

"TOWSER'S TWIN!" SPARKLING LONG ST. JIM'S STORY OF FUN AND ADVENTURE— **INSIDE.**





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# TOWSER'S TWIN!



Towser growled furiously and strained at his chain to get at Crooke and Mellish as the two cads jabbed at him with the brooms. But at that moment the enraged Herries reached the spot. "You cads!" he roared. "I'll teach you to bully my dog!"

## CHAPTER 1.

### The Madness of Bernard Glyn!

**H**ERRIES of the Fourth rushed into Study No. 6 in the School House of St. Jim's with his face crimson and his eyes ablaze with excitement. He came into the study at top speed, and reached the table before he could stop himself, and grasped it with both hands to avoid pitching over it.

Jack Blake, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy were at work at the table, writing industriously, and Herries' sudden grasp upon the table had a most disastrous effect.

The table rocked, and blots innumerable scattered from three pens, and three exercises were reduced at the same moment to a state of ruin.

The inkpot rolled over, and shot towards Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, and before that junior knew what was happening the ink was streaming over his trousers.

Three juniors jumped up with a roar of wrath.

"Herries, you ass!"

"Herries, you fathead!"

"Hewwies, you dangewous maniae!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Herries. "I say, I—" He gasped breathlessly, and still held on to the table. "I say, you chaps—"

"You ass!" yelled Blake. "Look at my impot!"

"Look at my giddy verbs!" shouted Digby.

"Look at my twousahs!" groaned D'Arcy.

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Herries panted.

"Blow your impot! Blow your verbs! Blow your trousers!"

"Look here, Herries—"

"You uttah ass!"

"Gimme your hammer, Blake!

Come along, all of you!"

"My hammer! What on earth—"

Herries made a dash at Blake's toolbox. Jack Blake was an amateur carpenter, and his tools were the common property of the study. Herries dragged the box open, groped in it for the hammer, and jerked it out.

The three juniors, forgetting even the ruined impots and the trousers in their amazement, rushed at Herries and grasped him. Herries was such a quiet, steady-going fellow as a rule, that his excitement was really alarming.

"What's the matter, Herries?" asked Blake.

"Let me go!" panted Herries.

"Come on, all of you! I'll smash him! He's mad!"

"Eh?"

"Who's mad?"

"Bai Jove, I wathah think that Hewwies himself is mad!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "Don't let him get away with that hammer. He may bwain somebody!"

The three juniors held Herries firmly, and Blake jerked the hammer out of his hand. Herries struggled furiously.

"Lemme go!" he roared. "I tell you, he's mad! The door's locked!"

"—"

"What door, you ass?"

"The box-room door! He's mad as a hatter! Come on! I tell you—will

you let me go?" yelled Herries frantically.

"But who—what—which—"

"Towser—"

"Towsah? Bai Jove! I always knew there was somethin' w'ong with that wotten bulldog. He nevah had the slightest respect for a fellow's twousahs."

"Towser's mad?" asked Blake in alarm. "My hat! Has he bitten anybody?"

"No, ass, but I expect he'll bite Glyn. I hope so—"

"You hope so!" roared Blake. "I think you're as mad as Towser! Glyn will have hydrophobia if Towser bites him—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I wish he had hydrophobia and— and smallpox, and measles!" hooted Herries. "He's mad!"

"Yes, Towser—"

"No, idiot—Glyn!"

"Bernard Glyn?"

"Yes, fathead! Lemme go! He's killing him!" Herries gasped incoherently.

"Look here!" exclaimed Blake, exasperated. "Who's mad—and who's killing whom? Are you mad, or is Bernard Glyn killing Towser, or is Towser killing Bernard Glyn?"

"Glyn's mad, and he's killing Towser, you idiots!" shrieked Herries, almost in hysterics. "He's locked up in the box-room with him, and he's killing him! I want the hammer to smash in the door! Now do you understand, you frabjous asses? Come on! If he kills Towser, I'll brain him! I'll—"



By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"Oh, you're potty!" said Blake. "Glyn wouldn't hurt an animal—"

"Bai Jove!"

"I'll brain him! I'll—"

"Pewwaws Towsah has been teawin' his twousahs, or somethin'," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as if that would be a full and adequate explanation for killing Towser.

"I don't care if he has! I'll brain him, I tell you! Come on!"

"Look here, Herries—"

"Rats! Leggo!"

Herries made a tremendous effort, and tore himself from the grasp of the Fourth Formers. He snatched the hammer from Blake's hand, and dashed out of the study before the chums of the Fourth could grasp him again.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "He's off his giddy wockah wight enough."

"After him! He'll do some damage with that hammer!"

The three juniors dashed out of the study. Herries was racing upstairs, three steps at a time, in desperate bounds. They dashed after him. From above came a wild sound of growling, snarling, and snapping, and the juniors thought they recognised the well-known voice of Towser, the bulldog.

They dashed on, amazed and alarmed. Bernard Glyn of the Shell was a peculiar youth in some respects. He was a wonderful inventor, and his inventions had often caused great trouble in the School House, for the inventor and for everybody else. But the Liverpool lad was kindness itself, and they could not imagine him being cruel to any animal.

Gr-r-r-r! Yowl!

It was certainly the voice of a canine sufferer. It came from the box-room over the Fourth Form studies—a room that was frequently used by Glyn for his experiments.

In the passage outside the box-room half a dozen excited fellows were gathered. Some of them were knocking at the door, and calling to Bernard Glyn to open it; but no answering voice came from within.

Glyn was evidently too deep in his work to reply. Herries dashed through the juniors, and crashed the hammer upon the lock of the door. It was a doughty blow. The lock did not yield, but the handle of the hammer did, breaking in two, and the hammer-head flew through the air, narrowly missing the aristocratic features of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as it flew back.

"Bai Jove! Take care, you frightful ass!" yelled D'Arcy.

Herries snorted.

The door was as fast as ever, and the hammer was of no further use. Herries raged in the passage. Blake pushed him aside, and knelt at the door to look through the keyhole. From within the box-room came the growling and whining without a pause.

Jack Blake uttered an exclamation of horror as he looked through the keyhole.

He could see into the box-room, and he saw all that was passing. Bernard Glyn was there, and he was kneeling beside the form of a bulldog that was stretched upon the floor.

The keyhole allowed a view of only part of the bulldog, and Blake could not see what Glyn was doing to it; but he was evidently doing something, and

the animal's mouth was wide open, showing the teeth, and growls and whines came incessantly forth.

Towser appeared to be in fearful agony, and yet he did not turn upon his tormentor and bite him. That was exceedingly strange, for Towser was supposed, as a rule, to be only too ready to bite, even without provocation, and certainly now he was having provocation enough.

Gr-r-r-r! Yowl!

"Great Scott!" gasped Blake. "Glyn, you idiot, you ass, open the door!"

"He's mad!" yelled Herries. "He's killing him!"

"Glyn—Bernard Glyn!"

"Open the door!"

"You brute!"

"Open the door, you rotter!"

Bang, bang, bang! The juniors kicked upon the door, and thumped upon it, and yelled through the keyhole. But the schoolboy inventor did not speak. From within the box-room came no sound but the agonised voice of the bulldog.

CHAPTER 2.

Towser II!

TOM MERRY came dashing upstairs, with Manners and Lowther at his heels. The noise from the box-room was drawing a crowd to the place, and the Terrible Three had heard it from the passage below.

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

"Glyn's gone mad," stammered Blake.

"He's ill-treating Towser!"

"Glyn! Impossible!"

"Look for yourself!"

Tom Merry looked through the keyhole, and his face blanched white.

"My hat!" he exclaimed. "He must be mad! Glyn, open the door! Leave

*George Herries thinks there's no bulldog in the world like his Towser—but the arrival of Towser's twin on the scene gives him—and some others—a bit of a shock!*

that dog alone! Open the door, or we'll smash it in!"

There was no reply. The juniors hammered furiously at the door.

They were amazed, indignant, and wildly excited. If they had not seen what was going on they could not have believed it. Bernard Glyn stopped at little where his experiments were concerned, certainly. He would take Manners' camera, or Blake's tool-box, or anything else that he needed at the moment, and the articles were sometimes returned in a somewhat damaged state. But no one had ever supposed him to be cruel to animals. But now it seemed only too clear that he was ill-treating Towser for some reason. It was no wonder that Herries was wildly excited.

"Open the door, Glyn!"

"Do you hear?"

"I'll brain him!" panted Herries, almost sobbing. "He's killing Towser! The brute! Pll—"

"Glyn, deah boy—"

"Will you open the door?" "Get the stool from the landing!" shouted Tom Merry. "We can bust in the door with that!"

"Good egg!"

Three or four juniors rushed off for the heavy oaken stool. They brought it back at top speed, and, without a pause, crashed it upon the lock of the door. Under that terrific impact the door shook and trembled, and the schoolboy inventor seemed suddenly to wake up to the fact that there was a disturbance going on outside. His voice was heard from the box-room for the first time.

"Hallo, out there! What are you up to?"

"Open the door!"

"What for?"

"What for, you ass!" yelled Tom Merry. "Let Towser alone!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bernard Glyn burst into a roar of laughter. But the juniors outside did not feel like laughing.

"He's mad!" said Tom Merry, in an awed voice. "That's the only excuse for him. Glyn has gone right off his chump!"

"Poor old Glyn!"

"Blow poor old Glyn!" roared Herries. "It's Towser we've got to think of! Open the door, Glyn, you brute, or we'll smash it in, and smash you afterwards!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash, crash!

The stool smote upon the lock with terrific force. There was an ominous creak from the door, stout as it was.

"Stop that!" shouted Glyn. "You'll break the lock!"

"You ass! That's what we're trying to do! Let Towser alone!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm not hurting the dog!"

"Not hurting him, you villain! We can hear his howls all over the place!"

"Open the door, Glyn!"

"I can't! I haven't finished my experiment—"

"You're jolly well not going to, either!" shouted Tom Merry.

"I must! You see—"

Crash, crash, crash!

The lock flew into pieces, and the door spun open. The stool crashed on the floor, and a wildly excited crowd of juniors rushed into the room. Bernard Glyn leaped to his feet, and in a second Herries was upon him, and had his head in chancery, and was hammering at him like a madman.

Glyn struggled and yelled, but Herries hammered away with his clenched fist, as if bent upon reducing the schoolboy inventor's face to a pulp.

"You beast! You cad! You brute! You rotter!" Herries jerked out a complimentary epithet with each jab of his fist upon Glyn's nose, mouth, or eyes.

"I'll smash you! I'll brain you!"

"Yow-ow-owwww! Draggimoff!" spluttered Glyn.

"Biff, biff, biff!"

"Yaroooh! Oh! Help!"

Herries hurled Glyn with a crash into a corner, where a table stood covered with bottles, glasses, and retorts and other paraphernalia. Table and glasses and the rest crashed to the floor, and Glyn rolled blindly in the midst of the wreck. Herries did not even look at him. He spun round towards Towser.

The bulldog was silent now.

He lay upon the floor, his paws outstretched, his mouth open, but no sound coming forth. Blake touched him; he was quite cold.



"He's dead!" gasped Blake.  
 "Poor old Towser!"  
 "Dead!" groaned Herries. "If he's dead, Glyn will jolly soon be dead, too!"

He threw himself upon his knees and clasped the head of the bulldog. Then an expression of utter amazement came over his face. He withdrew his hand, and stared blankly at the bulldog.

"Oh!" he gasped.  
 "Is he dead, Hewwies, old man?"  
 "It—it's not alive!"  
 "Then it must be dead, deah boy!"  
 "It—it's not Towser!"  
 "What?" yelled the juniors.  
 "It's a dummy!"  
 "My hat!"  
 "Great Christopher Columbus!"  
 The juniors understood at last.

The schoolboy inventor was not mad. It was a mechanical dog, made in the exact likeness of the famous Towser. Towser was probably reposing peacefully in his kennel at that moment. The juniors gathered round the mechanical bulldog, gazing at it in wonder. It was not the first time that Bernard Glyn had made a wonderful piece of mechanism; the juniors still chuckled sometimes over the remembrance of his mechanical figure made in the likeness of Skimpole of the Shell.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I nevah thought of that!"

Bernard Glyn staggered to his feet. He had been fearfully punished the minute or two Herries had had his head in chancery. His nose and mouth were streaming red, and his left eye was quite closed, and he was blinking painfully out of the other eye. He was smothered with all sorts of mysterious liquids from the broken bottles he had rolled in, and he smelt horribly.

The juniors could not help grinning as they looked at him. Glyn was stuttering with fury.

"You—you—you dangerous idiots!" he roared. "I—I—I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "You—you—you—"  
 "Well, I thought it was Towser," said Herries, in explanation.

"Towser!" yelled Glyn. "Do you think I would experiment on a live animal, you frightful idiot? Do you think I could open Towser and put a gramophone attachment inside him, you blithering ass?"

"Bai Jove! It would be wathah difficult!"

"Well, why didn't you explain, then?" growled Herries. "I thought you were experimenting on Towser, and so did the other chaps."

"Yaas, wathah!"  
 "We all thought so," said Tom Merry apologetically. "You should have explained, Glyn, instead of cackling. We couldn't possibly guess—"  
 "Wathah not!"

"You idiots!" roared Glyn furiously. "I can't have my experiments interrupted every time a silly ass knocks at the door, can I? Oh, you asses!"

"Well, I'm sorry I walloped you," said Herries; "but you shouldn't make these idiotic experiments! You've no business to make a silly mechanical dog looking like Towser! Go and eat coke!"

"I—I—I—"  
 Glyn made a wild rush at Herries, but the other fellows caught hold of him and held him back.

"Easy does it!" said Tom Merry soothingly. "There's nothing to fight about—"

"No; it's all wight now—"  
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"All right?" shrieked Glyn. "Look at my nose! Look at my eyes! I'll—I'll—"

"Yaas, you do look wathah a sight," agreed D'Arcy. "But Hewwies was undah a missapprehension. An apology will set mattahs wight."

"Ass!" shrieked Glyn. "An apology won't set my face right!"  
 "Well, punching Herries' won't do that," said Tom Merry.

"Certainly not! You had better wethah, Hewwies, till Glyn is a little calmer. He is natuwallly wathah excited, in the cires."

Herries snorted.  
 "Serve him jolly well right for making a rotten mechanical dog like Towser! He has no right to take Towser for a model, anyway! He can go and eat coke!"

And Herries tramped indignantly out of the box-room. Bernard Glyn made an effort to get after him, but the other fellows held him back.

"Pax, old man!" said Tom Merry. "No good making bad worse. And it's a wonderful invention! Show us how it works."

Tom Merry's speech was eminently tactful. It turned Glyn's thoughts from his black eye and swollen nose to his invention. He calmed down a little.

"It's the best thing I've done so far," he said, more cheerfully. "Anybody would take that for a live bulldog, and I've put in the works to make him walk. I was experimenting with a gramophone attachment to make him growl when you idiots interrupted me! We can have no end of larks with him when he's finished!"

"Bai Jove, that's a jolly good idea! We can spwing him on the New House fellows!" chuckled D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Can he really walk?" asked Monty Lowther incredulously.

Glyn snickered.  
 "Walk? Of course he can! Didn't I make Skimpole the Second walk? Look here!"

He bent over the bulldog and pressed a button in the back. The dog rose to its feet and walked across the study, and lay down again. The juniors watched it in awe and wonder.

"Bai Jove! Anybody would think the beast was alive!" gasped D'Arcy.

"He will growl, too, when I've finished," said Glyn. "Clear out now, for goodness' sake, and let me get on with it!"

"Better bathe your eye first," said Kangaroo of the Shell.

"Blow my eye!"  
 "Bettah bathe your nose, Glyn, deah boy!"

"Blow my nose!"  
 "Weally, Glyn, I wefuse to do anything' of the sort—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Oh, clear out, and let a chap get his work finished!" growled Glyn.

And the juniors cleared out, leaving Bernard Glyn alone with Towser the Second.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Begging Towser's Pardon!

**G**R-R-R-R-R-R!  
 Herries gave a start. After leaving the box-room, in which Bernard Glyn was busy with the mechanical dog, Herries had hurried off in the direction of the kennels, to assure himself that his favourite was quite safe. Bernard Glyn had taken Towser for a model, and there was no telling what the schoolboy inventor

might have done, and Herries wanted to have a look at Towser.

As he came round the back of the School House he heard the unmistakable tones of the bulldog raised in wrath.

Towser was evidently in trouble, if not with the schoolboy inventor. Herries' brow darkened as he hurried on. Towser was not a favourite at St. Jim's. Herries had been caned more than once for allowing him to run loose.

Towser was always kept on the chain now. Herries came round the corner of the garages at a run, and came in sight of Towser's kennel—and of Crooke of the Shell and Mellish of the Fourth. The two black sheep of the School House were entertaining themselves in a way that might have been expected of them. Each of them had a broom in his hand, and they were making drives at the chained bulldog alternately, and the unfortunate animal was twisting and turning furiously at the end of his chain, striving in vain to get at his tormentors.

Crooke and Mellish were so deeply engrossed in their cowardly amusement that they did not hear the approaching footsteps of Herries, or the snort of wrath that he gave.

Towser was growling furiously as the brooms buffed upon him in turn, and the chain clinked as he jumped and dragged at it. The chain was strong, and there was no danger of its breaking, and the two cads felt quite safe.

"Give the beast another jab," said Crooke, with a grin. "We'll teach him to chase a fellow across the quad."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Mellish. "I suppose the chain won't break, though he's tugging at it pretty hard."

"No fear. It's strong enough."

"Give him another buff, then!"  
 But at that moment the enraged Herries reached the spot.

"You cads!" he roared. "I'll teach you to bully my dog!"

Crooke and Mellish jumped.

"Hallo!" gasped Crooke. "I—I say, Herries, it's—it's all right, you know. Only a—a lark with Towser, you know."

"That's all!" said Mellish, turning quite pale as he caught the look on Herries' face. "Only a little fun."

"I'll fun you!" roared Herries. "I'll lark you, you cads!"

"Yaroooh!"

Herries' fist came crashing into Crooke's face, and he dropped like a log. Mellish backed away, brandishing the broom.

"Keep off!" he panted. "Keep off, or—"

Herries did not keep off. He rushed right at Mellish, and the junior had not the nerve to smite him with the broom. Herries knocked it contemptuously aside, and the next moment Mellish rolled on the ground.

"Now then!" roared Herries, dancing round the fallen juniors and flourishing his fists. "Now then! Get up, you worms! I'll take on the pair of you."

"Oh!" groaned Crooke.

"Ow!" numbed Mellish.

"Get up!" yelled Herries.

"Yow! I won't!"

"Groogh! I can't!"

"I'll jolly well set Towser on you, then!"

Herries rushed to the kennel and grasped the chain, to unlock it. Crooke and Mellish found that they could rise then. They sprang up and tore away from the garages at a marvellous speed. Gr-r-r!

The deep, angry tones of the bulldog could be heard behind them and the



clink of the chain. Fear lent the juniors wings. If Towser got at them, after their treatment of him, they were likely to suffer severely. They dashed away at frantic speed and burst round the School House as if they were running a race for life or death. They rushed right into Brooke of the Fourth, who was coming round the House, reading a book as he walked.

Brooke was a little short-sighted, and he had the book very close to his eyes, and he did not see them, and they were in too great a hurry to see him.

Crash!  
"Oh!" gasped Brooke.  
He rolled over on his back, and Mellish and Crooke rolled over him. In another second or two Towser was on the scene, but, fortunately, Herries held

that the bulldog should leap upon them from behind, but it was almost equally impossible for them to stand there and face him. Towser was wildly excited, and he looked dangerous. Herries seemed to be more than half inclined to let the chain loose. Towser was straining at it with all his strength.

"Keep him off!" shrieked Mellish.  
"I—I'll complain to the Head!" yelled Crooke. "I'll have you summoned for keeping a dangerous animal, you brute! Keep him off!"

"He wasn't dangerous, if you'd let him alone," said Herries fiercely, "and I don't see why I shouldn't let him have a bite."

He loosened the chain a little, and the bulldog came closer to the shrinking juniors, and they crouched back

House, with a dozen more juniors at his heels. "What's the trouble?"

Herries explained, in furious tones, and there was a yell of delight from the juniors as he stated his intention of making the culprits beg Towser's pardon.

"Good egg!" shouted Blake. "Ha, ha, ha! Get on your knees, you cads!"  
"You'll go down on your knees and beg Towser's pardon," said Herries resolutely, "or I'll let him loose on you!"

And Herries meant it, and the two juniors could see that he meant it. Mellish was already on his knees; but Crooke had more pluck than the sneak of the Fourth, and hesitated.

"I give you one minute!" said Herries threateningly. The chain clinked as



"Now then, you know what to say, Crooke!" rapped out Herries, holding back the straining Towser with difficulty. "I'm tired of holding him in." "Please, Towser," mumbled the wretched Crooke, "I beg your pardon, and I promise never to be such a beastly cad again!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

the chain in his hand. Towser made a spring for Crooke, and Herries dragged him back only in time, or the bulldog's teeth would have closed with a snap on the cad of the Fourth.

"Keep him off!" shrieked Crooke, white with fear.

"Ow! Help!" yelled Mellish.  
Gr-r-r-r-r!

Brooke leaped to his feet.

"What on earth's the matter?" he asked. "Keep that dog off, Herries. He looks as if he'll tear them to pieces."

"Let him, then!" yelled Herries, keeping Towser back, however.

"They've been tormenting him—biffing him with brooms while he was chained up, and couldn't help himself."

Brooke knitted his brow.

"The cads!" he exclaimed. "But you can't let him bite them, Herries. It will mean a fearful row if you do!"

Crooke and Mellish scrambled up. They backed away to the School House wall, and stood there, trembling and panting. They dared not run, for fear

against the wall, as close as they could, white with terror.

"Keep him off!" yelled Mellish faintly.

"Help!" shrieked Crooke.  
Brooke burst into a laugh.

