you."

"Quick!" shouted Reggie Pitt. "Let's rush back amidships! We want to find out what's been happening! Most of the others have gone back already——"

"Look out!" yelled somebody.

From close quarters there had come a shrieking of rending metal, and they hardly knew what to expect. It was the debris, hanging loose at the nose, crashing against the airship's girders and fabric.

With all speed they raced down the long subway, and hurriedly descended the staircase into the saloon. There was a rush for the windows, but nothing could be seen but thick mists. The entire airship was surrounded by an impenetrable fog, and she was tossing about to the accompaniment of creaking metal and straining woodwork. The air was filled with the noises of her torture.

"We're in the clouds!" exclaimed Nelson Lee, who was looking anxious. "The captain, I think, has succeeded in getting us several thousand feet high, but we're still adrift. Handforth, I am glad to see you safe! I hear that you were——"

"That's all right, sir," said Handforth shakily. "Only a bit of a mess up for a minute. Nipper pulled me back! By George, he's a brick!"

"Do you know exactly what's happened, sir?" asked Nipper quietly.

For a moment Lee hesitated.

"There is no reason why I should withhold the truth," he said at length. "The mooring-mast broke, and the gale swung us round. As you know, our engines were all still. For it was assumed that the ship was safely anchored. I don't know for certain, but I believe the starboard gondola has not only been smashed, but I fear she has torn adrift, and has damaged two of the aft balloons."

"That's lively, sir," said Nipper seriously.

Lord Dorrimore burst into the main saloon, his face aflame.

"The starboard gondola has gone!" he shouted, his voice quivering with uncontrolled fury. "Heaven knows what damage was caused before she fell off!"

"But what about the engineers?" cried Irene, in horror.

"They're safe!" shouted Lord Dorrimore. "But, by all the saints, somebody shall suffer for this! The metal of that mooring-mast must have been rotten! I'll prosecute the maker——"

"Don't, Dorrie!" muttered Lee. "What's the use?"

"I'm furious!" thundered his lordship. "There was no danger; the ship was in perfect control, and but for that

bad workmanship there would have been no disaster."

"But it was the storm, Dorrie," put in Nipper.

"The storm, be hanged!" said Lord Dorrimore savagely. "That mast was guaranteed to hold the ship in a tornado! A fine guarantee!" he added bitterly. "If I'd only known—"

But Lee succeeded in calming him. Dorrie was one of the most genial persons alive—until he was aroused. It was only on very rare occasions that he gave way to any show of temper—and even then only under acute provocation. "I know—I know!" he said at length. "It's no good rappin' on, Lee, old man. But think of it—after all the plans I'd made! Where are we now? Adrift in an Arctic blizzard, an' gettin' farther and farther northward!"

"But we can't be, Dorrie!" put in Nipper. "We've been coming northwards all night, and we were fighting against the gale—"

"It's veered round since then," interrupted Lord Dorrimore quietly. "That's the infernal trick of it! We're driftin' in a north-westerly direction—farther into the Arctic Circle. Our only chance is to fight the storm, and to hobble back to civilisation."

He was silent, and nobody else felt like speaking just then.

They were all thinking the same thing—but in this hour of disaster they were calm and cool. Nobody gave way to panic. There were pale faces, and there were anxious eyes, but even the girls remained perfectly level-headed.

That the airship was in grave danger needed no telling.

The passengers could feel the violent throbbing beneath them, and they knew that her remaining engines were at work. But the balance of the whole craft was upset, and, in any case, with two of her most important engines crippled through the loss of that gondola, there was a fear that the others would be ineffective.

And what of the other damage? It was soon reported that the wreckage at the nose had dropped clear, and was no longer a menace—but before falling adrift, it had torn the fabric, and one of the forward balloonettes was losing gas. And it seemed that the steering gear was fouled, too.

The danger was indeed considerable. "Upon my word, you've taught me a lesson in composure, young 'uns," said Dorrie, after a while, as he looked at the calm-faced boys and girls. "Here have I been gettin' frightfully excited, an' you look as though we were out for a morning's picnic!"

