

Lyster
HAVE YOUR "GEM" RESERVED FOR YOU!

SEE PAGE 15.

**THE
GEM**
2^p

A Thrilling Moment
for Tom Merry—from
the Great
St. Jim's Story Inside.





Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Bull himself! But keep your letter **SHORT**, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned.

Pat Lloyd and Jean Lindup, of Sompting, nr. Worthing, write:

We are both thirteen and very interested readers. Is Koumi Rao (excuse spelling) any relation to Hurree Singh of Greyfriars? Do you know Mabel Lynn of Cliff House or Jack Drake of St. Winifred's? Who is your favourite film star? Who is the best boxer, yourself, Roylance, or Clive?

ANSWER: *Nothing wrong with your spelling, is there? No, Koumi Rao and "Inky" of Greyfriars are not related. No, I don't know Mabel Lynn, but I've met Drake some time ago. He is now at Greyfriars, of course. My favourite is Donald Duck. (Quack, quack!) Switching from Walt Disney to the ringside, I could beat Roylance or Clive on points, but I haven't the least desire to "mix things" with either of them.*

F. Thorne, of Llandudno, N. Wales, writes:

Are you any relation to Sexton Blake? Why always three "ha's" when anybody is laughing in a GEM story? What is the record number of football matches you've won in one season—is it one or two? How many May Queens have been picked from St. Jim's? I suppose when Gussy has the "swish" you can see the dust rising in clouds, and the moth balls falling out of his pockets?

ANSWER: *No relation. Well, leave out one "ha" if you find three too many for you, old chap. Believe it or not, we won 25 matches the season before last. May Queens! Say, brother, just drop in any time and repeat that remark in my, or any other "Saint's" hearing. You'll "hear" no more—till you come round! Gussy hasn't had the "swish" lately; he wears dust-proof pants, I understand, and the moths at St. Jim's are of a voracious Sussex variety which eat up the balls, so that you never see a moth ball in this locality.*

"Aussie Reader," of Melbourne, writes:

1. Are Australian Aborigines allowed to enter England?

2. What are six common Welsh names?

3. Average ages and order of ALL the Forms?

4. What are the Claremont, Redclyffe, Abbotsford, and Bagshot colours?

5. Will Outram return to St. Jim's?

P.S.—I am sending along a picture of myself.
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ANSWER:

1. *Why not? The white "King" of the Aborigines broadcast once in "In Town Tonight." He said he was a blood-brother of old "King Billy."*

2. *Morgan, Jones, Gwynne, Francis, Davies, Evans.*

3. *Sixth (18), Fifth (17), Shell (16), Fourth (15), Third (13—14). Ages only approximate.*

4. *Claremont red and green quarters; Redclyffe crimson hoops; Abbotsford green and gold; Bagshot (this year) royal blue shirts, white shorts.*

5. *No.*

P.S.—*Glad to see your picture—when it comes! Must have missed the boat, 'cos it isn't in your envelope.*

J. S. Hughes, of Yeronga, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, writes:

I fully concur with your opinions on smoking, etc., and think the chaps who carry on that way, under age, are nothing but idiots!

ANSWER: *Thanks for your support, old man. I'm standing firm, as I've always stood, on this point. You ask an interesting question I haven't room to answer here. I'll endeavour to send a personal reply later.*

"Regular Reader," of Wollaston, writes:

You printed a nasty crack at a fellow for asking you about Nelson. Now, how high is the Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square? Or will you duck it?

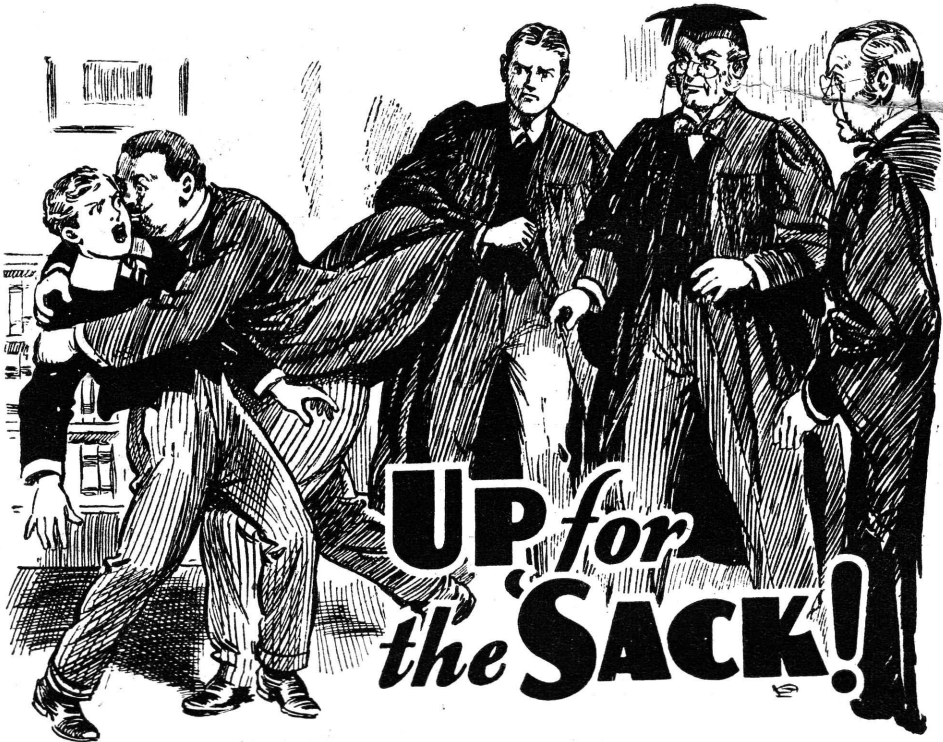
ANSWER: *Duck nothing. The column is 145 feet, the statue on top of it 18 feet. Total 163 feet. All right, if you don't believe me, climb up and see!*