"Make the cads beg Towser's pardon," he said, "and let them go. You can let them off with a fright, I should think. They've had a scare."

Herries grinned. If dire terror was a punishment, Crooke and Mellish had been punished for their brutality. Herries' good nature was returning.

"Good wheeze!" he exclaimed. "Do you hear, you cads? You'll go down on your giddy knees to Towser, and beg his pardon!"

"I won't!" yelled Crooke.

But Mellish eagerly assented. He would have gone down on his knees to anything to get out of his present predicament.

"What on earth's the matter here?" asked Jack Blake, coming round the

he let it out a little, and Towser's open jaws were within a foot of Crooke's knees.

"All—all right!" panted Crooke. "Keep it off!"

"Buck up, then!"

The crowd was thickening; the noise was bringing fellows to the scene from all quarters. There was a yell of laughter as the two School House cads dropped upon their knees, with Towser straining at the chain only a foot from them.

"You will say, 'Please, Towser, I beg your pardon, and I promise never to be such a beastly cad again,'" said Herries.

"I won't!" yelled Crooke.

"I will," mumbled Mellish. "Keep him off! Please, Towser—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Please, Towser, I beg your pardon, and I promise never to be such a beastly cad again," said Mellish, in dire terror as the chain clinked.



"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good! You can crawl off!" said Herries contemptuously. "I'll hold Towser while you get away. Now it's your turn, Crooke."

Mellish ran away, and Crooke made a movement to follow him. Brooke pushed him back with a strong hand.

"No, you don't!" he said. "You're not finished yet!"

"Let me pass, you cad!"

"No fear!"

"On your knees, Crooke, or I'll let Towser loose!" shouted Herries.

"Keep him off!" screamed Crooke, as the bulldog's nose for a moment brushed against his trousers.

"You'd better buck up, then! I'm tired of holding him in!"

Crooke dropped on his knees. His face was white and twisted with terror and rage. The crowd burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now then, you know what to say, Crooke!" rapped out Herries.

"Hang you! Please, Towser——"

"Louder!"

"Please, Towser, I beg your pardon, and I promise never to be such a beastly cad again!" said Crooke desperately.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good!" said Herries. "And if you ever are such a beastly cad again, I'll smash you, and let Towser get at you in good earnest! Crawl away, you cad!"

And Herries, not without difficulty, half-persuaded and half-dragged Towser back to his kennel, and fastened him up. Crooke and Mellish, followed by howls of laughter, fled into the School House to hide their crimson faces in Mellish's study. Mellish collapsed into a chair, panting. Crooke strode about the study, breathing fury.

"I'll settle him!" he said, between his teeth.

"Herries?" asked Mellish.

"No, you idiot! I'd be glad to; but I mean Towser! By George, I'll make 'em sit up for this! I'll settle him!"

"You won't get me near Towser again!" gasped Mellish. "I've had enough of him! And that brute Herries meant what he said! He'll set the horrible beast on to us if we meddle with him again!"

"He won't be able to set him on to us when I'm done with him," said Crooke, grinding his teeth. "I'm going to get some rat poison from Rylcombe for Towser!"

Mellish turned quite pale.

"Better draw it mild."

"Mind your own business!" snapped Crooke. "You can keep out of it, if you're afraid."

"I jolly well shall keep out of it!" said Mellish promptly. "Why, you might get expelled from the school for doing a thing like that!"

"I'll risk it. They won't make a fool of me for nothing. I'll get even with Herries, and that charity cad, Brooke, somehow! And I'll begin with Towser!"

"Better be careful——"

"Oh, shut up!"

And Mellish shut up. Mellish was a cad and a coward; but Crooke had the makings of a very considerable scoundrel in him—a fact which his schoolfellows were discovering gradually.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Erooke Butts In!

**D**ICK BROOKE rose from the study table in Study No. 6. Brooke was a day boy at St. Jim's, and had no study, but when he stayed later than usual at the

school, fellows in the Fourth were always willing to let him use their study, and he naturally liked it better than working in the Form-room.

There were very few day boys at St. Jim's, and the other fellows regarded them with a good-natured tolerance, as if they really were not quite St. Jim's fellows. Brooke did not mind. He was a quiet fellow, and he got on very well with most juniors at St. Jim's. With Crooke and Mellish, certainly, he did not pull very well; but there was nothing remarkable in that, for the two cads never quite agreed with anybody.

Brooke was on the best of terms with Study No. 6, and he frequently did his work there. He was entitled to leave the school with the other day boys as soon as lessons were over; but he was working for a scholarship, and little Mr. Lathom, the kindhearted master of the Fourth, was giving him what the juniors called "extra toot," and so he frequently stayed later.

"Thanks, you fellows, very much!" said Brooke, who had just finished his work. "I think I'll be off now."

"Right-ho!" said Blake cheerily. "I suppose your people don't mind your getting in late?"

"It's all right once in a way," said Brooke. "My mother knows I am having extra lessons here. It's jolly decent of you to let me work in your study."

"Oh wats!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We are highly honahed, deah boy!"

Brooke smiled.

"By the way, what about the cricket?" said Jack Blake. "Tom Merry was talking about putting you in the eleven, if you were up to it."

Brooke shook his head.

"Can't be done!" he said. "I'm not up to it. I should be jolly glad, of course. My sight isn't good enough. It's not getting any worse, but it's not good enough for cricket. Good-night!"

"Good-night, old chap!"

Brooke left the study with his books under his arm. He walked away thoughtfully down the corridor, and left the School House. It was dark in the quadrangle, and Brooke peered before him, with his head slanting a little forward, in the manner that some short-sighted people have. As he left the House behind him, two dim shadows loomed for a moment in the darkness of the quadrangle, and he heard a faint whisper:

"Quiet, Mellish."

"Look here, Crooke! I won't have a hand in it!"

"Quiet, you fool!" came Crooke's voice, in a fierce whisper. "I only want you to stand at the corner of the House and keep watch, while I go round to the kennel. Whistle to me if anyone comes, that's all!"

"But——"

"That's enough!"

There was a sound of retreating footsteps. Brooke paused, his eyes gleaming, and his hands clenched. By the sheerest chance he had come upon two rascals, and he guessed what was on. It was a plot of revenge upon the unfortunate Towser for their discomfiture of the afternoon. Brooke jammed his books into his jacket pocket, and ran through the gloom towards Mellish. He ran right into the cad of the School House, and grasped him with both hands. Mellish gave a startled gasp.

"Who—who's that?"

"It's Brooke, you rotter! What is Crooke going to do to Towser?"

"I—I don't know!" stammered Mellish.

Crooke had told his confederate to

whistle an alarm, but Mellish's lips were not capable of whistling just then.

"I don't know anything about it!" he muttered huskily. "He made me come here! You'd better go after him if you want to know! Let me alone!"

Brooke contemptuously hurled the cad of the Fourth from him, and Mellish staggered away. Without giving him even a glance, Dick Brooke dashed round the corner of the House. The garages in the rear seemed quite dark and deserted, but a gleam of light caught Dick Brooke's eye as he came near Towser's kennel. He caught sight of Crooke kneeling beside the kennel with an electric torch in his hand. Crooke had a large slice of steak in his other hand, and was coaxing Towser from his kennel to eat it.

Brooke paused in astonishment.

He had felt certain that Crooke intended some harm to the bulldog, and yet he found the cad of the Shell trying to feed Towser with an unusually luscious feed. Steaks did not often come Towser's way. Did it mean that Crooke was sorry for his brutality of the afternoon, and was trying to make it up to Towser by giving him a good feed, Brooke wondered, and he paused, a little repentant of his suspicions.

Towser had his head out of the kennel, and he was sniffing at the meat. It evidently attracted him, but he seemed to have his suspicions about it. Brooke caught sight of the face of Crooke in the light of the torch, and the savage expression upon it, the gleam of cold malice in the eyes, struck him at once.

It was not ordinary meat that Crooke was offering to the bulldog. A black suspicion darted into Brooke's mind, and he ran furiously forward.

"Stop, you cad!"

Crooke gave a violent start. He swung round from the kennel, dropping the meat. Towser made a movement as if to take it, and Brooke kicked it out of the bulldog's reach.

Crooke rose to his feet, his face white with rage and hatred.

"You charity cad!" he muttered. "What are you doing here?"

"What were you doing?" said Brooke, leaving Crooke's taunt unheeded and unanswered. "Is that meat poisoned?"

"No," said Crooke sullenly.

"Why were you giving it to Towser, then?"

"Can't I feed him, if I like?"

"Does Herries know?"

"Mind your own business!"

Brooke's eyes gleamed, and he stooped and picked up the meat. There was a peculiar white powder discernible on it, and then his suspicion became a certainty.

"You say this is not poison?" he said.

"No, it isn't!"

"Very well. I will take it to Herries, and let him see what you were offering to his bulldog. Will you come with me?"

Crooke's face blanched.

"Don't say a word to Herries!" he breathed. "Look here! I—I'll own up! Herries has no right to keep such a dangerous brute. I was going to rid the school of him. Don't say a word about it!"

Brooke's eyes blazed.

"You were going to poison Herries' dog, and you want me to keep it dark!" he exclaimed. "So that you can try it again another time, I suppose? I'm going to warn Herries to take care of his dog!"

Crooke uttered a cry.

"You sneak!"

"It's not sneaking!" said Brooke. "I must warn Herries. It would be rotten to leave Towser in danger!"



"You sneak! If you mention my name—"  
 "I won't mention your name if you're afraid to let Herries know what you've done!" said Brooke scornfully. "But I shall take this to him, and tell him what I saw here. If he finds you out without my assistance, you can look after yourself."

"Look here! I—I—"  
 "Don't talk to me! Get away from here! I don't trust you near Towser. Walk in front of me back to the School House!"

Crooke, gritting his teeth with rage, obeyed. At the steps of the School House, Brooke left him and hurried into the House.

**CHAPTER 5.**  
**The Culprits!**

**B**ERNARD GLYN came into Blake's study, looking very tired and dusty. His face was in a most unenviable state. One of his eyes was quite closed, and his nose looked, as Blake remarked, like a prize beetroot.

Herries looked at him rather truculently. But Glyn had not come on the warpath.

"I'm finished!" he said. "Towser II is as good as Towser I now. He can growl, and I may be able to make him bite."

"Bai Jove!"  
 Herries snorted.

"Like your cheek to make a rotten mechanical dog like Towser!" he said. "You might have asked a fellow's permission first, anyway."

"It's a compliment to your beastly bulldog, you ass!" said the schoolboy inventor. "Besides, we can get some larks out of it. Give me something to eat, you chaps. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane are out, and I haven't had any tea yet. You owe me something for this eye and nose, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Yaas, wathah, deah boys!" said D'Arcy sympathetically. "I weally think that Hewwies ought to apologise and set the mattah wight."

"Oh, rats!" said Herries. "Still, I don't mind saying I'm sorry I made Glyn such a figure of fun. But he shouldn't make inventions. I never make inventions."

"Needs brains, of course," remarked Glyn.  
 "Why, you ass—"  
 "Make some tea, Blake, deah boy," said D'Arcy, "and you make some toast, Dig. Hallo, who's this?"

The study door opened, and Dick Brooke entered. The juniors looked at him in surprise, which increased as he laid a powdery-looking lump of meat on the study table.

"What on earth's that?" asked Blake.  
 "Brooke's contribution to a feed!" suggested Digby, with a grin.

"It's meat and it's poison," said Brooke quietly.  
 There was a startled exclamation from every fellow in the study.

"Poison!"  
 "By Jove!"  
 "I found a fellow giving it to Towser," said Brooke.

Herries jumped.  
 "Towser! Giving poisoned meat to Towser! Why, I—I—I—"

"It's all right," said Brooke. "I kicked it away before Towser could touch it. I don't know whether he would have eaten it, either; he seemed very suspicious about it. I've brought it here to you, so that you can look after Towser."

"Thanks!" said Herries dazedly. "But—but who could be such a villain as to want to poison Towser?"  
 "Who was it, Brooke?"

The Fourth Former shook his head.  
 "I've promised not to mention his name," he said. "He's afraid of Herries. But I felt bound to tell Herries, so that he could be on his guard."

"Yaas, wathah!"  
 "It was Crooke or Mellish," said Herries. "They've got a spite against my dog. Which of them was it, Brooke?"

"Pway wememoah, Hewwies, that Bwooke has promised not to tell. He cannot possibly bweak his word. But you can keep your peepahs open."

"I'll find out!" said Herries sulphurously. "I'll go and look at Towser now, and make sure he's all right. Then I'll look into this. Thanks, Brooke! You're a jolly decent chap!"

And Herries ran out of the study. Brooke said "Good-night!" to the chums of the School House for the second time and left. As he walked across the quadrangle to the gates, he hoped that Herries would not discover the intended poisoner. Crooke's punishment, if Herries knew of his guilt, was likely to be severe enough to get Herries into

(Continued on the next page.)

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trouble afterwards. Brooke was thinking more of Herries than the cad of the Shell.

In Study No. 6, the juniors stood silent, looking at the meat on the table. Jack Blake broke the silence.

"Jolly lucky Brooke happened on the cad, whoever he was!" he said in a deep breath. "I believe Herries would go quite potty if he lost his dog! Of course, it must have been either Crooke or Mellish, after what happened this afternoon."

"No doubt about that," said Bernard Glyn; "and I don't think anybody else in the school is cur enough for such a thing."

"Quite wight, deah boy!"

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Tom Merry, as he came into the study with Manners and Lowther. "Holding an inquest, or what?"

Blake explained. The Terrible Three looked serious enough when they heard what had happened. Tom Merry scanned the meat, and smelt it.

"It's poisoned, right enough," he said. "What awful cad was it, I wonder?"

"Crooke or Mellish—or both!"

"Yes; it must have been."

"We'll have 'em in here and question 'em," said Glyn.

"Not much good," said Tom Merry. "They would deny it. Fellows who would poison a dog would tell lies, I suppose?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, Herries won't rest till he's found out," said Blake. "We shall never hear the end of it. He's as likely as not to make them eat that blessed meat!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"That would be rather thick," he said; "but—My hat!"

"What's the matter?"

"A wheeze, my son—a giddy wheeze!" gasped Tom Merry. "My hat! We will punish the cads in a way that will make their hair curl! It's the giddiest wheeze of the season!"

"Explain, you ass!"

Tom Merry cautiously closed the door, and explained in a whisper. A wild yell of laughter rang through the study. Tom Merry's wheeze, whatever it was, seemed to meet with unanimous approval.

"Oh, my hat!" almost sobbed Blake. "I want to see their faces! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Ha, ha, ha! Yaas, wathah!"

"We shall want a new steak, and you can shove it in your study cupboard, and mind you sprinkle it with flour," said Tom Merry.

"What-ho!"

"That's settled, then! Now we'll get out before you have Crooke in."

"Right you are!"

The Terrible Three left the study. Herries, very red and breathless, entered it a few moments later.

"Towser's all right," he said. "Now we're going to find out who did this. I know it was either Crooke or Mellish—or both the cads! I'm going to smash the chap who tried to poison Towser!"

"Better make sure first," hinted Blake. "You are rather sudden on the smashing business, you know. You've nearly killed Glyn for nothing!"

"Well, let's make sure, then!" said Herries crossly. "Some of you fetch the cads in here, and make 'em see this poisoned meat, and see if they have the nerve to deny it."

"Yes; we'll do that."

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Blake, Herries, D'Arcy, and Glyn hurried out of the study. They returned in a few minutes with Crooke and Mellish. The cads were looking angry and alarmed, but they had not been able to refuse to come to Study No. 6, Blake having stated blandly that if they didn't walk they would be carried, so they had decided to walk.

Herries glared at them as they came in. Blake insinuated himself between the burly Fourth Former and the two visitors.

"Go easy, Herries, old man!" he said.

"Easy be hanged!" growled Herries. "Look here, you cads, which of you gave this poisoned meat to Towser?"

"I didn't!" gasped Mellish.

"Poisoned meat?" said Crooke, in great surprise. "What are you talking about? Is this a joke?"

"If this is a joke, it's a rotten bad one!" said Mellish, taking the cue from his more courageous companion. "I don't see the fun myself!"

"You don't know anything about it?" asked Blake.

"Certainly not! I suppose this is some plot that you fellows have got up against us!" said Crooke boldly. "We know how much fair play to expect from this study!"

"Weally, Cwooke—"

"Brooke caught somebody trying to poison Towser with this meat, and he won't give the name!" said Herries savagely. "I'm going to find out who it was! I know jolly well that it was one of you cads!"

"I know nothing about it!" said Crooke.

"Same here!" said Mellish.

"Very well! I'll inquire in the village whether either of you bought any poison there for animals!" said Herries.

Crooke's face paled for a moment.

"Ah! That's got you, has it?" exclaimed Digby.

Crooke forced a laugh.

"I may have bought rat poison some time—I don't remember," he said. "You can make all the inquiries you like! I'm going!"

The cads of the School House were allowed to leave the study. The juniors felt certain enough of their guilt. But it was impossible to allow Herries to begin the smashing business, as Blake described it, without proof. Blake called to them as they turned to the door.

"I shall keep this poisoned meat for the present, and we'll see about it," he said. "Lock it up in the cupboard, Dig."

"Certainly!" said Digby.

Crooke laughed sneeringly.

"You can keep it till it begins to talk, if you like!" he said. "It's no business of mine! You can go and eat coke, all of you! Come on, Mellish!"

And he walked away.

## CHAPTER 6.

### An Irish Stew!

MONTY LOWTHER looked into Mellish's study in the Fourth Form passage some time later.

Two juniors who shared the study—Mellish and Jerry Lumley-Lumley—were there, engaged in doing their preparation. Crooke of the Shell was also in the room, lounging in the armchair.

"I thought I should find you here, Lumley-Lumley," remarked Lowther. "We've got a stew going, and we want you to come. It's something special—

a real Irish stew. Reilly has helped us to make it, and I can tell you it's prime."

"I guess I'll come," said Lumley-Lumley cheerfully enough.

Lumley-Lumley was on very good terms with the Terrible Three, and he frequently dropped into Tom Merry's study. He rose to his feet.

Monty Lowther turned to the door again. And then, as if struck by a sudden thought, turned back. It was as if, asking Lumley-Lumley in the presence of Crooke and Mellish, he felt constrained by politeness to ask them, too.

"You fellows like to come?" he asked. "It's a good feed, and we'll be glad to see you."

"Yes, rather," said Mellish promptly. "I've just got to finish my prep."

Crooke hesitated.

"Blake and his lot going to be there?" he asked.

"No. They've gone over to the New House to see Redfern."

"Good! I'll come with pleasure."

"Well, come in when Mellish is ready."

And Monty Lowther quitted the study with Lumley-Lumley.

Mellish finished his preparation, and about ten minutes later came into Tom Merry's study with Crooke.

"Ladle it out, Reilly!" said Tom Merry.

"Right ye are!" said Reilly.

"Faith, and it's a stunning stew! Lucky for you chaps I helped you. It takes an Irishman to make an Irish stew. Would ye believe it, Crooke, the spalpeen wanted to put suet dumplings in it. We don't do that."

"It smells jolly nice!" said Crooke as he and Mellish sat down.

"Faith, and it tastes jolly nice!" said Reilly.

Crooke and Mellish were given big helpings, and they wired into the Irish stew with a keenness worthy of the famous Fatty Wynn. The other fellows also had good helpings. Extensive as the stew was, it rapidly diminished as the seven juniors made repeated onslaughts on it.

"My hat!" said Crooke. "This is jolly good! Where did you get your beef—at Darr's Taggles, I suppose?"

To his surprise, the juniors burst into a laugh.

"Guess again!" said Tom Merry.

Crooke looked surprised. So far as he could see, there was nothing to laugh at in his question as to where the amateur cooks had procured the beef.

"The butcher's in the village?" he asked.

"No; we haven't been out."

"Did the cook give it to you?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"No fear!"

"Oh, you've raided it, I suppose?" said Lumley-Lumley.

"Right!" said Tom Merry.

Crooke laughed.

"Raided it from Figgins & Co.?" he asked.

"No, we haven't been over to the New House."

"Then where the dickens—"

Monty Lowther winked mysteriously.

"Perhaps you can guess now why we didn't invite Blake & Co. to the feed?" he suggested.

Crooke and Mellish started simultaneously.

"You don't mean to say—" began Mellish.



"Yes, we do!" said Tom Merry. "We raided it out of Blake's study. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners and Lowther.

Crooke, who had a piece of meat upon his fork, gazed at it in horror, and lowered it into his plate again. Mellish turned white and then yellow.

"You raided this beef from Blake's study?" Crooke repeated faintly.

"Yes, rather!"  
"Faith, and it would have been a good joke to invite them to the feed!" chuckled Reilly. "You could have told them afterwards where the meat came from, bedad!"

"I guess tha, would have been the cream of the joke!" grinned Lumley-Lumley. Then he stared in surprise at Crooke and Mellish. "What's the matter with you two chaps? You look ill!"

"Oh!" groaned Mellish.  
Crooke started, to his feet, with the perspiration thick upon his brow.

"Did—did you get this meat out of Blake's cupboard?" he asked unsteadily.

"Yes, certainly!"  
"Wasn't—wasn't the cupboard locked?"

"Yes; but we knew where the key was kept," explained Tom Merry, laughing. "We found the key under the clock on the mantelpiece."

"Oh dear!"  
"It will be a giddy surprise for Blake when he comes back from the New House!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley. "I guess he will get his hair off!"

"M-m-my heavens!" stammered Mellish.

"What's the matter?"

"Was—was there anything peculiar about the meat?" asked Crooke, trying to speak calmly, in spite of the horrible uneasiness that had fastened upon him.

"Not that I noticed!" said Tom Merry, in surprise. "What's the matter? It's good enough, isn't it? It tastes all right."

"Faith, and it's a drama!" said Reilly.