"It'll be a nice little picnic, sir!" said Pitt, with a grimace.

"Well, anyhow, keep a stiff upper lip—an' I'll run along to the navigation-room, an' see what's doing," said his lordship briskly. "Don't be too worried—I don't suppose there's any actual danger. Our plans have gone west, of course, an' we may have to land in Russia, or Norway, or Canada, or somewhere! Goodness knows where we're driftin' for, to tell the truth!"

"Anyhow, we're still afloat—and that's something!" said Handforth.

"By jingo! Rather!" Then followed an anxious wait. The passengers spoke very little, but they all had a feeling that something fresh might happen at any moment. And when something fresh did happen, it was hardly likely to be of a cheering character.

Umlosi was there, and his great frame seemed to be shrunken. His face was of a dirty greyish colour, and he was

The Glyn Challenge Cup—Second Round.

SOMETHING LIKE A SCORE. A GAME OF THIRTEEN GOALS.

By Clarence Fellowe (the Rhyming Reporter).

ST. JIM'S RUN RIOT AGAINST JARROW.

By Tom Merry.

Our second round opponents, Jarrow, had beaten Freshfields in the first round by 17—0, and so we expected a hard game when visiting them. We made a good start. I headed a goal from Digby's centre, and Lowther netted another. Jarrow's "star," however, a six-foot specimen appropriately named Goliath, dominated the game from this point, and Jarrow piled on four goals before the interval. While sucking lemons we discussed tactics, and it was agreed that the only way to beat Jarrow was to speed up our game, which had been rather slow in the first half. Restarting, we went all out, and we found Jarrow's weakness. They had put too much into the first half, and offered small resistance to our attacks, even Goliath being "blown." After Blake and I had levelled the scores, we had things pretty much our own way. I completed a "hat trick," and everybody enjoyed themselves, cramming on a grand total of fourteen goals ere the final whistle put an end to Jarrow's torture. And so we entered the Third Round on the strength of a 14—4 victory.

obviously terrified. While the girls were bravely composed, this great warrior of a hundred battles was visibly shivering in his shoes! Umlosi would fight a dozen men, and face death—of that sort—without a quail. But this adventure in the air turned his blood to water.

"Wau, young masters!" he rumbled, as he found several of the juniors round him. "Wau, I like it not!"

"If it comes to that, old chap, I think we all like it not!" said Nipper dryly.

"Are we not at the mercy of the great winds?" asked Umlosi. "Are we not as a feather in the storm, blowing hither and thither, and liable to descend into the cold and merciless seas? I would that N'Kose had abandoned this madness ere he started out! 'Twas indeed a folly!"

At that moment Dorrie himself returned.

"Well, there's not much news, but what there is is cheerin'," he announced to the eager listeners. "The forward and port engines are workin' fine, and we're holdin' our own, more or less. We're risin', too—ten thousand feet already."

"Hurrah!"

"That's good, Dorrie!"

"We're maintainin' an even keel, an' there's apparently no loss of gas," continued his lordship. "So all we've got to do is to keep our spirits up, an' hope for the best."

"But are we actually beating the storm, Dorrie?" asked Nipper.

"Well, no," admitted his lordship. "To tell the honest truth, young 'un, we're driftin' deeper an' deeper into the Arctic wastes, an' there's every appearance that the blizzard will get worse."

The Uncanny Light!

LORD DORRIMORE had a piece of other news, however, which was very welcome.

"Fortunately," he said, "the wireless hasn't been affected, and we're

When drawn against the River House, St. Frank's had little cause to grouse. A sporting game was well assured—those watching it could ne'er be bored. At first, Hal Brewster's men held sway—they'd struck their form, it seemed their day. Once, twice, then thrice the ball went in, which altered many a "Frankish" grin. But then St. Frank's pulled up their socks, and in defence became like rocks. At last they gained the upper hand—Pitt scored, than Nipper, Watson, grand! Twice more Hal Brewster's men drew blood. Then came a winning St. Frank's flood. At seven to six the total stood—St. Frank's had gained the verdict, good!