"Gemite," of York, writes:

Wise guy, huh? A rectangular solid is 4 feet wide and 6 feet long and has a volume of 72 cubic feet. What is its height?

ANSWER: *We get more than enough mathematics in class, as a rule. But, between ourselves, the height is 3 feet. How do I get it? It's all done by mirrors!*

**TOM MERRY CAN EXPECT NO LESS THAN EXPULSION FOR STRIKING A FORM-MASTER!
IS THAT TO BE THE END OF HIS CAREER AT ST. JIM'S ?**



The excitable French master darted at Tom Merry, embraced him, and kissed him on both cheeks.

BLACKED OUT !

“**G**USSY !” ejaculated Tom Merry. Coming out of the Shell passage to the study landing, in the School House at St. Jim’s, Tom stared blankly at Arthur Augustus D’Arcy of the Fourth Form.

Arthur Augustus was standing at the balustrade overlooking the well of the staircase. No other fellow was there—Gussy had the big landing to himself. In his right hand was an inkpot.

As Tom sighted him, Arthur Augustus suddenly raised the hand holding the inkpot, stretched it over the balustrade, and inverted it.

A stream of ink shot out, spattering over the stairs below.

For a moment Tom was quite dumbfounded as he watched that amazing and extraordinary proceeding. He wondered, for that moment, whether the swell of St. Jim’s had taken leave of his senses.

But the next moment he understood.

From the staircase came a startled yell.

Somebody on the stairs had caught that stream of ink !

Who it was, Tom could not see. But somebody was coming up the stairs, and Arthur Augustus had let him have the ink as he came.

Instantly, Gussy spun round, darted across the landing, and disappeared up the Fourth Form passage. He did not even see Tom Merry. His retreat was swift—he vanished like a ghost at cock-crow.

“Oh crumbs !” gasped Tom.

“Oooooogh !” came a spitting yell from the staircase. Somebody, out of Tom Merry’s sight below, was drenched with ink.

“The howling ass !” ejaculated Tom.

He ran across the landing to the balustrade to look down, wondering who had got the ink—probably some New House fellow. New House men, if they barged into the School House, were liable to meet with sudden surprises !

But as Tom looked down, he saw that it was not a New House junior. It was not a junior at all—it was a master !

“Silverson !” breathed Tom, in horror.

**Powerful New Story
of the Popular Chums
of St. Jim’s**

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

Mr. James Silverson, the new master of the St. Jim's Fourth, was staggering on the stairs, clawing at ink. His mortar-board was dripping with it—his face streaked and splashed—his collar blotted. He clawed at ink and yelled. As he clawed and yelled, he glared up—and saw the startled face of Tom Merry looking down, gazing blankly at his blacked-out visage.

"You!" gasped Mr. Silverson.

He came trampling up the stairs. His face, where it was not black with ink, was red with rage.

"You!" he repeated. "Merry! You! You have dared— Silverson almost choked. "You—you have dared to—to—to—"

"Nothing of the kind!" answered Tom Merry coolly. "If you fancy I threw down the ink, you are quite mistaken, Mr. Silverson."

"Then who did?"

"Not I!" said Tom.

He had not the slightest intention of mentioning that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had been on the landing a minute ago.

Gussy was in Silverson's Form, and, like the rest of the Fourth, he loathed Silverson with a deep loathing. Gussy's life in the Fourth would hardly have been worth living afterwards had Silverson discovered that Gussy had handled that inkpot.

James Silverson gave an inky glare round the landing. Only Tom Merry was there.

"It was you!" he roared.

"It was not I!" answered Tom.

"Do you mean to say that another boy was here?"

"I do not mean to say anything, Mr. Silverson!" answered the captain of the Shell. "I am not a prefect, and it is not my business."

"You will come with me to your Form-master at once!" James Silverson grabbed Tom by the shoulder.

"I will come to Mr. Linton if you like," answered Tom quietly. "But let go my shoulder, Mr. Silverson."

"Come!" hooted Silverson, and he tightened his grip and hooked the captain of the Shell towards the stairs.

Tom Merry gave a wrench, and tore his shoulder from Silverson's grasp. Then he backed away, with gleaming eyes.

"Keep your hands off me, Mr. Silverson!" he said between set lips. "I will follow you, if you like, but if you put your paw on me again, I will knock it off!"