"Was there any other meat in the cupboard?" asked Crooke, clinging to a faint hope.

"No fear!"  
"You—you looked?"

"You can bet we did!" said Monty Lowther. "If there had been any more, we should have made a clean sweep of it!"

"I—I say—" Crooke's voice was thick and husky. He remembered how he had seen Jack Blake put that poisoned beefsteak into the study cupboard in Study No. 6, saying that he would keep it locked up there. "I—I say, Merry, did—did you notice anything about the meat? Was—was it sprinkled with anything?"

"Yes; flour."

"Flour!" panted Crooke.

"Yes, certainly."

"Are—are you sure it was flour?" said Crooke, white as a ghost.

"Well, I didn't taste it," said Tom Merry, looking astonished. "It was sprinkled with a white powder, anyway, and I certainly took it for flour. It might have been salt, but I'm pretty certain it was flour. Anyway, whichever it was, it didn't hurt the beef. It tastes ripping, to my mind!"

"It's a drama!" repeated Reilly, helping himself again from the dish. "A real drama! I never tasted a better stew even in Ireland!"

"Don't eat it!" shrieked Crooke. The Belfast boy stared at him in amazement.

"Don't eat it?" he repeated. "Faith, and what do you mean, then? Why shouldn't I eat the best Irish stew that ever was cooked at St. Jim's?"

"It's poisoned!" panted Crooke, staggering away from the table.

Monty Lowther's left eye half-closed, and Lumley-Lumley saw it, as also did Reilly. Reilly, in fact, had already had a hint of the matter. And Jerrold Lumley-Lumley was quick to catch on.

"Poisoned?" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yes," cried Mellish. "Fetch a doctor! Quick!"

"It's no good!" said Crooke, with a haggard face. "It's too late; we're done for! Oh, you mad fools! You've poisoned us!"

"But what do you mean?" asked Tom Merry looking perplexed. "I don't feel poisoned! Do you other fellows?"

"Faith, I'm as right as rain!" said Reilly cheerfully. "I'm going to have some more, poisoned or not! May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, intirely!"

"I guess so," said Lumley-Lumley, helping himself again. "It's all right, Crooke, old man; you're only dreaming!"

"I tell you it's poisoned!" shrieked Crooke. "It's rat poison! Blake had the poisoned meat in his cupboard, and—and it's certain death to taste it! Oh, heavens!"

Mellish collapsed upon the floor, groaning in sheer terror, without the strength even to make an effort to help himself. Crooke staggered blindly to the door.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, stepping quickly between the cad of the Shell and the study door. "Where are you going?"

"To—to find a doctor!" panted Crooke. "I'm poisoned!"

"Oh, rot! Don't play the giddy goat!"

"I tell you I'm poisoned!" shrieked Crooke, struggling to pass Tom Merry. "Let me go! It may not be too late, after all. Let me pass! I tell you the meat was poisoned!"

Tom Merry held him back with a grip of iron.

"Don't talk rot!" he said. "How could poisoned meat possibly come into Blake's study cupboard? You're talking out of your hat!"

"It—it was poisoned for Towser!" gasped Crooke. "Brooke found it, and brought it to show Herries, and—and Blake locked it up in his study cupboard. I saw him."

"By Jove!" said Manners. "That looks serious!"

"Jolly serious, if Crooke isn't having a lark with us!" said Monty Lowther, with a shake of the head.

"Do I look as if I were having a lark?" screamed Crooke.

"Well, no; but you are such an awful whopper merchant!"

"It's all rot!" said Tom Merry. "Perhaps Brooke was having a lark if he said that the meat was poisoned. I suppose you didn't taste it?"

"I—I saw it."

"Well, I saw the meat we used in the stew, but it didn't look poisoned, or, of course, I shouldn't have used it."

"It was covered with white powder."

"Oh, that was flour!"

"It wasn't flour!" moaned Mellish, writhing on the floor. "It was rat poison."

(Continued on the next page.)



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Teacher: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Brown, for hitting a smaller boy than yourself! What do you expect to be when you grow up?"

Brown: "A school teacher, sir!"  
Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Hope-Wynne, 7, Livingstone Place, Edinburgh 9.

**\* \* \* \* \***  
**CONVENIENT!**

First Waiter: "What's Mr. Banks, who has Room No. 2, like?"

Second Waiter: "Left-handed, and keeps his change in his right-hand pocket!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," 18, Armstead Walk, Dagenham, Essex.

**\* \* \* \* \***  
**HE WAS SAFE!**

Bones: "Ah say, Rastus, is dat right, when yo' am dead yo' am done for?"

Rastus: "No, Bones; we all hab anudder life, but in a different form."

Bones: "Lawks a lumme, supposing Ah was to be a donkey next time!"

Rastus: "It ain't no good supposing, Bones. Yo' can't be de same ting twice!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Sheffield, 59, Park Street, Beeston, Nottingham.

**\* \* \* \* \***  
**A SHOCK FOR THE LAWYER!**

A lawyer had just started in business. Wishing to make an impression on a person he heard entering his office, he took down the receiver of his phone and said:

"No, I'm sorry. No, sir, that's final! Not for less than a hundred pounds. I've too many cases on my hands at present!"

Then he looked up at the new arrival.

"Well, my good sir, what can I do for you?"

"Oh, it's all right!" was the reply.

"I've just come to connect your telephone!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss M. Franks, 11, Rushcroft Road, South Chingford, London, E. 4.

**\* \* \* \* \***  
**JUST AS USEFUL!**

Keeper: "Here, my lad, you can't fish in this pond without a permit."

Tommy: "Oh, it's quite all right, sharks! I'm getting on nicely with a worm!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to "A Reader," 19, Hedge Lane, Palmer's Green, London, N. 15.

**\* \* \* \* \***  
**NO WONDER!**

Teacher: "Do you know, Tommy, a fool can ask more questions than a wise man can answer?"

Tommy: "That explains why I failed in my examinations, sir!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Collingwood, 39, Mayfair Road, West Jesmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

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"Stuff!"  
 "I know it was poison!" shouted Crooke. "Let me pass! I must see a doctor! I tell you I know it was poison!"

"You couldn't possibly know without tasting it," said Tom Merry.  
 "I do know—I do know!"  
 "How?"

"I poisoned it for Towser!" panted Crooke. "Now are you satisfied? Let me pass!"

"Yes, I'm satisfied now," said Tom Merry sternly, "and you won't pass. Stay there, you cad! You're not poisoned, but you're found out!"

And he flung the cad of the Shell into the corner of the study.

## CHAPTER 7.

### A Licking for Crooke!

**T**OM MERRY looked at the two juniors on the floor, and his face was half angry and half laughing.

The terror of the would-be dog poisoners was comic enough to the fellows who knew that there was nothing the matter with them. There was a chuckle from Manners and Lowther and Reilly. Reilly was still eating stew, and Jerrold Lumley-Lumley looked very much puzzled, but not at all alarmed.

"I suppose there's nothing in all that, Tom Merry?" he asked.

"Nothing at all."  
 "What the dickens does it all mean, then?"

"I'll explain," said Tom Merry quietly. "Brooke found a cad giving poisoned meat to Towser, but he wouldn't tell his name. We got up this little game to find out and to punish the cads for their dirty trick. Blake locked the poisoned meat up in his study cupboard, and afterwards he burnt it in the study firegrate to make sure of getting the beastly stuff out of the way."

Mellish suddenly left off groaning. Crooke stared at the hero of the Shell with new hope in his eyes.

"Wh-what's that?" he gasped.  
 Tom Merry took no notice of him.

"Afterwards," he went on, "Blake bought some new beefsteak and locked it in his cupboard and sprinkled it with flour."

"What on earth for?" demanded Lumley-Lumley.

"So that we could raid it and make this Irish stew and let Crooke eat some of it," said Tom Merry coolly. "I wanted to be able to answer Crooke's questions about the meat quite accurately, you know."

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Crooke rose to his feet, with a bitter smile on his face. Monty Lowther had crossed to the window and was flashing an electric torch there, evidently as a signal to someone over in the New House. A whistle was heard in the quadrangle. Crooke understood, and he made a quick movement towards the door.

But Tom Merry was standing there, with his back to the door, and he did not move.

"You won't leave this study yet, Crooke," he said quietly.

"Let me pass!"

"The Fourth Form chaps are coming back from the New House," said Tom Merry. "You can repeat to them what you've said to us."

Crooke gave him a look of hatred.

"I won't!" he muttered. "I—I—"

"I will, then," said Tom Merry, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You've got to explain to Herries. If I kept a dog,

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and a fellow tried to poison it, I'd smash him into little pieces. Herries wants to see you very badly."

Mellish edged towards the door.

"I—I didn't have anything to do with it!" he whined. "I told Crooke I wouldn't have a hand in it when he proposed it, and he can't deny it. I was against it all the time. I—I don't want to stay in this study."

"I believe you," said Tom Merry scornfully. "You can go, but Crooke stays here till Herries comes."

He stepped aside, and Mellish gladly slipped out of the study. Crooke made a desperate rush to follow him. Tom Merry swung him back, and the desperate junior struck at him fiercely. Tom Merry knocked up his hand.

"If you want to fight me as well as Herries you've only got to say so," he said; "but I think you'll have enough on your hands with Herries."

Crooke backed away.

"Let me go!" he said hoarsely. "I won't fight Herries! I—I—"

"I know you don't want to, but you should have thought of that before you tried to poison his dog. Stand where you are!"

There were hurried footsteps in the passage, and the chums of the Fourth came in, followed by Kangaroo and Bernard Glyn. They were all grinning with the exception of Herries. Herries looked grim and savage.

"Well, has the giddy culprit confessed?" asked Glyn.

"Yes. He has admitted that he poisoned the meat for Towser, under the impression that he had eaten some of it," said Tom Merry.

Herries pushed back his cuffs.

"Will you come into the gym, Crooke, or will you have it here?" he asked, with ominous politeness.

Crooke backed against the wall, his face white and his eyes gleaming. Always cunning and underhand, he never came out into the open if he could help it, but matters had been brought out into the open now with a vengeance. The cad of the Shell was fairly caught, and there was no escape for him which ever way he turned.

"I—I won't fight you, Herries," he muttered thickly. "I—I'll complain to Mr. Railton if you touch me! I—I won't be forced into this!"

"You can explain to Mr. Railton at the same time how you tried to poison Towser, then," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Crooke panted. He dared not let the story get to the ears of the School House master. He was fairly caught. Herries looked impatient.

"I'm waiting!" he said. "You can have it here or in the gym!"

"Hang you!" snarled Crooke passionately. "I'll fight you, then—here and now! Come on!"

"Bai Jove! Quite plucky, all of a sudden," remarked D'Arcy. "Take off your jacket, deah boy. I'll hold it for you if you like."

"Fair play," said Crooke. "Don't all of you pile on me."

Tom Merry frowned.

"You know you'll get fair play here, though you don't deserve it," he said.

"If you say another word like that I'll lick you when Herries has finished."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy indignantly.

"Upon the whole, Hewvies, deah boy, pewwaps you had bettah leave him to me. I will give him a feahful thwashin'—"

"Stand back, Gussy—"

"Weally, Tom Mewvy—"

"Give them room!"

Jack Blake drew Arthur Augustus back into a corner, and the juniors all stood back against the walls and the

door, to leave room for the combat.

It was not a long combat. Crooke threw himself desperately upon Herries, and the owner of Towser wreaked his long pent-up wrath upon the attempted poisoner of the bulldog. Crooke was knocked right and left. In his desperation he inflicted a good deal of punishment upon Herries, but the indignant Fourth Former seemed hardly to notice it. He hammered and hammered, and Crooke, resorting to foul play as his brief courage waned, began to kick.

Herries gave a sharp cry as Crooke's boot crashed upon his shin.

"You coward!" yelled Blake.

"Leave him to me to finish, Herries," said Tom Merry angrily.

Herries was staggering with the pain of that cruel kick, but he waved Tom Merry back.

"I'll finish him!" he said hoarsely.

He leaped upon Crooke, and got his head into chancery. Then nothing was heard in the study save the trampling of feet and the muffled yells of Crooke as Herries hammered him.

The juniors dragged him off at last. Herries seemed inclined to go on until bed-time. Crooke staggered against the wall as Herries was forced to release him, his face white, save where it was blue with blows.

"Kick him out!" said Tom Merry.

He opened the door, and Crooke staggered into the passage.

The door was closed upon him. Herries sank into a chair, gasping.

"I think he'll let Towser alone after this!" he panted.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Crooke Seeks Revenge!

**D**ICK BROOKE smiled a little involuntarily when he saw Crooke in the Form-room passage the next morning.

The would-be poisoner of Towser had exacted from him a promise that he would not mention his name. And he had not mentioned it. But the state of Crooke's features was a pretty plain proof that Herries had made the discovery, all the same. Crooke's face was in an unenviable state.

Morning lessons were very painful to Crooke. He had a variety of aches and pains, and he shifted most uncomfortably all the time. He was in the most savage temper when the Shell were dismissed.

The cad of the Shell went up to his study, making a sign to Mellish to follow him as he met him in the passage. Mellish went rather unwillingly. He did not like Crooke in his present humour, and he did not want to be drawn into any more of his plotting. But Crooke was the stronger character of the two, and Mellish was his unwilling follower.

"What are you up to now?" said Mellish sullenly, when they were in the study.

"I'm going to make that cad Brooke sit up for what he's done!" said Crooke.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Mellish. "Let Towser and Herries alone, for goodness' sake. It's not safe to meddle with them."

Crooke snapped his teeth.

"I'm not going to let them alone!" he said. "But never mind them now. It's Brooke. I'm going to show him up!"

Mellish looked puzzled.

"Show him up!" he repeated. "I don't quite see! What has he done?"

"Have you seen his father?"

Mellish grinned.



"Yes, rather. I've passed their house near Wayland sometimes. The old man is a coughdrop, and no mistake!" Crooke's eyes glittered.

"What have you specially noticed about him?" he said.

Mellish reflected.

"He's a coughdrop!" he repeated. "He's been in a good position, and he's lost it through drink, I suppose. I've heard that he's been seen tipsy in the High Street at Rylcombe, spouting out Greek by the yard, with the village kids in a circle round him. It must have been funny."

"Most of St. Jim's fellows have never seen his father," went on Crooke. "I think it would be a treat for them—and for Brooke."

Mellish stared.

"He wouldn't come here," he said. "When he's sober he shows plainly enough what he's been up to. He looks like a giddy wreck."

"He's never sober when he's got any money," said Crooke.

"Then I expect he's jolly seldom got any!" grinned Mellish.

"If he were asked here, and had some money at the time, what do you think he would do?" said the cad of the Shell slowly.

"Fill himself up to the neck and come here squiffy, I suppose!"

"Just so!"

"My hat!" said Mellish, with a deep breath. "Is that what you're thinking of? What a stunning lark—and how ripping for Brooke! The cad holds his head jolly high, as if a fellow like myself wasn't worth speaking to! I'd like to see his pater squiffy, rolling across the quad, and reciting Homer under the Head's window! Ha, ha, ha!"

Crooke chuckled.

"That's the idea!" he said.

"But how are you going to work it?"

"Oh, I can work it! Suppose he had a letter——"

Mellish shook his head.

"Too dangerous! Letters have a way of turning up afterwards and getting a chap into a beastly row!" he said, in alarm.

"Well, that's so. Suppose he had a message—you could take it——"

"Oh, could I?" said Mellish uneasily.

"Yes, you could!" growled Crooke. "He doesn't know you, and doesn't know your name. You could tell him that Brooke wanted him here, and hand him some money——"

"He wouldn't take money from me!"

"Ass! You could say Brooke had sent it—spin some yarn about a money prize! Thirsty men like Brooke senior don't examine too carefully into where money comes from; he'd believe anything for the chance of filling himself up at the Green Man."

"It's a jolly good dodge, and—and I like the idea. But if it came out——"

"Your part in it couldn't come out; you could be careful to keep out of sight while he was here. You could give your name as Brown or Jones, too. There are five Browns in the school, if he inquired after them. It's as safe as houses!"

"Why can't you see him yourself, then?"

"He knows me by sight. I've talked to him over his garden fence."

Mellish moved restlessly.

"Where's the money to come from?"

he said.

"I've got a pound in my pocket, and that's more than enough."

"Do you mean to say you'd spring a pound to show Brooke up?"

Crooke gritted his teeth.

"Yes—or fifty, if I had them!"

"Well, I—I'll take it on!" said Mellish. "And—and when——"

"To-morrow afternoon."

"Good, then!"

"Not a word!" said Crooke.

"No fear!" And Mellish quitted the study, looking very thoughtful.

CHAPTER 9.

Knox Asks For It!

"IMPOSSIBLE!"

Tom Merry & Co. were coming along the Fourth Form passage later in the day when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's voice, raised in excitement, reached them from Study No. 6.

Monty Lowther grinned, and kicked open the study door. The four chums were all there, and they were all looking rather worn.

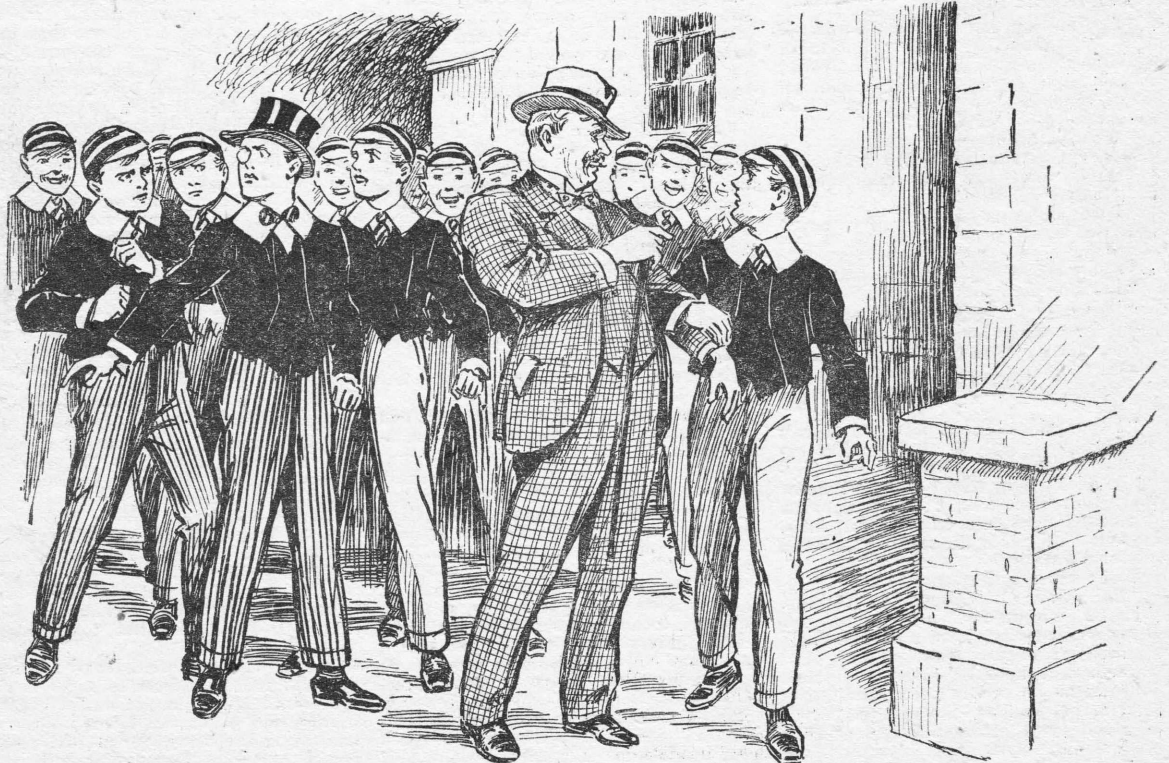
"Hallo!" said Tom Merry. "Trouble in the family? I suggest that you all apologise to one another, which, according to D'Arcy, would set the matter right at once."

Blake, Herries, and Digby grinned, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his eye, and regarded the Terrible Three with severity.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, this is no laughin' mattah——"

"Gussy is right for once," said Blake. "I should wathah say so!" said D'Arcy warmly. "I appeal to you fellows. Would you have a wotten bulldog in your study?"

"Certainly not!" said Tom Merry promptly. "If I had a bulldog in my



"I've come to see you, Dick," said Mr. Brooke. "But—but I can't make out which of you is Dick." Dick Brooks turned scarlet. "Come in, father, to the study and have some tea." And he drew his father away from the laughing throng.



study, I should insist upon his being perfectly wholesome. I should bar a rotten one."

"You silly ass!" said Herries. "If you can't talk sense, you had better ring off. I'm going to have Towser in the study!"

"It's imposs."

"You'd have the prefects down on you in next to no time, you know," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "It wouldn't do, Herries. Knox, the prefect, caught him in your study once, and you had a ragging from Mr. Railton."

"Blow Knox!"

"He won't be blown!" said Manners. "You see—"

"What's that?" The individual the juniors were speaking of looked into the study with a frowning brow. Knox had a decidedly unpleasant look upon his face. He was the most unpopular senior in the School House, and he fully deserved his unpopularity. "What's that about keeping a bulldog in the study?"

"We didn't know you were listening," said Monty Lowther politely.

Knox scowled.

"Take fifty lines, Lowther! If I find you keeping a dog in the study, any of you, you will get into trouble." And Knox walked off angrily.

Herries snorted.

"That's done it!" he said. "All through you silly asses! I can't have Towser here now that Knox is on the scent."

"Knox would soon have got on the scent," said Tom Merry consolingly. "You could tip the Head's gardener to keep an eye on Towser. That would make it all right."

Herries brightened a little.

"Well, there's something in that," he said. "I think I'll go and see him about it now."

And Herries departed.

"I'm getting fed up with Towser!" said Jack Blake. "There seems to be nothing going but Towser. It's Towser to the right of us, Towser to the left of us, and Towser all over us. He's as much bother as Gussy."