CHIEF CUP RESULTS.

JARROW... .. 4	ST. JIM'S ... 14
Goliath (3), Stuart	Merry (3), Lowther (3), Blake (3), D'Arcy (2), Noble, Digby, Figgins.
RIVER HOUSE 6	ST. FRANK'S 7
Brewster (5) Church (own goal).	Pitt (3), Nipper (3), Watson.
HALCHESTER 4	ROOKWOOD 5
UPCHESTER ... 2	BAGSHOT ... 3
GREYFRIARS 6	HELLESGOW 4
CLAREMONT 2	RIPPLINGHAM 9
RYLCOMBE G.S. 1	CRESSINGHAM 0
ABBOTSFORD 2	WEATON GR. 1

in communication with the Wanderer all the time."

"By George, that's good hearing!" exclaimed Handforth eagerly.

"We've told them that we're still safe, and that we're doin' our best to back against the storm," continued Dorrie. "They report that one man was hurt, but not very seriously. The top of the moorin'-mast is a wreck, an' the weather's getting worse."

It was good to hear that, in spite of their predicament, they were still in continuous communication with civilisation through the Wanderer. Somehow, it made them feel that things were not so bad. And by now, too, the Titan had settled down to a steady motion. Her officers and crew had got her under partial control, and were using every ounce of their skill to save her and her passengers from destruction. Captain Waring was a man of varied experience, and none could be trusted better than he.

A change came after half an hour. Everybody knew that the airship was racing along at a great speed—being blown almost sideways by the raging gale. Her engines were only serving to keep her steady, and to save her from getting completely out of control. With her steering gear damaged, and practically half her engine-power gone, she was at the mercy of the elements.

They were rapidly being blown farther and farther into the Arctic Circle, and as they went, the blizzard increased in violence. Lord Dorrimore was beginning to understand why the ill-fated Dr. Hammerton Powell had met with disaster. If he had encountered a storm like this, what chance would he have had in an aeroplane?

The change in the elements was not apparent in the motion of the great airship, but in what the anxious watchers could see from the windows. It was growing darker, and now they were rising clear of the cloud banks, and

getting well above them. Overhead was the sky, starry and balefully cold. The sun had practically vanished, although it was not the hour for night-time, according to their watches. It was a kind of twilight, with the clouds visible below, in rolling, uneasy masses.

Perhaps they were in a different current, for it seemed that they were racing the clouds with incredible speed. But in all the vista, no matter which direction they gazed in, there was nothing to be seen but a great desolate vista of waste.

Northward—ever northward! That was the startling truth, and it was idle to attempt to keep it away from the boys and girls.

"It's jolly rummy, when you come to think of it," said Reggie Pitt soberly, as they went to the windows again, after a meal. "We all wanted to go with Dorrie into the Arctic—and here we are!"

"Perhaps Handy's satisfied!" remarked Church, not without bitterness.

"You howling ass, I didn't say I wanted to come like this, did I?" asked Handforth. "But there's nothing to worry about. There's enough grub on this airship to last a fortnight, and if we're drifting all that time we shall go all round the world!"

"That wouldn't be so bad," said Fullwood. "My hat, Handy, what a chap you are for getting marvellous ideas!"

"Well, you never know," said Handforth tartly.

"That's just it—we don't!" said Nipper.

The one comforting fact was that the Titan maintained her great height. The hours went by, but nobody could think of sleeping. It was an effort to eat. The majority of the passengers wanted to crowd at the windows all the time, watching for some sign which would herald the end of this nightmare.

Nobody knew what the time was—nobody cared. But it seemed that many hours must have passed when the real crisis arose. By now it had been apparently established that the airship was indeed a mistress of the elements. In spite of her crippled condition, in spite of the hundred-and-one disadvantages, she was still plugging on, practically whole, weathering the many dangers. She had proved herself to be a masterpiece of the constructor's art.

But then came the revelation.