James Silverson gave him an inky glare. His dislike of Tom Merry—his distant relative—had never been so intense, so bitter, as at that moment. He had no doubt that it was Tom who had up-ended an inkpot over him—he did not even think of a member of his own Form. But he did not grab at the Shell fellow's shoulder again.

"Follow me!" he snarled.

"Certainly, if you like!" answered Tom.

He followed James Silverson down the staircase. At the foot of the stairs were Manners and Lowther—they had been waiting for Tom to come down when the inky episode occurred. They stared at the inky face of the "Worm"—and then at Tom.

"What—" began Lowther.

"Tom, old man—" breathed Manners.

Both of them were dismayed. Only too well they knew the cause Tom had to detest Silverson

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—his enemy ever since Silverson had obtained a temporary post at St. Jim's. The master deserved inking—indeed, in the general opinion of the School House juniors, he deserved boiling in oil! But inking a beak was a fearfully serious proceeding.

"O.K., you fellows!" said Tom cheerfully. "Not me this time—though Mr. Silverson seems to think that it was!"

And he followed the Fourth Form master to Mr. Linton's study. Dozens of pairs of eyes were turned on the inky Form-master as they went. Some of the fellows grinned.

"Oh, jiminy!" ejaculated Baggy Trimble.

"Tom Merry's done it now."

"Fathead!" said Tom.

"Is this a new thing in black-outs?" asked Cardew of the Fourth, and there was a laugh.

Mr. Silverson caught the words, and stared round at Ralph Reckness Cardew.

"Take two hundred lines, Cardew!" he hundered.

"Thank you, sir!" said Cardew politely.

Mr. Silverson swept on, with Tom Merry, smiling, at his heels. The sound of chuckling followed them. An inky Form-master was an uncommon sight at St. Jim's—indeed, this was the first time that a member of the staff had been seen "blacked out" with ink. Many of the fellows seemed to think that there was something comic in it.

If there was, it was quite lost on James Silverson. Silverson's temper was never good—now it was the worst ever!

He banged rather than knocked at the door of Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell. He hurled the door open, and tramped in. And Tom Merry—still quite cool and cheerful—followed him into his Form-master's study.

NOT GUILTY!

MR. LINTON jumped from his chair—or rather, he bounded from it. His eyes almost bulged at the inky face of the Fourth Form master.

"Mr. Silverson!" he ejaculated. "That—that is Mr. Silverson, I suppose?" He was not quite sure of the identity of the blacked-out visage. "What—"

"Look at me!" panted James Silverson. "Look at the state I am in! This was done by a boy of your Form, Mr. Linton—this boy, Merry."

"Oh!"

"It was not, sir!" said Tom. "Mr. Silverson is quite mistaken! He cannot say that he saw me throw the ink at him."

"You did not do this, Merry?"

"No, sir!"

"It is false!" roared James Silverson. "Every word the boy utters is false. He threw the ink over me!"

"I shall be obliged, sir, if you will moderate your voice in my study!" said Mr. Linton frigidly.

"I tell you, sir—"

"If Merry has done this he will be reported to his headmaster for a flogging! He denies it—"

"It is false—"

"Did you actually see him throw the ink, Mr. Silverson?"

"I saw him one moment afterwards, and no one else was on the spot."

"Kindly tell me precisely what has occurred."

"I was going up to the Fourth Form studies, sir—lines due from the boys in Study No. 6 have not been handed in to me, and I was going up to see about the matter. The ink was flung at me suddenly from the landing as I went up the stairs. Naturally, I did not see who flung it, as it was flung over the landing balustrade above. But I ran up immediately and found Merry there."

"Was no one else there?"

"No one!"

"You are sure of this, Mr. Silverson?"

"I am quite sure of it, sir! No other boy was in sight."

Mr. Linton fixed his eyes grimly on Tom Merry's face. That face was perfectly cool and composed. Tom Merry did not expect justice, or anything but bitter enmity, from James Silverson—but from the Form-master he did.

"Merry," said Mr. Linton quietly, "I cannot fail to be aware that there is ill-feeling between you and Mr. Silverson, although he is your relative. All through this term, so far, there has been trouble of one kind or another—and I have warned you more than once to remember the respect due to a member of Dr. Holmes' staff. I have had to punish you more than once for forgetting that respect."

Tom set his lips.

"There is no reason why I should ever have anything to do with Mr. Silverson, sir, as I am not in his Form!" he answered. "If he persists in meddling in the Shell I cannot help it."

"You must not make such remarks, Merry," said Mr. Linton.

But his tone was not unduly severe. In point of fact, he had himself told James Silverson in plain English to mind his own business on one occasion.

"Such insolence——" exclaimed Silverson.

"Let us keep to the matter in hand," said Mr. Linton coldly. "Merry, if you have been guilty of this outrage——"

"I have not, sir!"

"In that case," said Mr. Linton, "you must be aware who was, as you were on the spot."

Tom was silent.

"Some other boy must have been on the landing, and must have gone before Mr. Silverson came up!" said the master of the Shell. "Is that the case, Merry?"

"Yes, sir!" said Tom slowly.

"Let him give the boy's name!" said Silverson bitterly. "If his statement is not a reckless falsehood, let him give the boy's name."

Tom's eyes gleamed at him.