"Weally, Blake—"

Monty Lowther burst into a chuckle. "Well, what are you cachinnating at?" asked Blake.

"I was thinking of Knox. He'll look into this study presently to see if you chaps have got Towser here."

"I suppose he will. What about it?"

"Let him find him!"

"Fathead! It would mean two hundred lines each for all of us if he found Towser in the study," growled Blake.

"Not if he found Towser II."

"Eh?"

"I was thinking of Bernard Glyn's Towser, you see," Monty Lowther explained. "Knox doesn't know anything about him, and he doesn't know that the esteemed Towser's got a double. If he found Glyn's latest here, he would take him for the original and genuine Towser."

Blake burst into a roar.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "That's wippin'! That awful cad Knox wants takin' down a considerable numbah of pegs. He's a fwightful coward, and he'd be afraid to touch Towser, so he couldn't find out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!" roared Blake. "Let's go and find Glyn. This is better than springing Towser II on the New House."

"Yaas, wathah!"

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And the Terrible Three and the Fourth Formers rushed off to Bernard Glyn's study. Glyn had the study at the end of the Shell passage, with Kangaroo and Clifton Dane. The three Shell fellows were there, having tea, when the newcomers burst in. Bernard Glyn had stains of various hues upon his fingers and face, and had a mottled look, which indicated that he had been at work upon another of his famous inventions, a wonderful discovery in the line of indelible inks. The juniors grinned as they looked at him.

"Hallo!" said Kangaroo. "If you fellows have come to tea, wire in and welcome. There's exactly half a sardine left, and you can share it out."

"Weally, Kangy—"

"We haven't come to tea," said Blake. "We've come for Towser II. Where is the giddy mechanical mongrel?"

Bernard Glyn jerked his thumb towards a large box in the corner of the study.

"I've finished him," he said. "I'm going on with my indelible ink now."

"Yes, you look as if you were," said Tom Merry. "I should recommend you to make the ink invisible. It would leave you a little less like a tropical beetle."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Never mind the indelible ink now," said Blake cheerfully. "We want the mechanical bulldog. It's a little jape on Knoxy."

"Good egg! You can have him. I'll bring him. I'm not going to trust my inventions in any duffer's hands."

"Weally, you know—"

"What do you want with him?" asked Glyn.

Tom Merry explained, and there was a roar from the chums of the end study. They entered into the spirit of the thing at once. The box was rushed along the passage, and opened in Study No. 6. Towser II was taken out, looking very flat; but Glyn inserted a key into his back and wound him up. There was a slight whirring sound as the bulldog rose to its feet, and walked round the study.

"My hat!" Blake gasped. "I'd swear it was alive!"

"Yaas, wathah! What a howid-lookin' beast! It weally makes me quite uneasy about my twousahs, you know."

"Have you fixed up his beautiful voice?" asked Tom Merry.

Bernard Glyn grinned.

"Yes; listen!"

He touched a button concealed under one of the bulldog's ears. Towser II's mouth opened, and a deep and rumbling growl came forth.

Gr-r-r-r!

"Bai Jove!"

The mechanical dog's eyes rolled, and the mouth opened, showing the gleaming teeth.

The juniors started involuntarily back. It seemed as if the savage animal was about to spring upon them. Glyn chuckled, and backed Towser II into a corner of the study, the shadiest corner.

The fearsome-looking beast glared at them with its glass eyes, which, as Blake declared, looked more natural than life.

The juniors left the study and closed the door. From within a low growl came after them. Glyn grinned cheerfully.

"He's wound up to growl every half-minute!" he said. "I've got a speed gear inside him. Blessed if I don't half think he's a real dog myself, he does it so well."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blake and Herries strolled down into

the Lower Hall, where Knox was chatting with Langton of the Sixth. The juniors did not appear to notice the prefects, but Knox noticed them. As the Fourth Formers passed him, Blake said to Herries:

"It will be all right so long as he doesn't make a row, I suppose?"

Then the juniors walked into the quad.

Knox's eyes glittered. These words, overheard apparently by accident, put him on the scent. He left Langton, and strode after the juniors.

"Blake!" he called out.

Jack Blake turned his head.

"Yes, Knox?" he said meekly.

"Have you taken that bulldog into Study No. 6?"

"No, Knox."

"Don't prevaricate, Blake," said the prefect. "Has Herries taken him?"

"No, Knox," said Herries.

"Is he there at all?" asked the prefect angrily.

"Certainly not!" said Blake. "Didn't you tell us we weren't to have him? You don't think I'd disobey you, do you, Knox? I'd sooner disobey my great grandfather."

"You cheeky young cad! I believe you're lying!" said Knox, between his teeth. "I will go and see for myself."

"Hold on, Knox!" exclaimed Blake, with an artistic look of alarm. "I—I don't think you need go. Towser isn't in the study."

"I shall satisfy myself about that," said Knox. And he went up the stairs three at a time.

## CHAPTER 10.

### Not Dangerous!

GR-R-R-R!

That was the sound that greeted Knox's ears as he came up to the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

The prefect's eyes glittered. He did not want much more evidence than that. Knox had a feeling of the most profound satisfaction. Blake was supposed to be a most truthful boy, as indeed he was. And Mr. Railton or his Form-master, would have taken his word without a question. Not so Knox. Knox's charitable opinion was that if a fellow had an appearance of being very frank, it only meant that he was more deep than usual. And he was very pleased at finding Blake out in a lie. He would be able to report that to the headmaster as a proof that he had been right all along in his estimate of Jack Blake's character.

He opened the door of the study and entered. He started as he caught sight of Towser II in the opposite corner of the study.

"The—the lying young scoundrel!" muttered Knox, amazed in spite of himself at this indubitable proof that Blake had told an untruth. "There's the blessed bulldog as large as life. I'll take him to Railton."

Gr-r-r-r!

Knox backed away, and changed his mind about taking Towser to Mr. Railton.

"The beast!" he muttered. "He looks as if he's ready to tear a chap limb from limb. I—I'd better not touch him!"

Gr-r-r-r!

Towser II's eyes rolled and his jaws opened, and he began to move across the room. Knox jumped out of his way hastily, and as Towser II cut off his retreat from the study, the prefect backed round the table. Somehow or other the mechanism in the mechanical dog had come into operation on its own. But it couldn't have done so at a better time for the juniors' joke.



Towser II followed Knox and the prefect jumped on to the table in alarm. "The dangerous beast! It ought to be shot!" gasped Knox. "Herries should be caned for this!"

The mechanical dog came to a halt after circling the table twice. The clockwork had evidently run down. But Towser II continued to glare and his jaws moved menacingly, and Knox hesitated to leave his place of safety.

Kangaroo and Clifton Dane looked round the half-open door, and chuckled to themselves at the prefect's plight. Then they moved away in case the senior should see them. They had no wish to help Knox.

But at last the prefect plucked up courage, leaped from the table to the study door, and darted out of the room, slamming the door behind him. He hurried downstairs, and knocked at Mr. Railton's door.

Mr. Railton was having tea in his study with Mr. Lathom of the Fourth, and he did not look pleased at being interrupted. He was accustomed to hearing complaints from Knox, and he was what the juniors would have called fed up with them.

"Is anything wrong, Knox?" he asked wearily.

"Yes, sir. The juniors in Study No. 6 have brought a bulldog into the House, and it is now in the study."

Mr. Railton frowned.

"They have been expressly forbidden to do so," he said.

"I warned them that that was the case, sir," said Knox. "And Blake has just denied to me, point-blank, that the dog was there."

"Then I am sure it is not there," said little Mr. Lathom, blinking at Knox over his glasses. "Blake is a most truthful boy."

Knox smiled sarcastically.

"I have never thought so, sir," he said. "My opinion is—"

"Your opinion does not do you credit, then," said Mr. Lathom, with unusual sharpness of manner for him. "If you cannot see that Blake is an honourable lad, Knox, the fault must be in your character, and not in his."

"He has denied that the dog is there, sir."

"Then it is not there."

"But I have seen it."

"What!"

"I have just looked into the study, and the dog went for me," said Knox. He did not add that he had jumped on the table in fright. "I have left it there, because it looks too savage to touch. It is a positive danger to the whole House. I do not know what is to be done with it."

Mr. Lathom put his glasses firmly upon his nose, and looked directly at the prefect.

"Do you mean to say, Knox, that Blake denied having the dog there, and that it was there all the time?" he asked.

"Yes, sir!"

"Then I do not believe you." And little Mr. Lathom turned his back upon Knox.

The prefect turned crimson with mortification.

"Will you step up to the study and see for yourself?" he asked.

"No, I will not. You have an unreasonable prejudice against one of the best boys in my Form, and I have observed it before," said Mr. Lathom tartly. "I shall take not the slightest notice of your statement. If I were Head of this school you would not be a prefect. Dr. Holmes does not know you as I do."

"Sir! If you choose to insult me—"

# JUST MY FUN

## Monty Lowther Calling



Hallo, everybody! I hear goalkeepers keep in practice during the light evenings. Daylight "saying"! A pavement artist says it isn't easy to gain recognition. People will look down on his work! Household hint: Beef should never be served half cooked. It simply isn't done. "Birthdays," says Skimpole, "give me food for thought." Ah, dates? Remember, if he's a big fellow, discussion is the better part of valour. Railway travel is cheaper than ever, says a poster. But there's still no reduction for pulling the communication

"I will see into this matter," said Mr. Railton, rising, his brow very clouded. "I am as surprised as you are, Mr. Lathom, at Knox's statement; but it is easy to ascertain the facts. Pray excuse me a few minutes."

And he followed Knox from the study. The prefect mounted the stairs with a burning face; but he felt that his justification was coming.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

"There, sir!" Knox exclaimed triumphantly. "You can hear him yourself now."

Mr. Railton looked very grave.

He opened the door of the study. Knox remained behind the stalwart form of the Housemaster. He did not want to get too near to Towser again.

"Better take care, sir. He looks frightfully savage."

Mr. Railton did not reply. He knew that the surest way to make a dog attack was to appear afraid of it. He strode into the study. He started at the sight of the bulldog with open jaws and glistening eyes.

Towser II gave voice again as he Housemaster entered.

Gr-r-r-r-r!

"You can see for yourself that Blake lied now," said Knox maliciously from the passage.

"Good dog!" said Mr. Railton, stepping towards the animal. "Come! Good dog!"

Gr-r-r-r-r!

The animal looked so ferocious that Mr. Railton drew back his hand in spite of himself. Several fellows had come along the passage, and they looked into the study.

"Faith!" exclaimed Reilly. "Towser's here!"

"Mind he doesn't bite you, sir," said Gore of the Shell. "He looks dangerous, sir!"

Mr. Railton hesitated. The bulldog seemed about to spring, but did not spring. But it certainly seemed dangerous to touch him, and trousers were a very poor protection against such terrible teeth as Towser possessed.

Brooke of the Fourth stepped into the study.

"Shall I coax him, sir?" he said. "He knows me."

"Take care, Brooke, you ass!" muttered Hancock. "He'll have your hand off if you're not jolly careful!"

"Oh, he won't bite me!" said Brooke cheerfully.

"Stand back, Brooke!" said Mr.

cord! A Wayland boxer, who has been in retirement, wants to fight again. He wants to get out and a bout. As the old lady said to the engine driver: "Will you blow your whistle three times passing Dumford West, to let my niece know I'm on this train?" I see a headmaster has abolished the birch. No more schoolboy howlers! "It's porridge that has made Scotsmen what they are to-day," says Kerr. That's giving it away! Did you hear about the man who blamed the B.B.C. when it rained, because, he said, they broadcast the weather? "I saved the life of the matron's canary," said Wally D'Arcy. "How?" asked Gibson. "I shut the cat out!" "Even house flies have a certain amount of intelligence," says Mr. Lathom. Oh, yes; they know what's swat. "The largest cars are the quietest," says D'Arcy. Limousine but not heard! A sea trip is the best sort of holiday, I hear. A loaf on the ocean wave! A trapeze artiste told me he gets £1,000 a year. But he has to hang about for it. I'll be seeing you, chums!

Railton. "The animal looks very savage, and I will not allow you to run risks."

"He won't hurt me, sir; I always get on with dogs," said Brooke confidently.

"That's thrue for ye," said Reilly.

"It's so, sir. Brooke can always get on with dogs; they take to him like ducks to water."

"Let me try, sir!"

"Very well," said Mr. Railton. "If you can persuade him, good! I should be sorry to have to hurt the dog, who is not responsible for being where he is not allowed to be."

Brooke stepped closer to Towser, and the gleaming jaws moved slightly. But Brooke did not falter. He stooped and lightly touched the head of the bulldog with a caressing gesture.

"Good old Towser!" he murmured softly. "My hat!"

He jumped back in amazement.

"My hat! It's not Towser! It's not alive!"

"What!" shouted Mr. Railton.

"It's a dummy, sir! I—I remember now—"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"It's so, sir! You can tell if you touch it!"

The Housemaster bent down and touched the bulldog. Then he was convinced. He rose and turned upon Knox with a frowning brow. The prefect stood dumbfounded. His face was a study.

"Knox! Were you aware of this?" thundered the Housemaster.

"I, sir!" stammered Knox. "I! Certainly not! It is a—a trick!"

"Where did the dog come from, Brooke?" asked Mr. Railton.

Brooke grinned; he could not help it.

"It's a mechanical dog, sir," he said.

"I hadn't seen it before, but I heard the fellows talking about it yesterday. It's one of Glyn's inventions."

"Faith, rather!" said Reilly. "I forgot Towser II. Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton frowned sternly.

"There is no harm in Glyn making a mechanical dog," he said. "It is very clever of him, and it is certainly wonderfully lifelike. There is no harm in Blake having a mechanical toy in his study. You have made a fool of yourself, Knox!"

"Sir!"

"If you had taken Blake's word, as you ought to have done, you would not



have made yourself look ridiculous, and would not have brought me here upon a fool's errand!" said Mr. Railton angrily. "You have been taken in by a simple trick, and you fully deserve it! When Blake denied that there was a bulldog in his study, you ought to have guessed that it was a joke of some sort, instead of concluding that Blake was speaking falsely. Any other prefect would have known better! I cannot help thinking that you were glad to find the boy out in a falsehood! That was base of you!"

And Mr. Railton strode out of the study very much annoyed. Knox remained white with rage, and as soon as the Housemaster was gone, the juniors burst into a chuckle.

"That was base of you, Knox!" said a voice from the crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox gritted his teeth. He caught up a chair and rushed at the mechanical dog, and smote it fiercely. There was a wild whirl from Towser II, and he rolled over on the floor of the study. His performances were stopped with a vengeance now.

Knox, scowling like a demon, strode from the study. A yell from the juniors followed him.

"That was base of you, Knox."

The prefect gritted his teeth as he strode away.

#### CHAPTER 11.

##### Brooke's Father Arrives!

"**B**ROOKE, old man!" Brooke of the Fourth stopped as Tom Merry called to him. He gave the captain of the Shell a cheerful nod and smile.

"I want to speak to you about cricket," said Tom Merry. "You're not going to give it the go-by, you know."

Brooke's face clouded a little. He was as keen on the great game as any other fellow at St. Jim's, but he knew he would have to give it up.

"That's all right," he said. "I can't play. I can't see the blessed ball coming, you know. But I want to stay in the club, and I shall always turn up at the matches and yell. You can easily shove someone in instead of me. I was never above the average."

Tom Merry nodded.

"Quite so!" he agreed. "When it's a school match we've got better players for the junior eleven. But in House matches we have to scrape up twenty-two from the Lower Forms, and that's where you come in. But I suppose you know best. But if you can't play in a House match, you ought to turn up for practice, you know, if only to keep yourself fit."

Brooke looked doubtful. Like many people with some personal affliction, he was almost morbidly anxious about not letting it bother other people. But he nodded.

"Well, I'll come down to the nets," he said. "Thanks!"

"Come on, then, with me."

"Right-ho!" said Brooke, cheerfully enough.

It was one of the two weekly half-holidays at St. Jim's, and the weather was glorious. The whole school was streaming for the playing fields and the river. The New House fellows were at practice on their ground, and the yells of delight could be heard as Fatty Wynn bowled to Redfern's wicket.

Fatty Wynn of the New House had always been the best junior bowler at St. Jim's, and now it looked, since

Redfern's coming, as if they had the best junior batsman, too.

Tom Merry and Jack Blake needed to look to their laurels.

Brooke had been a good bat and a good bowler before his eyes began to trouble him, and some of the fellows knew that that trouble was due to his working late hours at home at close and difficult work, added to hard study at St. Jim's. But Brooke was not the kind of fellow to take his troubles sadly. He was always cheerful, though a wrinkle was already showing on his boyish brow.

Crooke stood on the School House steps and watched Brooke walking away with Tom Merry, with a sarcastic smile upon his face.

Mellish was with the cad of the Shell, and he was looking a little uneasy, though there was a malicious glitter in his eyes.

"Time you were off," said Crooke.

"Ye-es, I suppose so," said Mellish.

"It's as easy as rolling off a log," Crooke went on, lowering his voice. "You'll find him in Rylcombe. He gives a violin lesson to some clohopper there, and always leaves at three. I've found that out. He used to be a violinist before he took to going on the razzle, and he turns an honest penny that way now by teaching. Give him the message from Brooke—Brooke specially wants him here at five o'clock. The rotter will be having tea here in No. 6, most likely at that time. Hand him the pound in the envelope—from Brooke. Dash it all, I've found the pound, and it isn't much for you to do!"

"Oh, it's all right! I'll do it!"

"Then cut off, and mind you don't miss him."

Mellish nodded and walked away. Crooke strolled down to the cricket ground. Crooke did not play cricket, and he never turned up for more practice than was compulsory. But he wanted to keep an eye on Brooke that afternoon.

Brooke was batting now, and Blake was bowling to him. Brooke's brow was screwed up almost in a scowl, not from ill humour, but from the effort to see what he was about. But it was not of much use. Blake gave him easy bowling, but Brooke's willow missed the ball nearly every time, and the wicket fell very soon.

Brooke's blow unclouded, and he smiled a little ruefully.

"I'll watch you fellows," he said.

"Weally, Bwooke, old man, it's wathah wuff on you!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I should wecommend you to twy an eyeglass."

Brooke laughed, and handed over the bat to someone else and walked off the pitch. It was pleasant to lie in the grass on that sunny afternoon and watch the figures in white on the level green, and to hear the merry click of bat and ball, and to listen to the cheery shouts of the players. The day boy had a book in his pocket, too—he was seldom without one—and he took it out



Crooke and Mellish were held fast in strong hands, and the effect upon the features of the Indians never looked so red as C

to read and watch the players by turn. The book was Xenophon, and Brooke sighed a little as the Greek characters seemed to dance before his eyes.

"Swatting, as usual," said Crooke, in his sneering tones, stopping to look down at the Fourth Former in the grass.

Brooke glanced at him quietly.

"Yes," he said. "Swatting as usual." Crooke would have gone on to further unpleasant remarks, but there was a gleam in Brooke's blue eyes that warned him that he had better not.

The cad of the Shell moved away, and stood leaning against the pavilion, idly watching the players, and wishing that the afternoon would speed by till Brooke's father arrived. That Mr. Brooke would come Crooke had not the slightest doubt. And he grinned at the thought of what was to happen to the boy he hated. He knew how Brooke would suffer; not on his own account, but upon his father's. For whatever his father's weaknesses might be, Brooke had a strong affection for him, and he never forgot the respect that was due to him, whatever he might do to forfeit it.

To Crooke the afternoon was slow, but to the juniors on the cricket pitch it fled by swiftly enough.

It was getting near five o'clock when Tom Merry came over to Brooke.

"Hallo!" he said cheerfully. "What's that?"

"The Anabasis," said Brooke, with a smile.

Tom Merry yawned. "Good old Anabasis! Are they going up or are they going down, and how many parasangs?" he inquired,





erry proceeded to paint their faces. The ink was a bright  
of the School House was startling. The reddest of Red  
and Mellish did in a few minutes!

Brooke laughed, and closed the book. "You're coming in to tea with us," said Tom Merry. "There's going to be high jinks in Study No. 6. Gussy has screwed a fiver out of his guv'nor, and Fatty Wynn has done the shopping. It will be a jolly crowd, and we want you. You'll come in?"

"Glad to!" said Brooke. "Come along with me, then, and we'll get the fire going. I'm finished here, but some of the others are going on."

"Right-ho!" Tom Merry and Brooke went into the School House. Croke shifted restlessly. Five o'clock rang out from the school clock-tower. Mellish had not come in, but as the clock struck Croke caught sight of him in the quadrangle and hurried towards him.

"Well?" he asked. Mellish grinned. "It's all serene!" he said. "He's coming?" "Well, he said he would," said Mellish. "Hasn't he come? I gave Joliffe and Banks a look in at the Green Man, and I've only just got back."

"He hasn't come yet. What did he do after you gave him the message and the money?"

Mellish chuckled. "He stood thinking for about five minutes," he said. "I watched him from the door of old Bunn's shop. He started to go home, and stopped, and then started for the Red Cow, and stopped again. Then he stood a minute or two, and then made a sort of dive for the Red Cow, and went in, and didn't come out again."

Croke laughed. All had gone as he

had expected, and he knew what would come of Mr. Brooke's visit to the Red Cow. The elder Brooke was seldom sober when he had any money.

Most of the cricketers were gone in to tea by now, and others were on their way back from the playing fields. Croke walked down to the gates with growing uneasiness. Was his plot a failure, after all? He started, and his eyes brightened as he heard a sharp voice in the gateway. It was the voice of Taggles, the school porter of St. Jim's.

"You can't come in 'ere like that!"

"Oh, good!" muttered Croke. "He's come! Now for the circus!"

He hurried towards the gate. Several other fellows, who had heard Taggles' excited voice, were hurrying in the same direction, wondering what was the matter.

In the gateway stood a strange figure.