After a period of semi-calmness, the Titan was caught up like a feather, and tossed about so madly that everybody thought their last minute had come. The air was filled with the groaning and creaking of the straining metal, and

occasionally a shrill snap would occur—deadly proof of the enormous strain.

At times the floor of the saloon would be level, then it would abruptly tip downwards, heel over, and rise acutely. In the navigation chamber this movement was even more pronounced, and the captain and his officers realised that they had lost control. Indeed, they had to clutch madly at anything in order to save themselves from injury.

The airship was being tossed about in the most fantastic way, and Captain Waring grew more and more amazed—and, incidentally, more and more startled at the airworthiness of his craft. Although he was expecting her to smash into fragments in midair—to break her back and disintegrate—she remained whole.

"I can't understand it, Dorrie!" panted Lee, as he clutched at the guard-rail in front of one of the windows. "This is no ordinary storm—the air is simply tortured. What in the name of wonder is happening?"

"Don't ask me!" replied Dorrie. "Phew! It's getting infernally hot in this saloon!"

"I've noticed that, sir, too!" said Reggie Pitt.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" breathed Dorrie. "Hot! An' if my calculations are right, we're far up within the Arctic Circle! What does it mean, Lee? Man alive, we ought to be stiff with cold, in spite of the electric heat!"

Lee frowned.

"I certainly can't understand it," he replied. "We're within the Arctic Circle, Dorrie—that's an established fact. And to think of the air being warm here is not only fantastic, but sheer madness—"

"Look!" shouted Nipper. "What's that, sir?"

He pointed out of the window, and for a moment the others caught a glimpse of a strange, eerie light flickering in the distance. It was a golden glow, almost like sunlight, but in a moment it was lost as the airship whirled into another mass of impenetrable mist.

"That was queer, wasn't it?" asked Lord Dorrimore.

"It seems to me there's something even queerer!" said Lee grimly. "Look at the windows, Dorrie! They're steaming!"

"Steamin', by glory—on the outside, too!" shouted his lordship. "The interior heat can't be responsible for that, Lee! But how— Gad! Look there! There's that light again! Can you see it?"

For a moment there was dead silence. The passengers crowded at every

available window, watching with wide-open eyes. Again the fog had cleared, and now the amazed adventurers could see a glow filling the whole horizon ahead—a glow which was akin to powerful sunlight.

There was no gale here—that was apparent.

Yet the airship was still being tossed about as though giant hands were playing with her.

"Air pockets!" muttered Lee. "It is probably caused by abrupt differences in the temperature. It gets hotter and hotter!"

"Look!" shouted Lord Dorrimore huskily.

Well below them was something which filled them with amazement and dread. A boiling mass of white-hot fire! The radiance from it was filling the air with a dazzling glow, and it seemed to those perspiring watchers that they were being drawn into the deadly furnace!

The saloon was like an oven. The heat was so stifling, in fact, that afterwards they wondered how they had lived through that period. But at the time they were so staggered by the astounding sequence of events that they were only subconsciously aware of the dreadful heat.

And, almost as swiftly as they had caught sight of that boiling mass of white-hot fire, so it vanished. The vapour was around them again, but now there was brilliant, white light, which was just like sunlight.

And they were apparently getting clear of that volcanic vortex—for it was obviously the boiling crater of the most gigantic volcano that human eyes had ever rested upon. The rising heat had served them well, in reality—for the Titan soared upwards and upwards at an incredible speed, practically pitch-forked into the upper air by the very heat which had menaced her.

And then all became calm. The pitching ceased, and once again the airship was forging onwards with droning engines. There was not a creak of metal, not a trace of straining. But it was noticed that the air was becoming difficult to breathe. One or two of the girls were laughing half hysterically, and the juniors felt the same effect. It was almost as though they were getting light-headed. They could feel, too, a strange, acrid taste in their mouths.

What unknown place in the Arctic had they reached?

(Next Wednesday another full-of-thrills instalment of the further adventures of the St. Frank's chums in the Arctic. Order your GEM early.)



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