"I will not give the boy's name!" he exclaimed. "Masters at this school, Mr. Silverson, do not ask fellows to sneak about one another—and if you don't know that yet, it is time you learned!"

James Silverson gasped with rage.

"Is that the way, Mr. Linton, in which a master of this school is to be addressed by a boy in your Form?" he panted.

"No, sir!" said Mr. Linton. "Merry, if you forget the warnings I have given you on this subject, you will take the consequences. You will apologise to Mr. Silverson immediately for addressing him in such a manner."

Tom shut his lips hard.

James Silverson was his enemy—his self-constituted rival for the money-bags of old Miss

Priscilla Fawcett. Tom simply could not treat him with respect. He would gladly have avoided all contact with him; but, as it takes two to make a quarrel, so it takes two to keep the peace. James was not to be avoided—and Tom could not always be prudent.

"Do you hear me, Merry?"

"Yes, sir!"

"If you do not immediately apologise to Mr. Silverson, I shall give you extra school to-morrow as a punishment."

Tom did not speak.

That meant a half-holiday gone. But he would not have uttered an apology to James Silverson to save all the holidays in the school term.

"Very well!" said Mr. Linton, as he remained stubbornly silent. "You must learn, Merry, to treat every member of the school staff with proper respect, whatever your personal

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PLEASE SEE THE IMPORTANT NOTICE ON PAGE 15.

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feelings may be. You will go into the French detention class to-morrow afternoon."

"Yes, sir," said Tom quietly.

"That is not all, I presume, sir!" broke out Silverson. "Is not this boy to be punished for having drenched me in ink?"

"On that subject, sir, I accept Merry's word!" answered Mr. Linton. "Any boy might have happened to be on the study landing when this occurred—it is absurd to consider his presence there as a proof of guilt."

"If Merry was not the offender, sir, he knows the offender. Will you order him to give the boy's name?"

"No, sir!" said Mr. Linton. "Such is not my method. No boy in my Form has ever been asked to give information against another boy, and no boy in my Form ever will, so long as I am master of the Shell. It is for you, sir, to discover who was guilty of this outrage—and certainly without asking any boy to play the contemptible part of an informer."

James almost foamed.

"This matter shall not end here, sir!" he spluttered. "If you refuse to deal with this boy, I shall take the matter to the Housemaster!"

"I think, sir, that you will receive the same answer from Mr. Railton as from me!" said Mr. Linton. "But please yourself, by all means. Merry, you may leave my study."

Tom Merry left the study.

"I repeat, sir——" James Silverson almost roared.

"And I repeat, sir, that I will not tolerate a raised voice in my study!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "You may go to Mr. Railton, if you please—or you may go to the Head—it is quite immaterial to me—but the matter is closed so far as I am concerned."

"I tell you——"

"I must point out, Mr. Silverson, that I am busy!" interrupted the master of the Shell. "Pray say no more."

James Silverson gave him an inky glare, stamped out of the study, and slammed the door. Mr. Linton shrugged his shoulders, indulged in a sniff, and resumed his work on Latin papers for the Shell.

ALL RIGHT FOR STUDY No. 6!

"ALL wight, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a cheery smile. Jack Blake gave a grunt.

Arthur Augustus came into Study No. 6 in the Fourth as he spoke. He came in quickly and closed the study door behind him as soon as he was in.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were seated round the study table, busily writing lines. The four members of Study No. 6 had a hundred each, and the impots had to be handed in before tea. It was now past tea-time—and the lines not yet finished! So Blake & Co. were in momentary dread of hearing Mr. Silverson come up to the study.

Silverson had a down on that study. He was not likely to wait for his lines. He was more likely to jump at an excuse for doubling them.

"All right, is it?" grunted Blake. "I've got thirty more to do—and time's up! And you've got over fifty—and you've been wandering around instead of getting at them!"

"It's all UP!" said Herries. "Bet you Silverson will come up!"

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"Want to see him in the study, fathead?" demanded Dig.

"Wathah not, deah boy! He won't come to this study for some time to come, I wathah fancy!" Arthur Augustus chuckled. "Silvahson will probably go and get a wash befoah he comes heah."

"Eh! Why?"

"Because I've spilt some ink ovah him, ovah the banistahs!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "I knew the bwute would come up, and that was why I left the study, deah boys. I was weady for the wottah! I tipped this inkpot ovah his nappah, and he gave a howl like an air-waid siven! Ha, ha!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Blake.

Gussy's pals gazed at him almost in horror. They were up against the new beak who had taken old Mr. Lathom's place that term. They would have liked to duck him in ink—indelible ink. But tipping an inkpot over his head was asking for awful trouble. Silverson might be a worm, and a rat, and a rank outsider, but he was, for the present, a member of the school staff—not to be inked with impunity.

"It's all wight, deah boys!" repeated Arthur Augustus reassuringly. "The wat nevah saw me—I took care of that! And I wushed off like anythin' as soon as I had tipped the ink ovah him! There was nobody about. It's all wight—wight as wain!"

"I hope it is!" said Blake. "You howling ass!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"There'll be a fearful row if Silverson got the ink!" said Herries.