It was that of a man still in early middle age, with a handsome and somewhat striking face, and clear, blue eyes, still as fresh and handsome as a boy's. He was dressed in shabby clothes, but he wore them in a way that made one hardly notice their shabbiness. Anyone looking at him would have said that this was a man far above the common run of men; but the soft, small mouth, and

the delicate chin would have shown, too, that this was a man of weak and good-natured character—the kind of man who is said to be nobody's enemy but his own.

To the dozen or two fellows who stared at him inquiringly he was not known by sight; but Croke knew him, and he took care that the other fellows should.

"Brooke's pater!" yelled Croke. The man was evidently under the influence of drink. He walked unsteadily, and yet held himself with an air of exaggerated dignity and stateliness common to men in a certain state of intoxication. His voice, when he spoke, was broken by hiccups, and yet it was cultivated, and pleasant to hear. "You lemme pass, my man!" said Mr. Brooke. "I've come to see my boy. He wants me."

"Mind your own business, Taggles!" said Croke, coming forward. "A fellow's pater has the right to come and see him if he wants to."

"But see the state he's in, Master Croke!" whispered Taggles, who was far from guessing what was in the mind of the cad of the Shell.

"Well, that's his business, not yours." Taggles hesitated, not knowing what to do, and while he hesitated Mr. Brooke lurched past him and walked into the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

"Brooke's pater!" "Where's Brooke?" "My hat! What a giddy sight!"

There were exclamations, and grins, and chuckles among the fellows in the quadrangle. The sight of the intoxicated man, walking with absurd dignity across the quad, seemed irresistibly

funny to the boys. The element of tragedy in it did not occur to them. A fine man reduced to such a state of irresolution of character was tragic enough, but it was the comic element that struck the onlookers.

"Where's Brooke?" shouted a dozen voices. "Brooke, come and see your pater home!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "My only chapeau!" exclaimed Figgins of the Fourth, coming off the cricket field in time to see Mr. Brooke enter. "Who's that?"

"Brooke's pater!" yelled Croke. "Impossible!"

"Ask him, then!" Mr. Brooke looked round rather dizzily. The crowd of laughing faces seemed to swim before his eyes, and the number of them was at least doubled to his vision.

"I'm glad to see you all, my boys!" he said. "You're all friends of my boy Dick. Dick is a good lad!"

"I'm sure he is," said Croke. "I hope he'll grow up to follow in his father's footsteps, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"Dick wants me," said Mr. Brooke. "He sent me a message to come. Where's Dick?"

"Show up, Brooke!" roared a score of voices. "Here's your pater!"

The roar reached Dick Brooke in Study No. 6, in the School House. He had been making toast, and his face was very ruddy, but the colour died out of it as he stepped to the study window and looked out into the quadrangle.

Blake, D'Arcy, Tom Merry, and Lowther were in the study. They came at once to the window and saw what Dick Brooke saw.

Mr. Brooke, surrounded and followed by a laughing crowd, was crossing the quad, with slow and unsteady steps, towards the School House.

Dick's face was white as chalk. "My father!" he muttered. "Bai Jove!"

"Your father?" said Tom Merry, in startled tones.

"Yes," groaned Brooke. "I'm sorry, old man! You'd better run down."

Brooke nodded, and ran out of the study. The juniors looked at one another in silence. Even Monty Lowther's humour was gone. He realised what this meant for Brooke.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, at last. "This is frightfully wuff on Bwooke."

"Horrible!" said Blake. "Poor old Brooke!"

"The ass ought to have had more sense than to come here," said Tom Merry. "I knew he was like this. You remember the time we were at Brooke's house? But—what on earth has he come here for in this state?"

"I suppose he doesn't know what he's doing."

"Come on, deah boys!" said D'Arcy, jamming his silk topper on his head.

"Where?" asked Tom Merry. "To stand by old Bwooke. We can't desert him in a fix like this."

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy left the study.

The other fellows followed him more slowly. They were willing enough to stand by Brooke, but they did not see how they could help him in an emergency like this.

Brooke had reached the quadrangle. Mr. Brooke was near the School House now, and the crowd was increasing in numbers.

Brooke came up, white and breathless.



"Father"—Brooke took his arm—  
"come along!"

Mr. Brooke blinked at him uncertainly.

"You're Dick, are you?" he asked, evidently not being able to trust his vision. As a matter of fact, three or four Dicks were dancing before his eyes.

"Yes, I'm Dick."

"That's all very well," said Mr. Brooke argumentatively; "but which of you is Dick?"

"Father—"

"I've come to see you, Dick," said Mr. Brooke. "But—but I can't make out which of you is Dick. You're all like my son, all three of you, but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The yell of laughter from the crowd drowned Mr. Brooke's uncertain voice.

Dick Brooke's face was scarlet now.

"Pway shut up, you chaps!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "There is nothin' whatever to cackle at. This is simply howid for Bwooke!"

"Serve him right!" said Crooke.

Blake pushed Crooke roughly away.

"You shut up!" he said savagely.

"Mr. Bwooke," said D'Arcy, seeing that the man was resisting Brooke's attempts to lead him away towards the gates, protesting that he had come to see Dick, and wouldn't go without seeing him—"Mr. Bwooke, will you have the great kindness to accept the hospitality of my study. We're just goin' to have tea."

"Pleased, I'm sure!" said Mr. Brooke. "Pour out the wine; let it flow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, come in, father," said Brooke.

"This is awfully good of you, D'Arcy! Father, come in and have some tea."

And Mr. Brooke was piloted into Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage.

## CHAPTER 12.

### Backing up Brooke!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY had nobly expended the five he had received from his "governah." He had asked all sorts of fellows to the study to tea.

The Terrible Three were coming, and Kangaroo, Glyn and Reilly, and Figgins & Co. of the New House, and Redfern, Owen, and Lawrence, and D'Arcy minor of the Third, and Skimpole of the Shell, and two or three others.

Study No. 6, which was frequently crammed to its utmost capacity on festive occasions, seemed likely this time to be filled to bursting point. But the unexpected arrival of Mr. Brooke altered all that.

Brooke's immediate friends felt it their duty to stand by him, but the other fellows thought it would be more delicate not to witness his humiliation. Redfern & Co. of the New House made an excuse, and Figgins & Co. followed their example, with the exception of Fatty Wynn.

Fatty Wynn had quite as much delicacy as the others, but he had a bigger appetite, and he explained to Figgins & Co. that he thought he'd better go. And he did!

Tom Merry and Lowther stayed, too; but Manners went to develop some films. Other fellows dropped off, and so the tea-party in No. 6 was reduced to the four juniors to whom the study belonged, and Tom Merry, Wynn and Lowther, and Dick Brooke—and, of course, Brooke's pater.

Brooke's pater dropped into the armchair, and smiled round upon the

juniors with a benignant though rather uncertain smile.

Arthur Augustus tapped the miserable Brooke on the shoulder.

"Pway don't take it to heart, deah boy!" he murmured. "We're all good friends here, you know, and we'll look aftah him, and see him home when he's—when he's all wight again. Pway don't wowwy!"

"Thank you," said Brooke, in a strained voice. "I'm mucking up your tea-party."

"That's nothin'."

"Nothing at all!" said Tom Merry.

"Fellows don't mind in the least, and we can have another feed to-morrow, anyway. I think we'll be getting along."

"No, you stay," said Blake. "We want some chaps here. Crooke and some other rotters may come along."

"Good! We'll stay!"

"I hope I am not dishturbin' anybody," said Mr. Brooke, imperfectly hearing the muttered conversation, and he rose to his feet, but immediately collapsed into the armchair again.

"Gentlemen, you are all welcome at this board! Gentlemen—gentle—hic!"

Brooke coloured with shame.

"Give him some tea," said Tom Merry.

Blake made the tea.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was presenting Mr. Brooke with a cup of tea, and the visitor to Study No. 6 spilt most of it upon his waistcoat and trousers, and swallowed a little.

He uttered an exclamation of disgust.

"Do you call that whisky?" He demanded indignantly.

"Bai Jove! No; we call it tea," said D'Arcy.

"A Scotch-and-soda, please, miss!" said Mr. Brooke, apparently under the impression now that Study No. 6 was the bar-room of the Red Cow, in Rylcombe. "And not too much soda!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Have something to eat, father," said Brooke.

"Hallo! Is that you, Dick?" asked Mr. Brooke. "You haven't told me yet what you sent for me for? Do you want me to help you with your classics?"

"I didn't send for you, father," said Brooke.

"Hey? Didn't you send him with the message and the pound?"

"The pound!" said Brooke, in amazement.

"It came in very useful," said Mr. Brooke. "It was very kind of you to send it, Dick. You knew I should be thirsty on a warm afternoon, didn't you?"

"I didn't send you a pound, father."

"Who did, then?" asked Mr. Brooke, sitting upright in his chair and blinking at his son. "Who sent me the pound?"

"I don't know."

"I've got a bob left," said Mr. Brooke. "The whisky at the Red Cow is very good. The brandy is poor, but the whisky is good. Better than the stuff they drink here," he went on, Study No. 6 changing into a foreign cafe in his heated imagination. "No, I won't have any absinthe, and I won't have any chartreuse, and I won't have any benedictine. If I can't have decent English whisky, I won't have anything."

"Bai Jove!"

The study door opened, and the juniors turned round wrathfully, but it was only Bernard Glyn who came in. He had been at work in his study upon his latest invention, and knew nothing about Brooke's pater being at St. Jim's. The stains of deep red upon Glyn's fingers and face seemed to indicate that

he had discovered the secret of making red ink, at least, indelible.

"Come in, Glyn, old man!" said Blake. "Shut the door. This is Brooke's pater; he's having tea with us."

"Oh!" said Glyn, in amazement, as he looked at the unfortunate gentleman in the armchair. "All right."

"Les jeux sont faites," said Mr. Brooke, mumbling. "Monsieur, vous avez gagne. I win 3,000 francs on the red. C'est tres bien, ca! I shall be able to do something for my poor boy in England if this luck holds out. Oh! That infernal black again!"

So his wild talk ran on, till at last it died away, and he sank into sleep in the armchair. Brooke gave the juniors a haggard look.

"It's horrible to have to worry you fellows like this," he muttered. "Would you mind if he stayed here a bit—till I can see him home?"

"Vewy pleased, deah boy. We'll leave you the study."

"How did he get here?" whispered Glyn.

"Somebody seemed to have taken him some money and a message in Brooke's name, asking him to come here," said Tom Merry. "Brooke says he didn't send it, so it's a trick somebody has played on him, I suppose."

"I don't think we need to look far for the trickster, either," said Blake. "It was Crooke, of course."

"I wish I knew," said Brooke, between his teeth.

"We'll find out," said Tom Merry, knitting his brows.

"Yaas, watah!"

"Let's bring Crooke and Mellish here when Mr. Brooke wakes up," said Glyn. "We can see then if he recognises either of them."

"Good egg!"

It was more than an hour later when Mr. Brooke opened his eyes. His son was alone with him in Study No. 6. Mr. Brooke started and shivered, and sat up in his chair. The fumes of drink had somewhat cleared from his brain, though he was far from being himself yet.

"Where am I?" he murmured.

"With me, father," said Brooke quietly.

"Dick!"

"Yes. Are you ready to go home?"

Mr. Brooke blinked at him. He was sober enough now to realise what he had done, and he crimsoned with shame and remorse.

"Dick! Dicky, my lad, I'm sorry!"

"It's all right, father," said Dick Brooke, with an effort. "Shall I take you home now?"

"Yes, Dick," muttered his father. "I'm—I'm sorry! When the wine is in, the wit is out, you know. But why did you ask me to come here, Dick, and send me money at the same time? You might have known what would happen."

"I didn't, father. It was a trick of some cad. The message, and the money did not come from me."

"Oh, Dick! A trick—to disgrace you here?"

"Yes, dad."

"And I—I've done it," groaned Mr. Brooke. "Oh, Dick, I've disgraced you before the school; and it was hard enough for you before."

"Never mind, dad. It's no good crying over spilt milk," said Dick bravely. "Let's get off home now. You can walk all right?"

"Yes, Dick."

Mr. Brooke staggered to his feet. His head was getting clear, but his legs were

(Continued at foot of next page.)





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

**H**ALLO, chums! That tremendously popular serial, "The Secret World!" is drawing to a close—the last exciting chapters appear in next week's number. But it does not mean a parting from the boys of St. Frank's, whose adventures have thrilled you all for so many weeks. You will be pleased to learn that I have arranged for another grand story of their adventures, and it will be starting in a fortnight's time. The cheery schoolboys of St. Frank's have become great favourites since their escapades first appeared in the GEM, and now the old paper would not seem the same without them.

I have just read the next St. Frank's serial, which is, of course, written by Mr. E. S. Brooks, and it's a grand yarn of an amazing mystery. Mystery stories are Mr. Brooks' strong suit, so you can look out for something extra-special. In contrast to the last serial, the scene of action is laid in the St. Frank's district, and Nipper & Co.'s adventures are every bit as exciting as their Northestrian experiences. I will tell you more about this new fiction treat next Wednesday, but meantime, put your pals wise, so that they, too, can start the story from the opening chapters.

#### "TOM MERRY'S MELODY MAKERS!"

This is the star St. Jim's story that you will find in next Wednesday's GEM, and you can stand by for a load of laughs. Tom Merry & Co. always contrive to get the most fun out of their adventures at St. Jim's, but when they come all over musical—well, it beats the band! Tom Merry gets the bright idea of forming an orchestra to perform at a local function. He keeps it a secret from others except his pals, but it leaks out, and he soon has rivals in the field, which leads to many highly amusing situations—and not a little discord, musical and otherwise! If you like a good laugh "listen in" to "Tom Merry's Melody Makers" next week. They may not be the perfect band, but they're a perfect scream!

#### "THE BESIEGED BUNCH!"

is the title of Frank Richards' next gripping yarn in the "Packsaddle

(Continued from previous page.) as intoxicated as ever, and certainly he was in no state to walk unaided.

Brooke stepped to the study door and called. And Tom Merry, Lowther, and Glyn came along at once.

"You'll help me, you chaps?"  
"Yes, rather!"  
They helped Mr. Brooke out of the study.

There was a sound of a scuffle up the passage, and four juniors came in sight, marching along Croke and Mellish, who were resisting unavailingly.

"Here are the cads!" said Blake.

Rebellion" series, and it's another thriller, believe me. The boys of the cow town school are at their last gasp, so to speak, and unless Dick Carr, who has gone for "eats," can smuggle food through the enemy lines to the besieged bunch, the rebels will be starved into surrender. There's no other help for them. Can Dick get food to the bunch and thus save the rebellion? It's a difficult task, with a dozen roughnecks barring his way to the rebels' stronghold! Whatever you do, chums, don't miss reading what happens in the next stage of the Packsaddle rebellion.

#### FREE—A MODEL GLIDER!

How does model gliding appeal to you? I know you would all like to try this latest sport and here's your big chance. A splendid model glider, made in wood, is being offered free. It measures 14 inches from wing-tip to wing-tip, is fitted with a powerful sling motor, and does all kinds of stunts exactly like a real plane. All you have to do to get the glider is to send two packet-tops from Puffed Rice or Puffed Wheat—they both make topping breakfasts. If you turn to page seven you will find out all the details for securing this model. You'd better hurry, though, because there'll be a rush on them!

#### A GRAND PUZZLE GAME.

I wonder how many of you have played Mappa-Mundi, the puzzle game which I told you about some while ago. Those who have played it will readily agree that it's great fun. But those who haven't should make a point of becoming acquainted with it. To play Mappa-Mundi you have to place the capital cities of the world in their right countries on a huge jig-saw puzzle map. The player who gets the most cities in their correct places wins.

The set costs 3s. 6d., and can be bought

#### PEN PALS COUPON

13-7-35

"Did either of these fellows bring you the message you thought was from Brooke, sir?"

Mr. Brooke blinked at them.

"Yes," he said. "It was this boy. He said his name was Brown."

And he pointed with a shaking finger to Percy Mellish.

"It—it wasn't," stammered Mellish, turning pale. "I—I've never seen him before. He's drunk, and he doesn't know me."

"He knows you well enough, you cad, and you're going to pay for it!"

at any bookshop, stationer's or toyshop. Quite apart from the game, the jig-saw puzzle is worth the money by itself.

#### A LUCKY STRIKE.

Here is the story of two gold-seekers who went in search of the elusive and precious metal that has taken toll of thousands of lives through the years, and who met with no luck until—well, let me tell you the story from the beginning. The two men set out from Tennant's Creek, Central Australia, and for many weary days they sought for gold. But not an atom did they find, and at last, despairing of finding a fortune quickly, they returned home.

Some weeks later the little girl of one of the gold-seekers saw two stones in the motor lorry which the men had used in their search. For no reason at all, she gave one a biff with a hammer and smashed it. She had struck gold, literally, for that it was the stone contained! The two stones had somehow got lodged in the lorry when it broke down, and remembering the place, only thirty miles from their homes, the men started their gold seeking again, with much brighter hopes now of finding fortune.

#### THE BIRTH OF THE "BOBBY."

It was over a century ago, J. Briggs, of Sutton, that the Police Force in this country came into being. It was Sir Robert Peel who was responsible for introducing the idea of an organised force to keep law and order. Hence the derivation of the nicknames which have become associated with policemen—"Bobbies" and "Peelers."

Of course, from earliest times there have been police forces of a sort, but not until the nineteenth century could citizens rely with any degree of safety on their property and valuables being protected from thieves—unless they employed men to keep guard.

In the time of Oliver Cromwell military police were introduced, but it's the only period in our history that the police have been otherwise than a civil force. Bow Street Runners were instituted in the eighteenth century, but their duty consisted mainly of patrolling the main roads out of London, within twenty miles of Bow Street. They looked after the safety of travellers, who in those days were menaced by the highwayman. Later, street-keepers were employed to control traffic, but they were not under the police authorities. The detective force and the Criminal Investigation Department were formed in 1878.

#### TAILPIECE.

"Who was Joan of Arc?" asked the teacher during history lesson.

For a few moments there was silence in the class, then little Johnny put his hand up and said:

"Please, teacher, she was the daughter of Noah!"

#### THE EDITOR.

said Herries. "Yank him into the study!"

"It was Croke!" shrieked Mellish, as he was hurled into Study No. 6, and the juniors released his confederate. "He put me up to it. He gave me the pound."

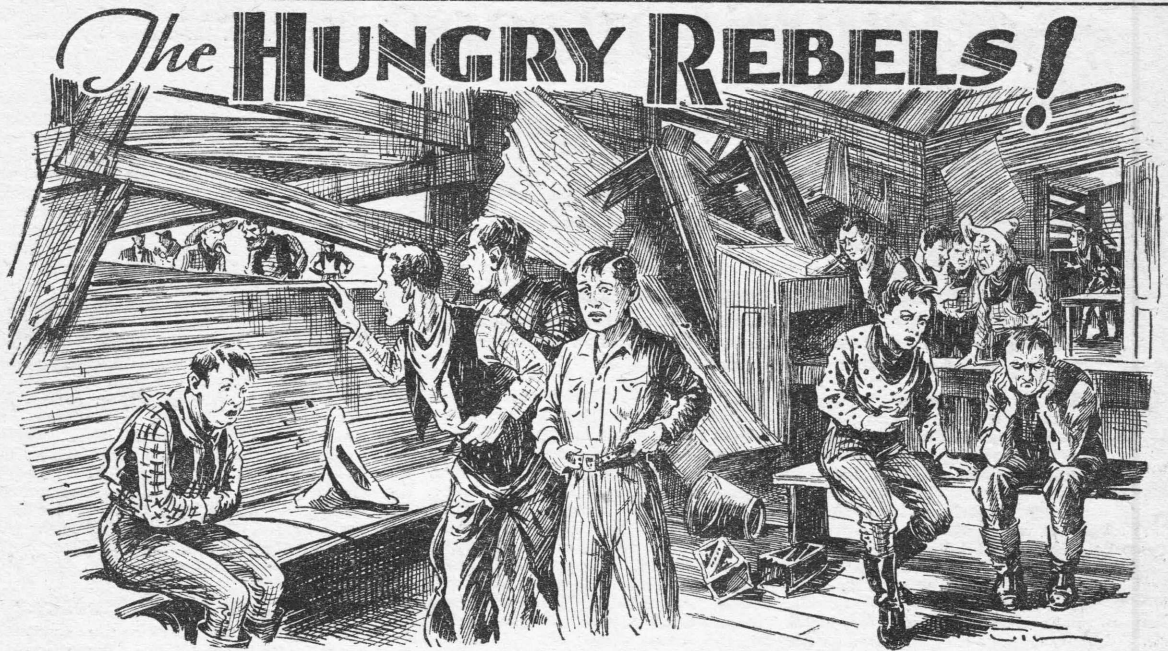
"Oh!" said Digby. "I thought Croke was in it, too."

"Shove him in, and keep 'em both there till we get back!" said Tom Merry.

(Continued on page 28.)

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By FRANK RICHARDS.

### The Quitters!

"I'M goin' to quit!"  
Poker Parker made that announcement.

"Aw, can it!" growled Slick Poindexter.

"And squat on the can!" snapped Mick Kavanagh.

There were serious and solemn faces in the schoolhouse at Packsaddle. The rebels of the cow town school were up against it.

Dick Carr was taking in a notch in his belt. Dick was as determined as ever, but there was no doubt that he was feeling the pinch—like the rest of the Packsaddle bunch.

Pie Sanders declared that he could have eaten the hind leg of a Mexican mule, with the hair and the hoof. In the first excitement of the rebellion the bunch had not given much thought to "eats." But they had to think of the eats now.

For a whole day and more there had not been a morsel for any guy in the bunch. They all had healthy appetites. Every fellow barred in the timber schoolhouse was getting ravenous.

Outside, in the playground, the hot sun of Texas streamed down. Across the playground Job Wash, chairman of the Packsaddle school committee, could be seen standing with Elias Scadder in the doorway of Small Brown's cabin. In the shade of the chuckhole Hair-Trigger Pete and his gang sat at ease, smoking and waiting. They were waiting for the rebel bunch to surrender. And it looked as if they had only to wait. The bunch had defeated all attacks, but they could not stand up against the enemy within—hunger. Mr. Wash was expecting surrender at any moment now.

Poker Parker was the first to speak of quitting, but his pal Slim Dixon backed him up at once.

"You said it, Poker!" exclaimed Slim. "I'll tell a man I'm hungry enough to chew off the tail of a prairie wolf! The game's up!"

"The game isn't up!" snapped Dick Carr.

"We're holding out till the school committee let Bill Sampson come back! We're not taking on Scadder as headmaster of Packsaddle!"

"Nix on Scadder!" growled Slick. "You doggone pesky bonehead!" howled Poker. "How you figure we're going to hold on without a bite to chew?"

"We'll manage somehow—"  
"Aw, pack it up! Them scallywags is watching all the time, and I guess they won't let us get in any eats. The jig's up, and I'm quitting!"

"I'm with you, Poker!" said Slim. Dick Carr shut his teeth. "I'm sticking it," he said. "I'm standing for Bill, and I'll hold on if I have to hold on alone!"

"Doggone Bill!" snarled Poker. "Bill's gone back to punching cows on Kicking Mule, and I guess he's forgot by this time that he ever was a schoolmaster. I don't hone for the Scadder guy any more'n you do—but they got us by the short hairs, and we got to quit!"

Dick looked over the bunch. Every face was long and grim, but most of them were resolute. So far, at all events, there were only two quitters.

Poker stamped across to a window. The doorway on the porch was strongly barricaded, and there was no egress that way. Planks were nailed across the window, and Poker grasped one to drag it down.

"Let up!" shouted Slick. "Go and chop chips!" retorted Poker Parker. "I'm quitting; and I guess if you guys have got any hoss-sense you'll quit, too! Lend a hand here, Slim!"

Slim Dixon lent a hand; they wrenched together at the plank to make room to get out of the window.

Slick Poindexter clenched his fists. Prospects did not seem hopeful for the besieged bunch. The garrison of the timber schoolhouse had no provisions, and there seemed little prospect of getting any, but they were going to hold on somehow.

"I'm saying let up!" roared Slick. And as Poker and Slim continued to

wrench at the plank Slick Poindexter jumped at them. His fists lashed out together, the right catching Poker on the chin, the left landing in Slim's eye. The two quitters yelled and rolled over on the floor.

"That's the stuff, Slick!" grinned Dick Carr.

"You said it!" chuckled Mick. Poker and Slim scrambled up, red with fury; they hurled themselves together at Slick Poindexter.

"Boot them!" roared Mick Kavanagh.

And six or seven of the bunch rushed in. Poker and Slim backed away in a hurry and then ran for it. After them rushed the Packsaddlers, booting them the whole length of the school-room and back again.

With howls and yells the two quitters dodged and ran and scrambled. They got out of the school-room at last, streaked across the passage, and dodged into the room that had belonged to Bill Sampson when the six-gun schoolmaster was there.

Poker slammed the door of that room and jammed his foot against it. Slim hastily wedged the end of a pointer under the door.

Bang, bang! came on the door of Bill's office, but the wedged door held fast.

"Come out of that, you goldarned quitters!" roared Poindexter.

"We're sure going to quit you a few!" howled Mick.

Bang! Thump! Bang!  
But the wedged door held. In Bill's office Poker and Slim were safe—for the moment, at least.

"Pronto!" breathed Slim. He ran to the window of Bill's room. It was shuttered, with planks nailed across it, like all the windows in the building. But the quitters had time now, and they grasped at the nailed planks and wrenched.

While the wedged door held the rest of the bunch off they dragged a plank away. Space was left for squeezing out.

"Beat it!" gasped Slim Dixon.

"Beat it!" gasped Slim Dixon.



## —THE BOYS OF THE TEXAS COW TOWN SCHOOL ARE UP AGAINST IT!

He squeezed through the opening; he got through and dropped on the ground outside. Poker Parker squeezed after him; but he was burlier in build than his comrade, and he stuck in the aperture.

"Aw, lend a hand, Slim!" he gasped. Slim grasped his shoulders and dragged at him. Poker struggled wildly to get through. He knew that the wedged door would not hold long.

It did not! The whole bunch crashed on it and the wedge gave way and they came streaming into Bill's office.

"Get them!" roared Slick. He tore across to the window. Poker Parker made a terrific effort and got half through. But Slick grabbed his legs in time.

"I'll say that guy's cinched!" panted Slick, as he grasped a pair of ankles and dragged.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Give me room with this quirt!" shouted Mick Kavanagh.

Whack, whack, whack! The quirt came lashing down on the seat of Poker's trousers. He yelled and wriggled frantically.

With Slick holding his legs he could not get through. He was half out and half in, and the half that was in getting the quirt hot and heavy and hard.

"Aw, can it!" shrieked Poker. "I guess I'll come back! Let go, Slim, you bonehead! Wake snakes! Whoop!"

Slim let go, and Poker was dragged back into the room. Slim cut away like an escaped bronco. He had got loose, but the other quitter had to stay. He rolled on the floor of Bill's office, roaring.

Whack, whack, whack! came the quirt, and Poker scrambled up and fled, yelling, across the passage to the school-room.

Dick Carr, grinning, nailed up the plank again.

### First Come First Served!

**J**OB WASH scowled across the playground at the barricaded school-house. Job was the most obstinate guy between the Rio Frio and Squaw Mountain, but he was getting tired of the trouble at Packsaddle.

The more tired he got the madder he got, and the more determined to put down the rebellion of the bunch.

It was a heap of trouble for Job, for he was a storekeeper as well as chairman of the school committee, and his store on Main Street, Packsaddle, had to be left to his assistants while he was dealing with the rebel bunch. And the gang of roughnecks he had hired to deal with the rebels were going to cost somebody five dollars a day each.

Job was not quite sure that he would be able to land that expense on the funds of the school committee—and all the more doubtful because most of the committee were opposed to his measures, and had only reluctantly given way to their chairman.

Matters had gone well enough when Bill Sampson was riding herd at Packsaddle. Even the obstinate Job could not figure that they were going well now. He had never dreamed that the bunch would stand by Bill and refuse to knuckle under to his brand-new headmaster. But they were doing it—and so far they were keeping their end up. Job's temper was getting so bad that even his pet Scadder had to deal with him warily.

"It cannot last long now, sir!" said

Elias Scadder. "The young rascals have had no food since yesterday—"

"If you was a man, you Scadder, you'd have taken them in hand and rode them!" snarled Job. "I guess Ezra Lick was right when he said you wasn't the guy to fill Bill Sampson's boots."

"My dear sir—" Scadder coughed. "I'll tell a man!" hooted Job. "If it wasn't for going back on my word, I'd send you along where you came from, and bring Bill Sampson back! Why ain't you handled that bunch?" He snorted angrily. "Bill Sampson had them feeding from his hand. Why ain't you?"

"I am accustomed to a more orderly—"

"You knowed what you was taking on!" growled Job. "Did you figure you was going to handle a bunch of tin angels in the roughest section of Texas? Aw, pack it up!"

"A sufficient amount of punishment," said Elias Scadder, setting his thin hard lips.

"You said it!" agreed Job. "Hide them a few, and then a few more, and I guess you'll work the raffle. Yep! Am I going to be beat by a bunch of

*Time and again have the no-surrender rebels of Packsaddle School defeated enemy attacks. But there's one enemy that they cannot defeat—hunger!*

pesky schoolboys? I'll say not! But if it wasn't for that, I'd sure send for Bill and go back to my store."

"My dear sir—" "Pack it up—I've no use for back-chat!"

Job turned his podgy back on his new headmaster, and stamped across to his roughneck crew, sitting in the shade of the chuckhouse.

They eyed him under their stetsons as he came. They had disappointed Job, and they had already had the sharpest edge of his tongue a good many times. But they were not the guys to take it like Scadder.

Halting in front of them, Job glared at them scornfully and savagely.

"Say, you doggoned prairie rabbits!" he hooted. "Say, there's a round dozen of you, and you allow that you're the toughest gang in Santanta County. And you let them schoolboys put it across you! I got to hang on hyer, leaving my store, while you sit around like a caboodle of old hens! What sort of pesky mugwumps do you call yourselves, anyhow? By the great horned toad, I'll tell a man, you want to get jobs in a Chinese laundry! That's the sort of crawling gophers you are!"

Hair-Trigger Pete looked up at him.

"You sure do shoot off your mouth a whole heap, Job!" he retorted. "I guess we're earning our dollars, with every guy here got bumps and bruises all over him from them young scallywags yonder. And I'll mention that if you spill any more, I'm the guy what's going to take you by the slack of your breeches, and sling you into the Frio!"

"I should smile!" remarked Yuma Dave.

Job Wash controlled his wrath. He did not want to be dropped into the river that rolled past the school fences, and the Packsaddle roughnecks were just the guys to do it. There was a sudden yelp from Scadder.

"Here they come, sir—"

"What!"

Job spun round.

"At least, one of them," added Elias.

Job stared at the running figure coming across from the besieged schoolhouse.

It was Slim Dixon, hurried and breathless. Job's angry face cleared. This meant surrender.

For a moment or two he expected to see the rest of the bunch following. But it was soon clear that Slim came alone.

Elias Scadder, with a sour look on his bony face, went into Small Brown's cabin for a cane. Scadder's cane had never had authority at the cow town school like Bill's quirt, but he was anxious to get going with it.

"Please, Mr Wash," gasped Slim, "I've got away! I—I'm quitting! I—I say, I'm hungry, Mr. Wash."

Job eyed him grimly.

He was very anxious for the bunch to surrender; he had sworn that he would have them feeding from Scadder's hand before he was through with them. He was going to do it—if he could. And the desertion of one member of the bunch looked like the beginning of the end. So Job ought to have been pleased—and no doubt he was pleased; but at the same time he rather unreasonably despised the deserter as a "quitter."

Job was no quitter himself, as he had proved by his obstinate determination to put Scadder in, and keep Bill out. He prided himself on being no quitter. So, welcome as Slim's surrender was, Job glared at him morosely.

"You pesky young piecan!" he said. "Ain't the rest coming out?"

"Nope!" said Slim. "I guess Parker would like to, but they got him cinched. I'll say the bunch are carrying on, Mr Wash. But me, I've come back here, sir, good and obedient."

"Obedient, nix!" snorted Job Wash. "Honing for eats, you mean, you young quitter! I guess you'll get some eats, but eats ain't what you're getting fust, by a long chalk! Mr. Scadder!"

Elias came out of Small Brown's cabin, cane in hand and a gleam in his fishy eyes.

"Sir!" said Scadder.

"You want to handle this young rube," said Mr. Wash, "and you want to l'arn him good and strong. Here, you Hair-Trigger, you get a hold on that young gopher and see he don't vamoose agin."

Hair-Trigger Pete, grinning, stepped over to the dismayed Slim and grasped him by his neckscarf. Scadder swished the cane.

"Say," roared Slim Dixon, "ain't you letting me off, Mr. Wash, seeing as I've come back good and obedient?"

"Let off Abraham Lincoln!" yapped Job Wash. "Skin him, you Scadder! You show that you can handle a cane, like Bill Sampson his quirt! You hear me toot?"



What followed was painful for Slim.

Hungry as he was, and now with a prospect of "eats" in store, he wished that he had stayed with the bunch.

And the bunch, staring across from the window, of the schoolhouse, were glad that they were not with Slim—even Poker Parker was glad that he had not got away!

For Slim went through it good and strong, as Job expressed it. Bill Sampson had often laid on the quirt hard and heavy at Packsaddle School—but Bill had never laid on the quirt as Elias Scadder laid on the cane.

The whacks of that cane rang across the playground like pistol-shots. Louder still rang the frantic yells of Slim.

"Gum!" grinned Slick Poindexter. "I'll say that Slim is sorry he beat it, you guys! I'll tell a man!"

"Sounds like!" chuckled Mick, as the fearful yelling from Slim echoed through the building. "Say, Poker, if you want some, I guess we won't stop you! You drop out of the winder, and go and ask Scadder for your turn."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Poker did not accept that offer. He was glad to be where he was, eats or no eats. It was clear that stiff punishment awaited the bunch when they fell into the hands of authority—and first come were first served!

Slim was struggling wildly and frantically in the herculean grasp of Hair-Trigger Pete. But he struggled in vain. The red-bearded bullwhacker held him as helpless as a baby, while Elias laid on the cane.

Job looked on grimly. He hoped that this sight would be a warning to the rest of the bunch. It was a warning not to surrender so long as they could possibly hold out!

Whack, whack, whack, whack! rang the cane on the struggling, wriggling, yelling Slim, till Scadder's bony arm was fired, and, in spite of himself, the whacks fell lightly.

"I guess," said Job Wash, "that that will see him through, Scadder! I guess they're all going to have the same! Now, you Dixon—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" wailed Slim, doubling himself up in anguish, as he was released. "Yow, wow, ow! Wake snakes! Whoop!"

"You get into the chuckhouse!" said Job. "And stay there! I guess there ain't no school till this rookus is through, but you ain't going to rubber around lazy, you ain't! Nope! You're going to do the chores! Say, you 'uns, you keep that young gink working, and if you see 'im laze, you lam him a few!"

"You bet, boss!" grinned Yuma Dave.

Slim tottered into the chuckhouse. He had the eats at last; but he had also had the thrashing of his life, and now he had a chore-boy's job, kicked and cuffed by the rough gang of bullwhackers. It was not the reward he had expected for "quitting"—but no doubt it was as good as he deserved!

### A Desperate Venture!

"WE'VE got to get the eats!" Slick Poindexter spoke when the sun had gone down behind Squaw Mountain and darkness had descended over Packsaddle School and the Valley of the Erio.

"There ain't no two ways about THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,430.

that!" groaned Pie Sanders. "I ain't no quitter, I ain't, but I sure do feel bad! I'll tell a man, I could chew the sole off'n a cowman's boot!"

"It's eats, or the finish!" said Mick Kavanagh dolorously. "That doggoned fat old geck, Wash, has got us by the short hairs. If we feel like this to-day, what'll we feel like to-morrow?"

"We got to get in eats by to-morrow," said Slick.

Dick Carr nodded. He was trying to think out the problem.

It seemed as if all the cards were in Job's hand now that he had given up attacking and settled down to starve out the bunch. Job reckoned that he had only to exercise patience for the rebel bunch to fall into his hands like ripe apples. And it looked as if Job was right!

"How come?" groaned Poker Parker, pressing his hands to his stomach, which quaked with emptiness. "Slim's had it bad, but I guess he's getting the eats! I'll say I'd let that guy Scadder take the skin off'n my back for a can of beef or a plate of beans!"

"Aw, can it, you quitter!" growled Slick. "I'm saying we got to get the eats."

"And I'm saying, how come?" snarled Poker. "Any guy that gets out will be roped in at once by that gang; they're watching us for jest that very thing. And if you got down to the town, you wouldn't get any eats there—you'd be rounded up at once. How you going to get any eats, doggone you?"

"I've been thinking," said Dick Carr quietly.

"Spill it, old-timer," said Mick hopefully.

"We can't get anything from Packsaddle town," said Dick. "But if a fellow could get out without being caught—"

"Forget it!" grunted Poker.

"Bill's at Kicking Mule Ranch," said Dick, "and if a fellow could get to the ranch—"

"Gum! That's a stunt!" exclaimed Slick. "All the Kicking Mule outfit stand for Bill, and they was sure mad when he was fired. But how you going to hit Kicking Mule, even if you get out? They got all our hosses safe—you'd never get hold of a cayuse—"

"Shanks' pony!" said Dick.

"It's ten miles of prairie to the Kicking Mule!" said Slick dubiously.

"And Bill wouldn't horn in, neither," said Poker. "He ain't nothing to do with the school now. Didn't he tell us when he went to make the best of Scadder. Bill's through with us."

"I know that," answered Dick Carr. "Bill can't very well chip in. But Barney Bailey, the foreman at the Kicking Mule, will help us fast enough when he knows we've got no grub. It's a chance, anyhow."

There was a discussion in the schoolroom. It was a desperate chance to take, for it was certain that the rough-necks were watching to cinch any straggler from the garrison. And any fellow who fell into their hands was booked for the same fate as Slim. Worse still, he would be taken care of, and would be able to take no further part in the rebellion.

But it was clear that something had to be done! No garrison could hold out without food.

"Who's going?" asked Hunky Tutt, at length.

It boiled down to that. It was the only chance, and the real question was who was going to make the venture.

"Let Carr go!" sneered Poker Parker. "It's his stunt, and sure he's the galoot to put it through."

"I'm willing to go," answered Dick

at once. "Best for me to go, because Barney's a friend of mine, since I helped him get hold of the brand-blotters on the ranch. I'm ready."

"You ain't going alone," said Slick. "Count me in."

"Me, too!" said Mick.

Dick shook his head.

"Easier for one to get through," he said, "and you fellows are wanted here. If they get me, you try it on next, Slick."

"Mebbe you're right," admitted Slick reluctantly. "I sure do hate you going it alone, but I guess you're right. I'll be glad to see you safe back."

"Specially if you bring in some eats," moaned Pie.

Now that the matter was settled, no time was lost in getting ready.

The sun was gone, and deep darkness lay on the cow town school. The moon was not due to rise for an hour yet, and it was necessary for Dick Carr to get clear before moon-rise. Only in the darkness could he hope to elude the watchful eyes of Job's "army."

Quietly a plank was removed from a window to allow him room to squeeze out. Across the playground lights were burning in the chuckhouse and in Small Brown's cabin. Every now and then a moving figure could be seen against the light. But most of the enemy were hidden in darkness.

The bunch guessed that a watch was being kept on the besieged schoolhouse. Job Wash was not likely to give them a chance of getting out in quest of provisions if he could help it. But if the watchers were at hand, the darkness wrapped them, and they could not be seen.

Dick peered from the window. In the velvety darkness an enemy might have been within ten feet of him, unseen. But he had to take the risk.

Silently he squeezed out of the window.

Holding on to the wooden sill he felt for the ground with his feet and landed without a sound.

"Good luck, ol'-timer!" breathed Slick.

"Stick it out while I'm gone," whispered Dick Carr.

"You bet!"

Leaving his anxious comrades packed at the window peering after him in the gloom, Dick stepped away from the wall. He groped along with hands outstretched, and disappeared from the sight of the bunch.

"Hope he pulls through safe!" breathed Mick.

"And he gets back with the eats!" murmured Pie.

"Hark!" panted Poindexter.

There was a sudden shout and a trampling of feet in the shadowy playground. The bull-voice of Hair-Trigger Pete roared:

"Say, that's one of them young scallywags breaking herd! Cinch him! Watch out, you geeks!"

Shouting—trampling—yelling! The bunch listened with beating hearts, breathless. Had they got Dick Carr?

### Touch and Go!

"OH, my hat!" breathed Dick, as his outstretched hands, groping in the darkness, came in contact with a shadowy form.

Instantly a brawny hand grasped at him and grabbed him by the shoulder, and Hair-Trigger's voice was roaring.

Dick wrenched at the bullwhacker's grasp, but it closed harder and tighter. Dim in the thick gloom, the red-bearded face peered at him. There was yelling



and trampling as the roughnecks rushed up at their leader's roar.

Dick was desperate! It was too bitter to be caught before he had taken a dozen steps on his mission. He clenched his fist hard, and drove it up fiercely at the stubbly red-bearded chin.

The clenched fist crashed like a lump of iron on that stubbly chin, and Hair-Trigger Pete felt for a moment as if his chin had been pushed up through his head. Hair-Trigger, with a gurgling gasp, let go and staggered.

He was clutching again the next moment, bellowing with rage, but one moment was enough for the tenderfoot of Packsaddle. Dick leaped back the instant he was loose and dodged. The bullwhacker's brawny hands sawed the air for him in vain.

"Cinch him!" roared Hair-Trigger Pete. He clasped his aching chin with both hands and rubbed it. There was a severe pain in it. "You guys, you cinch that young geek. You hear me toot? I'll say he's handed me a sock-dolager, doggone his hide! I'll sure lay him out!"

"Say, where's that guy, Hair-Trigger?" shouted Yuma Dave, from the gloom.

"Git to the gate!" yelled Tanglefoot. "He'll make for the gate."

The anxious bunch, packed at the window, listened with thumping hearts and tried to penetrate the darkness with their eyes. But they could see nothing except glimpses of shadowy forms passing between them and the lights of the chuckhouse across the playground. But they had one hope—the howls and yells of the roughnecks showed that Dick was not caught yet! He was still dodging in the darkness, even if he had not escaped.

"They ain't cinched him yet!" breathed Slick. "I guess he's got a chance—I tell you, that tenderfoot is a bully boy with a glass eye! Yep! I'll say he's got a chance."

The chance seemed slim enough to Dick Carr. He had streaked for the gate, but two or three of the gang loomed up there in the shadows, and he had to stop and dodge. All round the school grounds was a ten-foot fence, and he was shut off from the gate. There was a side-gate on the river, and Dick made for that, but only to discern a burly form sitting on it, a black silhouette against the sky. He backed and dodged again, panting for breath.

There was a bump in the darkness as he collided with a running figure. He barely missed a grasping hand. A yell followed:

"Say, he's hyer! I guess this is the young geek! Say, you stop him you galoots! Watch out!"

Trampling feet seemed to surround the schoolboy dodging in the darkness.

He hardly knew how he eluded the crowd of them. But he cut away again, and headed for Small Brown's cabin. There was no escape that way, and, for that reason, Dick hoped that the roughnecks would give that direction a miss, and give him a chance to lie low.

The doorway of the cabin was open, and the light of a kerosene lamp streamed out, revealing Mr. Wash and Elias Scadder standing there. Dick dodged behind the cabin, stopped, and flung himself down on the ground, hugging the wall. The darkness wrapped him like a cloak, and hid him from searching eyes. And so long as he did not stir, he was fairly safe.