"He was makin' wathah a wow when I wan for it!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Yellin' like anythin'! Weally, I hope nobody mistook it for an air-waid warnin'—it sounded feahfully

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like it, you know. His voice is always wathah waucous, and it is feahfully unmusical on its top note."

Arthur Augustus dropped into his chair at the table and picked up his pen.

"Wathah a bwight ideah—what?" he asked. "The bwute was comin' up aftah these lines that we haven't finished yet. We can get through while he's washin' off the ink. Ha, ha!"

"Of all the chumps—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus began to scribble Latin lines. The other fellows were getting near the finish; but Gussy had a lot of leeway to make up, owing to time lost in ambushing Silverson on the study landing.

His pen raced. Blake, Herries, and Dig finished; but Gussy was still going strong when there was a bang at the study door, and it opened to reveal the Terrible Three of the Shell.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther grinned into the study.

"It's all right," said Tom.

"Gussy's just told us that," grunted Blake. "But if you knew what the howling ass had done—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"I saw him do it," he answered.

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus jumped. "I did not see you there, Tom Mewwy. Did you see me ink Silvahson?"

"I saw you ink somebody, you ass! I thought it must be some New House man—till I saw Silverson. But it's all right. Silverson thinks I did it."

"Oh cwumbs!"

Arthur Augustus rose from his chair.

"If they've got you, old chap, I shall go and tell them how the mattah stands," he said.

"I tell you it's all right, fathead! Linton doesn't think I did it—and only Linton matters to me," said Tom. "Silverson can think what he likes, and be blowed to him!"

"The dear man jumps on Tom every chance," said Monty Lowther. "It's really quite safe for any other chap to jape Silverson. He will always think it was poor old Tommy."

"He's gone to wash off ink now," said Manners. "He looked a picture. Blacked out in best A.R.P. style."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not a word about it, you fellows," said Tom Merry. "Let Silverson keep on the wrong track, if it amuses him. But don't do any more, Gussy; it's not safe."

"I am going to wag Silvahson feahfully, until he changes his ways," said Arthur Augustus. "He gives us a feahful time in Form, so I have set out to give him a feahful time out of Form. One good turn deserves anothah, Tom Mewwy. I am sorry to say it about a welaion of yours, but the fellow is a wat—a wotten wat—an absolute wat!"

"Get on with those lines, Gussy," said Blake. "We're all right if we get them down in Silverson's study before he finishes getting off the ink."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Terrible Three went on their way, and Arthur Augustus' pen raced again. The lines were finished at last, and Gussy gathered them up.

Then the four juniors went down, taking their impositions, to be handed in at their Form-master's study.

Downstairs they found the inking of Silverson

a happy topic among a crowd of School House juniors.

"You fellows heard?" asked Levison of the Fourth.

"What?" inquired Blake. "Anything happened?"

"Yes; it's about Silverson."

"Well, Silverson is rather an outsider. What's up with his nibs? Anything happened to him?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Anythin' to do with ink?" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"Shut up, ass!" breathed Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

Levison stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy for a moment, and then laughed.

"Yes, something to do with ink. Lots of ink," he answered. "I shouldn't mention ink, if I were you, Gussy."

"Where is the dear man now?" asked Blake. "In a bath-room, with the hot water going. He's got rather a washing-day on hand."

"Good egg! Come on, you men!" said Blake.

The four hurried on to Mr. Silverson's study. Blake tapped and opened the door, to find the study vacant. They marched in, and laid their lines on the Form-master's table.

Then they departed, with smiling faces. The lines had been duly delivered before Mr. Silverson inquired after them, which had to satisfy even the Worm.

It was a good half-hour later that James Silverson came back to his study, his face no longer black, but red with rubbing and scrubbing and rage.

James was still quite convinced that Tom Merry had "got" him with that ink. But as Tom's Form-master declined to take that view, James was helpless in the matter. He had reconsidered his threat of going to the Housemaster about it. He knew that Mr. Railton would support the master of the Shell as a matter of course. James had to get this down like an unpleasant pill, never dreaming that, by concentrating on Tom Merry, he was giving the real perpetrator an easy escape.

He did not think of Study No. 6 at all, till he noticed four impots lying on his table ready for his inspection. He scowled at them. He would rather have doubled those impots than received them from the four juniors.

And, suspicious as James was, he did not suspect that Study No. 6 had gained time by means of the inky episode to get through those impots, and that that was why the ink had been hurled. Which undoubtedly was rather fortunate for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

IN EXTRA!

"**R**OTTEN luck!" said Manners.

"Putrid!" agreed Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded, with a glum face.

It was the following day, and a glorious October afternoon. Looking out at blue skies and brown woods, it was difficult to think of such things as wars going on—only a reminder coming, every now and then, in the shape of a glistening plane roaring through the blue.

That afternoon the Terrible Three of the Shell had an excursion on, which they were very unwilling to miss. At a distance from the school, on the banks of the Rhyll, a German plane had been brought down, and it was a sight that interested everybody. Tom Merry & Co. had intended to visit the spot to catch a glimpse of

it before it was shifted, and Manners hoped to get permission to take a snap of it with his camera.

The excursion was off now for Tom Merry. Tom was booked for extra school—French, in Monsieur Morny's detention class.