Shouting and trampling went on. He heard the voice of Elias Scadder speaking to Job Wash.

"Undoubtedly, sir, one of the boys trying to get away—perhaps to obtain a supply of food—"

"Perhaps nothing!" snarled Job. "Ain't it as plain as the dirt on the face of a Mexican half-breed? I guess they want the eats, and want 'em bad, goldarn 'em! They got to talk turkey

if they can't get the eats. But they ain't making the grade, Scadder—I'll tell you that! I got the whole crowd watching, and I'll mention that they're going to watch all night, and any young guy what breaks herd will be sure cinched! And I'll see you hand him a few with that cane of yourn."

Hair-Trigger came panting up. He still had one hand to his stubbly chin where an ache lingered.

"You got him?" howled Job. "Got nix!" grunted Hair-Trigger. "But I'm telling you he ain't broke loose. He ain't got out, Mr. Wash. The moon'll be up in half an hour, and then I reckon we'll spot him, and have him dead to rights."

Dick Carr could hear every word clearly. He breathed hard. He knew, as well as Hair-Trigger, that his game was up when the moon came up over the Rio Frio. If he was not outside the school fence before then, he was caught.

"Say," went on the bullwhacker, "you, Scadder, you bring that lamp, and I guess you'll be some use. I'll say you ain't no use rubbering there with that long neck of yourn."

"You said it!" agreed Job Wash. "You mosey along with that lamp, Scadder!"

Elias did not seem very keen, but he did as he was bid. He emerged from the cabin with the kerosene lamp in his hand. The light was cast for a considerable distance round him.

"I guess the young gink is keeping doggo," went on Hair-Trigger. "You show that glim round the cabins, Mr. Scadder. Mebbe we'll raise him behind the bunkhouse, or the chuckhouse, or mebbe this hyer very cabin. You mosey along with that glim."

Dick rose to his feet. He had hoped to lie low for a time till the roughnecks slackened in the search.

But Hair-Trigger had evidently



Dick Carr was clambering up the fence when a light gleamed on him. There was a roar from the roughnecks hunting for him. "There he is! On the fence! Cinch him!" He was seen, and the bunch were relying on him to get through with food! In a moment Hair-Trigger rushed at him and grabbed!



spotted his game, and there was no time to lose now. The light of the kerosene lamp, carried in Scadder's bony hand, came glimmering round the cabin.

Even as Dick rose the light glimmered on him as Scadder came round the corner, and the new schoolmaster of Packsaddle gave a startled jump, and almost dropped the lamp.

"Here!" he squealed. "Here! Oooogh!"

Dick Carr lowered his head and charged. His head butted on Elias Scadder's waistcoat, and the long, thin Scadder folded up like a pocket-knife.

One long horrible gasp he gave as he folded. Then he collapsed, gurgling for breath, and the kerosene lamp crashed on the ground, and went out. All was dark again.

Dick jumped back as Hair-Trigger, only a few paces behind Scadder, came trampling on. Heavy boots trampled on Scadder.

"Urrrrghh!" came in agonised tones from Elias. "Wurrghh!"

There was a roar from the bull-wacker.

"Say, I got him! I got him, sure!" He grasped at the wriggling, gasping figure on the ground. "This way, booves! I got him dead to rights."

"Yurrrghh!" gurgled Scadder.

He could not speak. He could only gurgle as he wriggled wildly in Hair-Trigger's grasp.

Dick Carr dodged away swiftly in the dark. Five or six of the rough-necks were running to the spot. Job Wash was yelling:

"Where's that light? Say, what you put the lamp out for? You, Scadder! Where are you?"

Job came rushing round the cabin. He met a running figure in full career. Dick Carr staggered from the shock. Job Wash flew.

"Whoosh!" gasped Job, as he rolled. "What the thunder— Oooosh!"

The fat storekeeper sprawled over, panting. Dick Carr was running again. Behind him he heard the roar of Hair-Trigger Pete.

"I'm telling you, I got him! Get a

glim hyer, you'uns! I'm telling you I've cinched that guy!"

Dick chuckled breathlessly as he ran. Evidently, in the darkness, Hair-Trigger had grabbed Elias Scadder by mistake. A word from Elias would have set the mistake right, but the hapless Elias could not utter a word. He was winded to the wide, and could only utter gurgles.

The roughnecks were running up from all directions. Job Wash staggered to his feet, and tottered on. A crowd was gathering behind the cabin, where Scadder wriggled in Hair-Trigger's mighty grasp.

It was a chance for the tenderfoot of Packsaddle, and he made the most of it.

He guessed that the gate was still guarded, and he did not head for the gate. He reached the school fence, and groped along it, feeling for a spot he knew, where a timber buttress made it fairly easy to climb. He found the spot, and began to clamber up, only hoping that he would have time to get over the top.

Behind him a light winked in the darkness. Somebody had got a lamp. There was a roar.

"Who's that?"

"By the great horned toad, you got Scadder!"

"You doggoned gink, Pete!"

"Great jumping gophers! I figured it was that young gink I'd got a holt on. Say, you goldarned Scadder! Why couldn't you put a galoot wise?" bellowed Hair-Trigger.

"Urrghh!" That was all Scadder could say. "Gurrnghh!"

"You pesky goobs!" howled Job Wash. "You let that young gink beat it! You doggoned boobs, you get arter him! You figure I'm paying you to let them young scallywags break herd, and get in the eats! Say, you piefaced bunch of geeks—"

"Woogh!" moaned Scadder. "Oogh!"

"Arter him!" raved Job. "Get that young geek! Say, if he gets away, I'll sure leave you to whistle for your dollars, you boobs! You figure I'm

paying you to fool around and rope in my schoolmaster?"

Shouting and trampling, and a flashing light! Elias Scadder was left to moan and gurgle unheeded. Job Wash's infuriated voice rang far and wide, urging on the chase. In the schoolhouse the bunch listened in tense excitement.

The hunt was up again, hotter than ever. Dick Carr was clambering desperately up the fence. He was almost at the top when a light flashed below, and there was a roar:

"There he is!"

"On the fence!"

"Cinch him!"

He was seen. A kerosene lamp gleamed on him, revealing the desperately clambering figure to a dozen pairs of eyes. Hair-Trigger rushed at him and grabbed.

At the same moment Dick dragged himself to the top of the fence. The grasp from below missed him by a foot or more as he whisked out of reach. Breathlessly he swung over the top. Job Wash, almost dancing with rage, yelled frantically:

"Get him, you goobs! Get him!"

Hair-Trigger made a jump at the fence, and caught the top with his brawny hands within a foot of Dick Carr. Before he could make his hold good Dick released one hand, clenched it, and hammered it on the red-bearded face. Hair-Trigger bellowed and let go, and dropped back within.

For a second Dick grinned breathlessly at the crowd of faces in the light of the lamp. Then he dropped outside the fence.

He stumbled over, jumped to his feet, and ran into the night. A minute later Hair-Trigger was scrambling over the fence again, and two or three more of the roughnecks were scrambling after him. But only a receding sound of running feet rewarded them. Darkness and the rolling prairie had swallowed Dick Carr.

In the besieged schoolhouse the bunch listened. The trampling and the yelling and shouting died away. Had they got Dick Carr? Slick Poindexter wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Hope he's got through," he murmured.

"Say, that's Job's foot," breathed Mick. "Lissen, you'uns!"

The angry voice of Job came to their ears.

"You doggoned geeks! You piefaced goobs! You've let that young gink make his getaway. Doggone you, he's got clear! Say, you watch out for him! You hear me yaup? That pesky young geek's gone for eats; and if you let him get back with any eats, I'll sure fire the whole crowd of you!"

Slick chuckled.

"Say, you guys, young Carr's made the grade!" he said joyfully. "He's sure made his getaway!"

"You said it!" chortled Mick.

"I'll tell a man that tenderfoot is a whole team and a cross-dog under the wagon," chuckled Slick. "He's got clear, and he'll get back with the eats. I'll tell all Texas."

And the hungry bunch hoped that Slick was right.

(Will Dick be able to get food to his rebel companions? Read what happens in "THE BESIEGED BUNCH!"—next week's ace-high yarn. Order your GEM early).

## All about the coming

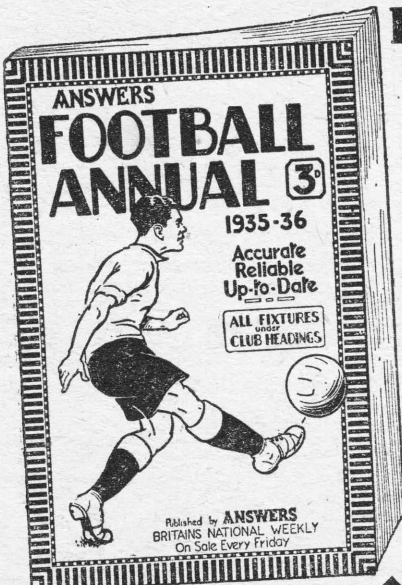
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# The SECRET WORLD!



The St. Frank's adventurers were alarmed as great lumps of ice came floating down the tunnel. "I don't like this!" said Nelson Lee. "It's a bad sign, Nipper. The waters are freezing again!" Could they get through to the Arctic before the river froze and trapped them in the tunnel?

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

## The Leave-taking!

WHEN the airship in which Nelson Lee, the boys of St. Frank's, and others are travelling comes to grief in Northestia, a secret land in the Arctic surrounded by impassable mountains, the party find themselves involved in a war between Northestia and Gothland. After many thrilling adventures, during which the St. Frank's boys discover an outlet from the hidden world, the enemy are put to rout. The war over, the St. Frank's party prepare to leave by a river which runs through a tunnel in the mountains out into the Arctic. Here they are to be met by seaplanes sent out to rescue them by the British naval authorities. But there is a danger that the river they are to take will freeze before the St. Frank's party can get through.

"Couldn't the seaplanes find the outer exit to the tunnel and then float through on the current?" asked somebody.

"That would be an unnecessary waste of time—we must go out to meet them," replied Nelson Lee. "This tunnel is only open once in every thirty years."

"Phew!"

"There can be only one explanation of the phenomenon," continued Lee. "The influx of water is undoubtedly caused by a giant geyser of the recurring type, and the warm flow only lasts for a few days."

"But it's a cold flow, sir," said Fullwood.

"Cold in comparison to the lake water—but very warm compared to the Arctic," replied Lee. "Out there everything is frozen solid, as you ought to know. But this recurring geyser causes a thaw, and the tunnel is then freed, and the water flows in. Unless we take advantage of this opportunity it will not come again for twenty-five or thirty years!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ods prospects and visions!" ejaculated Archie. "I mean to say, thirty years—what?" went on Archie, in dismay. "Chappies aren't allowed to go into the Remove at forty-five."

"Don't be silly!" said Irene carelessly. "It's all talk, anyhow, because we're going to get free! I know we are! And in next to no time we shall be back at school, and this affair will seem like a dream!"

However, there was no certainty of escape.

Optimism was one thing, but hard fact was another. And it was a hard, concrete fact that the Spitfire would have a strenuous task in battling against the current through that long tunnel—a tunnel which went on for miles and miles, penetrating the very heart of the barrier range.

And even then there would be another doubt. What if they all got out into the open Arctic? They would be in the outer world, certainly. But they were not equipped for Arctic travel. Their

ship could not progress beyond the thawed pool caused by the submarine geyser. As for getting over the snow, the very idea was impossible. They were hundreds of miles—perhaps thousands—from any outpost of civilisation.

The seaplanes knew the precise position of this hidden oasis, but there were a hundred and one uncertainties connected with such a flight.

However, it was of no use to make troubles before they arrived, so everybody was full of enthusiasm for the immediate operations. The ship was to make its attempt to get through the tunnel, and that was exciting enough for anybody. The rest could be left.

"Everythin' has turned out pretty good, on the whole," Lord Dormimore was saying, as he stood on deck with Nelson Lee. "We're all on this one ship, an' she's equipped with those two aero-engines. We've got stores aboard, an' if we can conquer that current, we shall be free. We can carry enough grub to last us for months, too. I'm not worryin', old man. We're bound to be freed, sooner or later."

"If only those seaplanes get through, and we can meet them on the other side of these mountains, the issue will be settled within seven or eight hours," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Jove, it's a sober thought! Seven or eight hours! And then a journey of two days at the utmost—and then England! Isn't it too good to be true?"

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"Seems like it; but I'm an irrepres- sible optimist," said Dorrie. "I've got a pretty strong idea that we'll pull it off. You an' your boys can get back to your precious school then!"

"Where are we? What's the date?" asked Nelson Lee dryly. "Upon my word, Dorrie, if we do escape, we shall be at St. Frank's only a short while after the term begins. It seems incredible!"

"Wasn't the term started later, or somethin'?"

"Yes," nodded Lee. "The school didn't assemble until three weeks after the usual date. It was originally only two weeks, but I've heard over the wireless that St. Frank's has only just gone back, and the whole school, naturally, is agog with excitement over our affairs. It'll be a good thing for everybody in general when we get back."

"What about these good people," asked Dorrie—"Ethelbert the Red and Princess Mercia and the rest? I suppose you've told 'em that we're thinkin' of slippin' out by the back door?"

"I have already had a long consulta- tion with Ethelbert, and he agrees, of course, that it is our best chance," replied Lee. "I think they are reluctant to let us go, but they made no attempt to hinder us. On the contrary, Ethel- bert offered every help. He and the princess are coming at once to bid us good-bye!"

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to take a few of these Northestrians out with us?" asked Dorrie, with a smile. "The princess, for example? She'd probably enjoy a look at London! Glory! Wouldn't she get a few surprises!"

But Lee shook his head. "If those seaplanes get through, they'll have a full enough load without any extras," he replied. "Quite apart from that, these Northestrians are content with their own little world, and have no desire to venture out of it. Both Ethelbert and the princess made that quite clear to me."

They made it even clearer when they came aboard, half an hour later, to bid the party good-bye. It was, after all, a very simple leave-taking, with no attempt at display. The majority of the Northestrians were engaged ashore, and there was plenty of work for them.

"Tis well for ye all to take this opportunity while it lasts," said the young princess. "I trust that all will go well, and that your friends will win through!"

"We like not your going, good people," said Ethelbert the Red. "I'faith, it is with the greatest reluctance that we allow ye to depart. Thou hast saved our country, Lee the Lion- heart!"

"No; that is quite wrong!" declared Lee. "I helped, I will admit, but your own soldiers won this victory!"

"Thy modesty is becoming, brave sir!" smiled the princess. "Hence- forth our little kingdom will be safe. Kassar is dead, and the Gothlanders are for ever defeated!"

"Ay, by my soul!" vowed Ethelbert. "Henceforth Gothland will be a vassal state, held in constant subjection. A governor will be placed in control, and never again will those dogs be allowed to gain power! Our lesson has been severe; but we have learned it all the more thoroughly on that account. But for your help, good strangers, 'twould have been the end of us, I fear. So ye will well understand our reluctance to let ye depart."

"We go, at all events, with the satisfac- tory knowledge that your own troubles are over," replied Nelson Lee

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contentedly. "We leave you at peace— the war over."

"We'd like to take some of you back with us to see our own world," put in Dorrie. "We've seen yours; so why shouldn't you see ours?"

But the princess shook her head. "Nay, I would not sanction it," she replied. "We have heard of the wonders beyond, but we desire not these things. Let us remain here in our own domain. Should we depart, and like not the change, what then? Could we get back? I fear not. So it is well for us to remain and to let ye go in peace."

And so, after a general leave-taking, the Princess Mercia and her regent took their departure. They knew that Nelson Lee was anxious to waste no time, and they had no desire to hinder him. Already the preparations for setting off were well forward. The aero-engines were being tuned up, and there was activity everywhere.

The princess had seemed rather sub- dued in saying her good-bye to Hand- forth—much to the latter's confusion. The fair Mercia had rather a soft spot for the rugged Handy, and if she could have had her own way, he would have remained behind.

"Phew! Thank goodness that's over!" murmured Edward Oswald, as the royal barge left the Spitfire's side. "She's a jolly ripping girl; but, all the same, those eyes of hers are a bit too powerful! When she looks at me I feel embarrassed!"

"For two pins, Ted, she'd send a squadron of soldiers and have you yanked ashore, and carried into the royal castle!" said Willy impressively. "In fact, I think you ought to go below and hide yourself, so as to be on the safe side! Mercia's gone on you, and she's heartbroken to see you slipping out of her—"

"Dry up, you young ass!" interrupted Handforth gruffly.

"You've had a jolly narrow escape, my lad!" went on Willy. "Not that it isn't a good idea," he added. "Why not stay here, Ted? Think of the allur- ing prospect! You can marry the prin- cess, become King of Northestria, and rule everybody to your heart's con- tent!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You funny young idiot!" roared Handforth. "Any more of that piffle, and I'll take you below and give you a good tanning!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Poor old Ted!" grinned Willy. "I believe you're a bit cut up at parting from your lovely Princess Charming, too! Never mind! You can find consolation in Irene!"

But Willy thought it advisable to make himself scarce after that remark, for Edward Oswald was looking very dangerous.

### Into the Tunnel!

IT was a time of intense excitement for all.

The St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls could do nothing to help, and so they stood about on deck, watching eagerly, and discussing the prospects over and over again.

Every kind of argument was used. The optimists were constantly pulling the theories of the pessimists to pieces, and there were always fresh arguments arising. And while the younger ones were engaged in this pastime, Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and the airship engineers were hard at work.

The powerful motors were already roaring, and the ship was progressing

steadily down the lake. At various points on the shore, crowds of North- estrians would appear, shouting and waving their good-byes. But at Nelson Lee's own wish, none of the natives accompanied the party down the lake by water. He wanted the departure to be quiet. Northestria had her dead and dying to attend to, and this was no time for celebrations.

Certainly, every possible step was taken to ensure success. Nelson Lee knew that a strong current had to be battled with, and he was convinced that the aero-engines would be inadequate.

But there were the two "gondola destroyers," and these were provided with the most powerful engines of all. They were just the gondolas from the wrecked airship, fitted with floats. They had been used on the lake for battling against the Gothlander trans- ports—and had proved very effective, too. They were of service still, for now they were being utilised as tugs.

The motor-boat, with Lord Dorrmore at the wheel, was deputed to lead the way. For the little craft carried a powerful searchlight, and this would serve to light the way during the tense journey through the tunnel.

"Why, it'll be easy!" declared Hand- forth, recovering a great deal of his usual spirits. "With our own engines and these two gondolas, we shall whack that current to fits! What the dickens is there to worry about? Nothing, my sons!"

"Yes, we're buzzing along pretty well," said Church. "I think we shall do it all right."

The others were similarly confident. The Spitfire was making splendid progress. She was churning through the water like a cruiser, leaving an enormous wake of foam in her rear. The air was filled with the roar of the four powerful motors, and the great hawsers were stretched taut as the tugs pulled the vessel along.

"We mustn't be too sure of ourselves, though," remarked Fullwood. "According to Dorrie, the current is terrifically strong, and this ship is a clumsy old hulk at the best. Just a dead weight, remember. It'll be touch-and-go whether we get through."

"Rats!" "Dry up, you croaker!" Ralph Leslie Fullwood grinned. "I'm no croaker," he replied cheer- fully. "I'm only trying to point out that it won't be all honey."

Nearly all the members of the party were in a condition of acute anxiety, although they didn't like to admit it. They openly told themselves that there was nothing to worry about. And yet, privately, they worried over it. For there were so many chances of failure.

This venture into the unknown depths of the tunnel was nothing but a gamble. The fact that Lord Dorrmore had taken the motor-boat through counted for little.

For the motor-boat was a tiny thing, after all, whereas the Spitfire was a big, clumsily built ship. It was more than likely that there were hidden rocks in that tunnel—shallows, perhaps, on which the vessel would go aground. One of a thousand things might happen to wreck the whole scheme. So the tense uncertainty was justified.

At the end of the lake the waters converged into a great gorge, with tower- ing rocks on either hand. Down here all was rugged and barren. The fair landscapes had been left behind.

The view immediately ahead was menacing. Rocks appeared to bar the way—vast, awe-inspiring mountains, which reached up and up into the ever- lasting mists above. For thousands of



feet they rose, like a threatening danger. And right at their base could be seen a black opening—ridiculously small from a distance.

The gorge narrowed as it continued, and ordinarily there was no current here whatever. But now a strong flow could be felt, and it was coming from that tunnel exit. The waters of the Arctic were still pouring beneath the mountains—proof enough that the great geyser was still in active operation—proof that the way of escape was open!

"We'll never get through there!" said Mary Summers, as she stood, looking ahead. "That opening isn't big enough, surely?"

"It's bigger than it looks," explained Nipper. "We've already been in it, you know. We took our galley up there a few days ago. You'll be surprised at the size of that opening when we get there."

"We're slowing down, too," murmured Doris Berkeley, as she looked over the side. "We're only going at about half the speed now. Oh, what if the current is too strong for us?"

"Couldn't we all get into the gondolas and the motor-boat?" asked Irene. "We should get out like that—"

"The gov'nor won't hear of it," interrupted Nipper, shaking his head. "But why not?"

"Because it might be fatal," replied Nipper. "Even if the worst comes to the worst, and the current beats us, we can drift back into the oasis, and, although we shall be prisoners there, we shall at least be alive. But if we ventured out into the Arctic in the gondolas the situation would be pretty acute."

"Why?" Mary insisted. "Aren't the seaplanes coming for us?"

"They're coming—but there's no guarantee that they'll find us," replied Nipper. "In this ship we could live for several weeks, perhaps. We'd have lots of hardships, no doubt, but we could live. But what chance should we have in those flimsy gondolas, with the temperature far below zero? There's no accommodation in them, remember—they're all engines. No, unless we can take the ship through, we shall go back. So it's going to be a pretty anxious time."

Nelson Lee's decision was, after all, a sound one. It would be sheer madness to take the party out into the bitter cold of the Arctic without a ship to accommodate everybody.

The Spitfire was bad enough, in all conscience, since she was not equipped with the necessary kit for a prolonged stay in the frozen North. But, at least, the party would be able to live, and they would still have their wireless. If the first attempt to rescue them failed, there might be other expeditions sent out.

Lee was very worried over the whole problem, for he knew that brave men were risking their lives even now—intrepid naval officers were flying through the bitter cold, seeking that unfrozen spot near the mountain range which marked the position of the great geyser. Only the utmost skill in navigation—the utmost daring—could carry those seaplanes through.

And there was always the vital question—could this ship win her way out into the open world?

Suspense!

A TENSE silence fell when, at last, the Spitfire drove steadily into the low cave entrance. But it was only a human silence, for the engines were creating a shattering, nerve-racking din.

The noise echoed and re-echoed from the rock walls of the gully. And then, indeed, it seemed as though pandemonium had been let loose. For inside the tunnel the noise from the engines was almost unbelievably terrific.

Ordinary conversation was out of the question. One could only make oneself heard by yelling lustily.

The procession moved slowly and laboriously along—the motor-boat leading, with its searchlight splitting the darkness ahead. Then the two gondolas—one a couple of lengths ahead of the other. And, finally, the main ship, her own engines doing their little bit towards the conquering of the strong Arctic inflow.

The Spitfire had only just managed to scrape through the entrance, and even then the wireless-masts had been dismantled for the purpose. But now there was no fear, for the rock roof sloped upwards, and was high overhead.

"By George, what a tunnel!" said Handforth, as he stared up. "It's just like a railway tunnel, only ten times as large! And we're moving, too—we're winning!"

"But doesn't the current get stronger farther on?" asked Church.

"I don't think so; Dorrie didn't say anything of that sort, anyhow," replied Handforth. "Once we're well into the mountains, the rest will be easy. We ought to be through in an hour or two."

"Rats!" said Reggie Pitt, as he put his mouth close to Handforth's ear. "Dorrie took two or three hours in the motor-boat alone—and we shall be lucky if we do the journey in a day!"

"A day!" yelled Handforth, staring. It seemed an awful long time to him, but Pitt was probably nearer the mark—

for there was little hope of accomplishing the journey in under nine or ten hours. The Spitfire was only moving sluggishly, although all the engines were being driven at their utmost power.

In the gondolas, the engineers were stripped to the waist, perspiring freely, and working hard to keep the motors in perfect trim. Lord Dorrimore had, perhaps, the easiest task, for he went ahead in the motor-boat, and found it necessary to use only half throttle.

Most of the girls had gone below, attempting to seek relief from the nerve-shattering noise. The whole air quivered with the tumult caused by the explosions from the open exhausts of the aero engines.

"Most of you boys had better get below, too!" shouted Nelson Lee, as he came upon a group of fellows. "You'll be deaf for a week—"

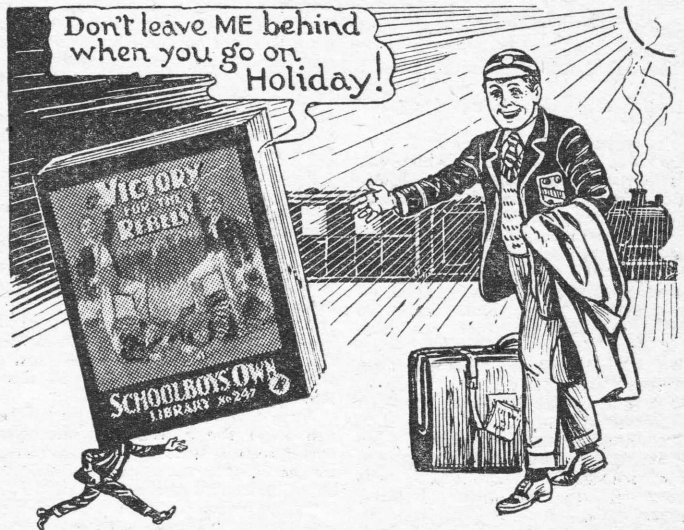
"That's all right, sir!" roared Nipper. "We want to stay. We're all anxious to see how we progress."

"Yes, rather, sir!"

Nelson Lee said no more. After all, it made little difference, for the noise below was nearly as acute. Even the girls came up on deck again, finding it impossible to rest.

"We've just got to see everything that's going on," explained Irene, as she joined Handforth. "Oh, Ted, do you think we shall do it?"

"Do it!" laughed Handforth. "Of course we shall! And when we get outside we shall probably find the seaplanes waiting for us. Don't forget, this is the age of marvellous aerial navigation! And the British Navy is on the job!"



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But Irene shook her head rather doubtfully.

The time went on—an hour elapsed. Then two hours—three hours. And still the procession moved, ever onwards beneath the vast barrier range. It was monotonous—tantalisingly, maddeningly monotonous. There seemed to be no change whatever. The tunnel was all the same—black, grim, and forbidding. And still the procession penetrated deeper and deeper, and so far there had been no hitch.

The great engines kept up the pressure steadily. All the airship's crew knew that they were solely dependent upon any one of the motors. For should one of them fall the others would be insufficient to pull the load.

So far there had been no snag. Men were taking soundings constantly, and the depth of the water was satisfactory. Not once had there been any indication of a shallow or of a submerged rock. And the Arctic flow continued to swirl past in a black, silent flood.

Some of the time was filled in by eating. The juniors offered to prepare a meal for everybody in general, and a good hour was spent in making sandwiches, the girls being the chief workers in this enterprise. The fellows did their share after the sandwiches had been made.

But they all knew that it was a false kind of diversion. Their thoughts were constantly with the great problem, and although they remained below they wanted to be on deck, watching.

"How much longer?" asked Tommy Watson hoarsely. "We seem to go on for ever, and there's no sign of an end!"

"We've only been in the tunnel for just over four hours," said Nipper.

"Begad, old boy, it seems like four days!" said Tregellis-West. "I've had a few frightful experiences, but this is the most frightful! Nothin' but suspense all the time!"

"What was that?" shouted Handforth abruptly.

"Great Scott! We bumped against something!"

"We're aground!"

There was a rush, but when the fellows arrived on deck they found nothing different. One of the officers was looking very grave, however.

"It was a near thing that time!" he said, when a number of juniors pressed round him. "We hit a ledge, I believe, on the starboard side—just scraped off by a piece of sheer luck. It's so infernally difficult to steer the confounded ship."

"Do you think we shall get through, Mr. Wilcox?" asked Pitt.

"We've got to get through," replied the officer simply.

And then came another alarm. Ice was floating down! Great jagged lumps of ice! The whole tunnel was becoming filled with the floating fragments!

"I don't like this!" said Nelson Lee, as he stood staring overside, with Nipper close to him. "It's a bad sign, young 'un. I hope we get out before there's too much of it."

"You think we'll get jammed up, sir?"

"It's possible," replied Lee. "Dorrie's having quite a job, I believe, to force his little motor-boat through it. We didn't reckon on this. There was no sign of it when Dorrie came through a few days ago."

"What does it mean, guv'nor?"

"You needn't ask me that, Nipper—you know what it means," replied Lee. "The geyser is petering out, and the waters are freezing again. In such an

atmosphere it won't take long for the flow to cease altogether. There's a danger here that I had not contemplated at all."

"We might be forced to abandon the attempt, eh, sir?"

"We might get jammed up, and slip between the frying-pan and the fire," said Nelson Lee grimly. "We assumed that we should be able to get back into the oasis if the current proved too strong. But what if the ice jams us in? We shall be able to move neither forwards nor backwards. We shall be trapped in this tunnel!"

"Phew! That's a lively prospect, sir!" whistled Nipper.

"Say nothing to the others—there's no need to alarm them unnecessarily," warned Lee. "By Jove, the ice is getting thicker every minute!" he added, his face looking aged with anxiety. "And if we fail it means thirty years before we get another chance—perhaps never! And perhaps it means being trapped in this vast tunnel!"

Lee muttered this to himself, and Nipper did not hear. He, like the other fellows, was staring down at the black flood, and watching the ever-increasing masses of twisting, turning, floating ice.

### The Everlasting Ice!

ANOTHER hour of suspense.

The ice had thinned out a bit by then, and the adventurers were beginning to get fresh hope. Perhaps there was no need for any alarm. Perhaps the geyser was in full operation again.

But the atmosphere gave the lie to this supposition.

For it was cold—penetratingly cold. Gradually the temperature had been dropping, and now, indeed, freezing point had been well passed. The air of the tunnel was bitter. Ice was beginning to form on the Spitfire's sides, and the juniors were surrounded in a kind of steam as they breathed. Every scrap of available clothing had been put on. But still they stood about, staring always into the unknown blackness of the tunnel ahead.

The light of Lord Dorrimore's motor-boat continued to rip the blackness, but it only penetrated a short distance. Beyond that the darkness was mysterious and almost terrifying. At times the roof of the tunnel would slope lower, and the procession would only just be able to scrape through.

And now and again the tunnel would become narrow, and only the most careful navigation averted a disaster. But still the engines roared, and the ship was hauled steadily onwards.

And a new sound was added to the din from the exhausts. There was a continuous splintering and grinding of ice as it was hemmed in between the ship's side and the rock walls.

"How much longer?" asked Church unhappily. "We seem to go on and on, and there's never any change. I'm getting nery, Mac! The ice is getting worse again now—thicker than ever!"

"Don't worry," growled Handforth. "We're nearly through."

"Somebody said it would take another three or four hours—"

"Don't believe it!" interrupted Handforth, frowning. "Can't you feel the frost in the air? The temperature's pretty well at zero already. And that means that we're near the open."

"It means that we're nearer—but that's a different thing," put in McClure. "We've got miles to go yet— By jingo! Did you feel that? We're getting jammed up in this beastly ice!"

They stared overboard anxiously.

The ice was indeed thicker than ever, and was piling up ominously as the vessel continued her course. At times the hawsers would twang with a queer, significant sound. The Spitfire would lurch onwards unwillingly. The ice was beginning to pack up and bar the progress of this strange string of boats.

There could be only one explanation. The recurring geyser was getting to the end of its present activity, and was again becoming dormant. The ice was beginning to form on that outer lake, and in a very short time the freeze-up would be solid. It would be touch and go whether the party could get out.

And it would be a dreadful climax to the adventure if they were all hemmed in here, for there could be no return to the oasis. Frozen up in this mass, even the motor-boat would be as useless as a riddled hulk. And then what chance of escape would there be? Even if the seaplanes arrived, there would be nobody to rescue.

But Nelson Lee thrust this thought grimly aside as it occurred to him. He couldn't believe that such tragedy would signalise the end of their journey. For, according to all his calculations—based on Lord Dorrimore's report—the tunnel exit should now be very close. The atmosphere told this, too. There was a distinct air current now, amounting to a real wind. It was blowing down the tunnel, and it was bitter.

"Dorrie's waving!" said Nipper, as he stared out into the distance ahead. "Look, guv'nor!"

"Yes, I have seen," replied Nelson Lee tensely.

The motor-boat could be distinctly noted beyond the straining gondolas. And the figure of Lord Dorrimore, outlined against the gleam from the searchlight, was visible. Dorrie was standing up in his boat, waving frantically.

"It's a warning!" ejaculated Handforth. "By George! The ice is all packed up, and we can't move! That's what it means! Dorrie's trying to tell us—"

"No!" yelled Church. "The tunnel's getting wider. Look! Can't you see? The ice isn't jammed so much here either. The tunnel's getting wider, I tell you! We're near the exit!"

"Don't be an ass!" roared Handforth. "It'll be hours before we get near the exit."

"Half an hour ago you said we were nearly through!"

"Eh? Did I?" said Handforth, with a snort. "Well, I expect I was right, but you needn't get so excited—"

"Oh, dry up!" interrupted McClure. "Let's watch!"

It seemed that Lord Dorrimore's signal was indeed a token of good tidings. For, as the gondolas surged onwards, they drew apart, proving that the tunnel was a great deal wider here. It continued to open out, and then, at last, there was no further doubt.

A bitterly cold wind was whistling over the deck, and everybody instinctively knew that the end of the tunnel was close at hand. And then the searchlight suddenly went out, and a darkness shut down.

"Oh!" exclaimed Irene. "Why has Dorrie done that?"

"We're through—we're through!" yelled a dozen voices.

Far ahead, a dim, uncertain light could be seen—a greyness amid the surrounding black. And everybody knew that that dim twilight was



coming from beyond, from the open air. At this time of the year there was no full daylight in the Arctic, and all was dim.

It was curious that the volcanic fires from the great craters above did not reflect down. They seemed to concentrate all their light into the great oasis. It was a phenomenon of the mists which always hung over that enormous basin. Out in the open, the volcanic fires were lost in the vast emptiness of the upper air.

"We're through!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "By George! Didn't I say we should do it? I never had any doubt about it, like some of you pessimists!"

Everybody seemed to go mad with joy ten or fifteen minutes later. For the great gondolas, tugging at their charge, passed under a frowning rock, and emerged under the glorious sky. At least, it seemed glorious to all these temporary exiles. Not so long ago they had almost lost hope of seeing a real cloud again. In the oasis there had been nothing but the upper mists.

"It's snowing!" shouted Fullwood. "Hurrah!"

"Good old honest snow!"

The cheering became wild. And the terrible din from the engines seemed to be utterly dissipated now. They were still roaring, but after the echoes of the tunnel the noise was like a mere murmur.

"Steady on, you chaps!" said Nipper grimly. "Not so much of this cheering!"

"But we're out!" gasped Tommy Watson. "And it's snowing!"

"I know it's snowing, but that's nothing to gloat about," replied Nipper anxiously. "What about the seaplanes? How are they going to find us in this smother?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Watson, with a start.

"It's real Arctic weather—that's all," went on Nipper. "Just our luck, of course! We're out, but we're not out of the wood! If this snowstorm continues, those seaplanes will never get near us! We're out of the oasis, and we're free of the tunnel. But is there any chance of us getting picked up?"

### Waiting!

**T**HE wave of wild excitement soon died down. The weather was bad, and that might mean the death-knell of all their hopes.

The fleet of naval seaplanes had started out—should be here by this time. But what chance was there of ever seeing them?

If the pilots had already encountered this storm, they would have turned back, knowing the utter impossibility of going on. For the visibility was practically nil. From the decks of the Spitfire, scarcely anything could be seen but a smother of whirling snowflakes.

A sort of twilight reigned overhead, and there were signs of ice on all sides. But these vessels were floating in water, and the pack-ice was floating about uneasily, as though disturbed by under-water currents.

Not one of the engines had been stilled. The party was going onwards—progressing as far as they possibly could, in order to get away from the deadly mountain range. It rose up behind them—a vast mass of ice, reaching upwards into the smother.

"Those seaplanes may have met with disaster already," said Pitt anxiously. "They were going to fly low as soon as they got to this latitude. And imagine the danger here, with scarcely any visibility! Flying low, they would crash into those mountains before they knew they were near them!"

"It would make no difference, even if they flew high," said Nipper. "These peaks rise for thirty thousand feet or more, and the aeroplanes couldn't get to that height in this sort of air. The engines wouldn't work—the cold would be too intense."

"But what can we do?" asked Watson despairingly.

"Just nothing," replied Nipper. "We're out, and let's be thankful for that. We've done our part, and now everything depends upon the Navy."

For a full hour the voyage continued. The mountains had long since been left in the rear. Lord Dorrimore's searchlight, sweeping round in all directions, revealed nothing but the black water and the pack-ice. In many places there were great clear spaces, hundreds of yards in extent—just plain water. The open sea appeared to stretch for mile after mile. It was a sure enough proof of the geyser's enormous size.

Its strength was sufficient to thaw the ice, and to convert a large expanse of the ordinary frozen Arctic into an open sea. But once the geyser lost its effectiveness, the freeze-up would be swift and dramatic. It was losing its effectiveness already.

But Nelson Lee knew well enough that the temperature here was extraordinarily high. It was freezing hard, but, according to all records of this latitude, the thermometer should have been a great many degrees below zero. But the coldness was no greater than that of an ordinary bitter day in temperate zones.

And then at last the engines ceased. Miles had been covered in the open, for the current was lacking here, and the Spitfire had made good progress. But the ice was now becoming so thick that the end of the journey was reached. Into the distance ahead lay no water, but the everlasting ice of the Arctic. The limit of the geyser's zone had been reached.

Lord Dorrimore came on board, stiff and blue with cold. Every engine was quiet, and the sudden silence was uncanny. The wind was whistling and the myriad snowflakes were whirling down. But everything seemed deadly silent.

"Well, old man, we've done it," said Lord Dorrimore, as he gripped Nelson Lee's hand. "All the same, I don't think a great deal of this snow. A bit of a dirty trick, eh?"

"I'm worried, Dorrie," muttered Lee.

"I don't wonder at it," said his lordship. "Thinking of those seaplanes, eh? A fat chance they'll have in this blizzard!"

"We can only wait," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Let us pray that the weather will clear. The geyser is losing its power, and I venture to predict that within forty-eight hours the temperature here will be down to normal, and the ice as solid as ever."

"That's cheerin'," said Dorrie, with a grimace. "I distinctly told the Navy that there was plenty of water for their planes to alight on. What the deuce will they do if there's nothin' but ice?"

"They'll be able to land, but I'm afraid they'll never get off again," replied Lee. "This weather has upset all our calculations. Unless those seaplanes can arrive within twenty-four hours—"

He broke off significantly.

*(The St. Frank's party will be in a serious plight if help doesn't reach them. Don't miss the final exciting chapters of this great serial.)*



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## TOWSER'S TWIN!

(Continued from page 17.)

"Yaas, wathiah!"

"I won't—" began Crooke fiercely. But he had no time to finish. He was flung, neck and crop, into Study No. 6, and rolled on the carpet there.

The three Shell fellows and Brooke helped Mr. Brooke down the stairs, and got him out of the House quietly.

Mr. Brooke was very quiet now.

### CHAPTER 13.

#### Inky!

**J**ACK-BLAKE and his chums were standing guard over the cads of the School House when Tom Merry came in with Lowther and Glyn. Crooke and Mellish were standing by the mantelpiece, looking sullen and savage.

"The cads own up to what they've done," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathiah!"

"I'm not afraid to own up," said Crooke fiercely. "I wanted to show Brooke up, and I've done it. Now you can do what you like!"

"It was all Crooke's doing!" muttered Mellish. "I was against it from the first!"

"And what did you want to show Brooke up for, Crooke?" asked Tom Merry quietly, without taking any notice of Mellish.

"Because he's a rotten outsider!"

"Because he stopped you from poisoning Towser, and because I licked you for it, you mean, you unspeakable cad!" said Herries.

"I quite agree with Hewwies!"

"If ever a pair of rotten cads ought to be ragged, these are the rotters!" said Tom Merry. "It's our duty as decent fellows to make an example of them!"

Glyn burst into a chuckle. "I've got an idea," he said. "I think you fellows all agree that they ought to blush for themselves?"

"Yaas, wathiah!"

"But they won't."

"Then we ought to make them blush!" Bernard Glyn took a bottle from his pocket. "This is my latest invention. Indelible red ink."

"Gweat Scott!"

"If we paint their chivvies with it, the colour can't possibly come off under a week, and they will be pink for another week after that," said Bernard Glyn. "If they won't blush for themselves, they can blush for us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you dare put that stuff on me!" shrieked Crooke.

"Shut up, Crooke!"

"Collar the cads!" said Glyn. "The invention is quite at your service, and I shall not charge Crooke or Mellish anything for the ink!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Glyn opened the bottle, and Blake produced a paste-brush.

Crooke and Mellish were grasped and, in spite of their frantic struggles they were held fast in strong hands, and Tom Merry proceeded to paint their faces.

The ink was of a bright vermilion colour, and the effect upon the features of the cads of the School House was startling. The reddest of Red Indians never looked so red as Crooke and Mellish looked in a few minutes. The most awkward and modest of youths never blushed so vividly.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy, when Tom Merry had finished. "They look jolly well, and no mistake! Bai Jove!"

"Now, get out, you cads!" said Blake.

The two culprits were released, and they made a wild rush from the study, panting with rage and terror. In one minute they were washing, rubbing and scrubbing at their faces with hot water and lathering soap. But the water was hardly stained pink from their washing. The red remained upon their

faces, and as Bernard Glyn had declared, it was likely to remain there for at least a week to come.

One uproarious yell of laughter greeted the cads when they appeared in public. Juniors and seniors were almost in hysterics at the sight of the scarlet faces.

The next morning Crooke and Mellish were blushing furiously when they were going down to breakfast.

At the breakfast-table little Mr. Lathom noticed that they were very red, but he was short-sighted, and made no remark upon it. But after breakfast when the crimson youths encountered Mr. Railton in the Hall, the House-master stopped them in amazement and questioned them.

Then the story came out.

Mr. Railton heard it all, and then turned to Tom Merry & Co.

"You should not have done this," he said. "It was a very wild and reckless thing to do; but you had such provocation that I shall excuse you. Crooke and Mellish acted so basely that you were naturally indignant, and I am glad you were! Glyn, I forbid you to make any more indelible ink. It is evidently not safe in your hands. Crooke and Mellish, you will go at once into my study. I shall cane you both severely for your mean and cowardly trick upon Brooke's father!"

Crooke and Mellish emerged from the Housemaster's study five minutes later, looking as if they found life not worth living. And for nearly a week they furnished inexhaustible merriment to the St. Jim's fellows.

The cads of the School House continued to blush till the effect of the indelible ink wore off, which it did at last, and they refused, quite rightly, the schoolboy inventor's offer to give them a second coat if they liked!

(Next Wednesday: "TOM MERRY'S MELODY MAKERS!"—a sparkling extra-long yarn of the fun and frolic of the rival musicians of St. Jim's. Look out for it!)

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