The look on his face showed that he was thinking of not turning up for extra.

Tom was a sensible fellow, and not in the least given to kicking against constituted authority. But a feeling of injustice rather blinded his usual good sense.

Linton had given him extra for disrespect to Silverson. The same thing had happened before—now it had happened again. All Tom's troubles that term—and they had been many—had been due to James Silverson. He tried to keep out of the man's way, but the man would not keep out of his way.

"Look here, let's go, all the same," said Tom.

The three were discussing it in the quad after dinner.

"Don't be a goat, old man," said Manners quietly. "You played the goat like that last week, and had a jolly narrow escape. It's tough, but a fellow has to toe the line at school."

"It's that cur Silverson who got me extra!" grunted Tom.

"I know that. But Linton handed it out; and you can't cheek Linton. You were sorry last time; you'll be sorry again. Have a little sense."

"Just a little, old chap," said Monty Lowther.

"We don't expect you to have a lot, knowing you as we do. But just a little."

"Fathead!" said Tom.

"If I can get some snaps of that plane, I'll show them to you when we get back," said Manners encouragingly.

Tom Merry looked at him. That, to the enthusiastic amateur photographer of St. Jim's, seemed a consolation. It did not seem to console Tom Merry very much.

"Ass!" said Tom.

"Well, you're not cutting extra," said Manners decidedly. "If you haven't sense enough to look after yourself, your pals are going to look after you. We shall see you safe in extra before we start."

"Yes, rather," agreed Monty Lowther. "Until half-past two, Tommy, we're sticking to you like glue. We've got half an hour to fill up. Like me to read you some of the stuff I've been doing for the 'Weekly'?"

"Thanks!" said Tom sarcastically. "But things are bad enough already."

"Like to look over some of my photographs?" asked Manners.

"What's the good of making matters worse?" asked Tom.

His friends looked at him. Tart replies like this were not like Tom Merry—always sunny-tempered and good-natured. Manners and Lowther did not speak. They just looked at him, and Tom coloured under their gaze.

"Sorry!" he said. "Don't mind me. That swab Silverson is getting on my nerves. You fellows are right, of course. I'm going in to extra. I jolly nearly made a fool of myself last week. I'm not going to repeat the performance. You can think of me sitting in extra and mopping up French, while you're rooting after that Boche plane."

"After all, extra might be interrupted, you know," said Lowther consolingly. "Might be an air-raid warning, and then you'd have to hop."

Tom Merry laughed. "I don't like extra," he remarked. "But, as a matter of taste, I think I prefer it to air-raids, old fathead. Don't you fellows wait. That plane won't be left where it dropped for ever, and you don't want to miss seeing it."

"You'll go in to extra at half-past two, if we cut?" asked Manners.

"Honest Injun!" assured Tom.

"O.K., then."

And Manners and Lowther went out at the gates, leaving Tom Merry in the quad to wait for two-thirty and extra French.

His brow was clouded as he strolled about the quad in the fine October afternoon, with his hands driven deep into his pockets.

He was in an angry and rebellious mood, and extremely disinclined to give up his half-holiday. He was quite well aware that, as Manners had said, a fellow had to toe the line at school. But it was his enemy, Silverson, who had got him that detention, as he had done before, and he hated the idea of knuckling under to the Worm.

Yet to disobey Mr. Lanton's order was to play directly into the hands of the schemer, and help James on in his obvious scheme of making him out to be a troublesome and incorrigible boy.

That alone would not have deterred Tom from "cutting." But he had given his word to his friends, and that settled the matter.

Study No. 6 came out of the School House in a bunch, and passed him in the quad. They paised as they saw him mooching aimlessly about.

"Coming to see that jolly old Boche plane?" asked Blake.

Tom made a grimace.

"I'm in extra," he answered.

"Oh, rough luck!"

"Bai Jove! That is wathah wotten, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sympathetically. "What has your beak put you in extra for?"

"Cheeking Silverson," said Tom, between his teeth.

"Same old game!" grunted Herries. "I'd cut!"

"Weally, Hewwies, that is vewy thoughtless advice to give poor old Tommy," said Arthur Augustus severely. "A fellow has to play up. If evewy chap did what was wight in his own eyes what would become of the school?"

"Doesn't he talk like a picture-book?" grinned Blake. "That's the chap who poured ink over his beak's napper!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake——"

"Stick it out, Tommy!" said Digby. "After all, extra French may come in useful. You may be serving in France some day."

"Fine!" said Tom. "Come in to extra French with me, Dig! Mossoo would let you in willingly."

"No fear!" said Dig promptly. Extra French might be useful, with a view to possible eventualities, but Dig did not seem to value it to that extent.

Study No. 6 went on their way, and Tom was left alone again. A little later Figgins & Co. hailed him, coming away from the New House.

"Waiting for your pals?" asked Figgins.

"No; they've gone," answered Tom.

"Aren't you going?" asked Kerr.

"Extra."

"Hard luck!"

"Rotten!" said Fatty Wynn. "Look here, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,654.

there's some toffee in my study you can have if you like."

"Thanks, old fat tulip!" said Tom, laughing.

Figgins & Co. marched off. But Tom Merry did not head for the New House and the toffee. Toffee, in Fatty Wynn's estimation, was a consolation for most trials, and a present help in time of trouble; but the captain of the Shell saw no comfort in toffee.

Half-past two chimed at last, and he made his way to the French master's class-room, where the detention class had to collect.

It was not a cheery gathering.

Nobody liked detention, and no detention class had ever been seen looking as if it really enjoyed life.

There were a dozen in all. Racke and Crooke of the Shell were there for slacking in Form. Grundy was there for having punched a fellow's head—Grundy was rather given to punching fellows' heads. Bernard Glyn was there for having given his attention in Form to a diagram of one of his wonderful inventions instead of Latin. Baggy Trimble was there for having devoured cake in the Fourth Form Room. Redfern, a New House Fourth Former, was there for having blotted an exercise, though Redfern declared that it was really because the Worm had overheard him remarking that he wished Mr. Lathom was back. There were other fellows, booked for various transgressions, and not one of them appeared to be looking forward to extra French with any real pleasure.

It was, in fact, a disgruntled class that was taken by Monsieur Morny, though not more disgruntled than was usual on such occasions.

Tom Merry, having made up his mind to it, settled down to extra French, and he found no consolation in ragging Mossoo, as some of the fellows did. Monsieur Morny probably did not enjoy a detention class any more than the members thereof, and Tom did not see any use in adding to his troubles.

Grundy stamped his feet; Racke banged a desk-lid; Crooke dropped books. Tom sensibly gave his attention to French. He was losing his half-holiday, but there was no object in wasting time for nothing. And extra French would have gone on the uneven tenor of its way to the end had there not been an interruption.

LUCK!

BUZZ!

It was a long, droning buzz, distinctly audible in the French class-room.

It sounded remarkably like the note of the siren warning of an air-raid.

But all the fellows in the French class-room—or nearly all—knew that it was nothing of the kind.

It was, in fact, the buzz of an electric carpet-sweeper in the room above the French class-room. The resemblance to a siren was quite startling, and it made some of the fellows jump for a moment. It made Monsieur Morny bound. It made Baggy Trimble yell.

"Yaroooh!" yelled Trimble.

The fat Baggy bounced from his seat, clutched his gas-mask, and hurtled to the door.

Baggy was not often known to put on speed, but the buzz of a siren electrified Baggy. Any sound resembling the same had an electrifying effect on him. Baggy did not stop to think—thinking, indeed, was not much in his line. Baggy bolted.

"You fat ass!" called out Redfern. "Chuck it! It's nothing!"

Baggy did not even hear. He had torn the door open, and was shooting through the doorway like a fat rabbit.

"Allons!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny. "Ecoutez—ze signal! Zat you make ze haste, but keep calm! Calmez-vous, mes garçons!"

For a moment the detention class stared at him. Then they caught on.

Monsieur Morny, like the fat Baggy, had been deceived by the resemblance between the buzz of the electric sweeper and the siren note of alarm.

Mossoo was by no means funky like Baggy. It was a heavy blow to Mossoo that he was too elderly to join the forces of his native land. He was as brave as a lion, but he was nervy and excitable, and if it was possible to misapprehend anything, Mossoo was the man to misapprehend it.

"Oh gum!" breathed Grundy. "What luck!"

The detention class rose to this.

They kept quite calm—all the more easily because they knew that there was nothing the matter.

But they rose as one man and headed for the door. Mossoo's little mistake was letting them out of detention. Getting out of detention was exactly what they wanted. Being only human, they really could not resist a chance like this.

It was the invariable rule in the school that when the siren note sang the alarm, the boys marched at once into the air-raid shelter, under the command of masters and prefects.

Now there was no alarm, but Mossoo fancied that there was. In the room above, the electric sweeper buzzed and buzzed. And the detention class marched joyously out.

In the quad there were plenty of fellows, nobody looking alarmed. Monsieur Morny stared round him in surprise.

He rushed up to Mr. Railton, who was walking in the quad with Mr. Linton, and clutched the Housemaster with an excited hand.

"Do you not hear?" he exclaimed. "Allons! Ze alarm!"

"The alarm?" repeated Mr. Railton. "I heard nothing."

"Neither did I," said Mr. Linton.

"But I hear him!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny. "Ecoutez, donc! Allons! Zat is verree strange! In ze class-room I hear him, but in ze open air I hear him not! He have stop. But I hear him viz my own ears, sair."

"Impossible, sir!" said Mr. Railton. "We should certainly have heard the signal in the open air if you heard it in a class-room."

"But I hear him!" exclaimed the puzzled French master. "Monsieur Silverson, have you not hear him?"

Mr. Silverson, who was in the quad, glanced round.

"I heard nothing," he answered.

"Zat is of ze most strange! Here, you, Redfern, come here viz you! Did you not hear ze alarm in ze class-room?"

Redfern grinned.

"I think it was an electric sweeper, sir," he answered.

"Mon Dieu!" gasped Monsieur Morny. "Pas possible!"

Mr. Railton smiled.

"It was a false alarm, Monsieur Morny," he said. "You had better take your class back to the class-room."

He could not help smiling. Mr. Linton smiled also. Mr. Silverson sneered. There was a laugh from somewhere. Monsieur Morny turned as red as a turkey-cock. He realised his mistake now, and was overwhelmed with confusion.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "C'est ca! I am mis-take—I am misunderstand! I am to misapprehend! Maintenant je comprends!"

And the French master, with crimson cheeks, proceeded to gather up his flock, to return to the class-room, as Mr. Railton advised.

But gathering that scattered flock did not prove an easy matter.

Fellows who had had a good excuse for getting out of detention were naturally not keen on getting in again.

Mossoo had ordered them out, in the belief that it was an air raid. Now he had to order them in; but it was difficult to order in fellows who had vanished from sight.

Immediately they were out of the House, the detained juniors had scattered among the many other fellows in the quad.

Only Baggy Trimble had headed for the dugout shelter in the quadrangle, and he had reached it in record time. The fat Baggy was now safe inside, palpitating, but he had it all to himself.

Redfern remained in sight; but he, too, disappeared after answering Monsieur Morny's question.

Up and down and round about whisked Mossoo in search of his class, but he found them not.

The detained juniors chose to regard that detention class as dismissed. Until Monsieur Morny found them and instructed them otherwise, they were going to stick to that view of the matter.

Monsieur Morny did not succeed in spotting one of them till he looked into the shelter, where he spotted Baggy Trimble. Baggy was ordered back to the class-room at once. But he was Mossoo's only catch.

The others had vanished.

In searching for them Monsieur Morny found an unexpected ally in Mr. James Silverson. The master of the Fourth joined him as he was rooting about after the rest of his flock, having dispatched the fat Baggy home.

"Have you found your boys, Monsieur Morny?" asked James.

"Vun only," said Mossoo. "Only zat Trimble. Ze ozzers have disappear. It is vun verree great mystery how zey have disappear."

"Obviously, they have taken advantage of the false alarm to keep out of detention," said Mr. Silverson dryly. "Merry, I suppose, went with the rest?"

"Mais si."

"I had no doubt of it. I will help you in your search, sir."

"Zat is verree kind of you, sair!" said Monsieur Morny gratefully.

James Silverson's look was not exactly kind. Neither was he specially pleased when Redfern was discovered talking to fellows in the changing-room, and Racke of the Shell was rooted out of a box-room where there was a lingering aroma of cigarette-smoke. It was Tom Merry on whose track the Worm was so keen, and Tom Merry was not to be discovered anywhere within the walls of St. Jim's.

Clearly he had lost no time in getting out of gates, and out of gates went James, in the hope of spotting him.

COMING TO BLOWS!

TOM MERRY smiled, a cheery smile.

It was a glorious autumn afternoon, with a nip in the air—just the kind of day when a fellow longed to be out of doors.

Detention on such a day was really rough luck. Other fellows had made the most of the false alarm in the French class-room, and Tom did not see why he should not do the same.

He had kept his word to his chums, and gone in to extra. He had settled down to make the best of it. Now this unexpected chance had cropped up, and it was hardly to be expected that Tom was going to be the only fellow in the detention class to return to the detention-room of his own accord. Nobody else was going in again if he could help it, and Tom Merry was not going in again if he could help it, any more than any other fellow.

He walked cheerily by a footpath through brown autumnal woods, to follow the way his friends had gone, more than an hour ago, up the river. He did not take the direct path to the Rhyl, unwilling to fall in with any Sixth Form prefect who might know that he had been detained that afternoon.

If he met some person having authority who ordered him back, back he had to go. Naturally, he took his measures to avoid meeting any such person.

The woodland path he was following would take him to the river bank a mile from the school, and at that distance he expected the coast to be clear.

As for a row afterwards, that was a trifle. As a dozen fellows had done precisely the same thing, Tom was only one of a crowd. Silverson certainly would have picked on him had he been able to do so; but Silverson was not his Form-master, and had no power over him.

It was probable, indeed, that nothing at all would be done in the matter, for certainly Monsieur Morny had dismissed his class; and they could claim that they had been dismissed, and not ordered to go in again.

Anyhow, there was the half-holiday, after all, and Tom was going to make the most of it, like the other fellows who had scattered far and wide.

He sauntered along the footpath, whistling, and the gleam of the waters of the Rhyl was in sight ahead of him when he suddenly heard the sound of pattering footsteps behind.

He glanced round carelessly, rather expecting to see some other member of the detention class bound for the same destination.

Then his brow darkened.

It was James Silverson who was coming up the footpath at a rapid run.

Tom gave him a grim look.

Obviously, Silverson was on his track. It was absolutely no business of Silverson's; he was not Tom's Form-master; he had not been detention master; he was utterly unconcerned in the matter in any way. Nevertheless, it was certain that the Worm was going to make himself unpleasant, as usual.

Tom gave him one look, and walked on.

If Silverson interfered he was quite determined to give him no heed. He would have obeyed an order from Monsieur Morny to return, or an order from a Sixth Form prefect. He was not going to obey a man who had no just authority over him.

He tramped on.

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Patter, patter, patter! came the running feet behind.

"Stop!"

Tom did not heed the call.

"Merry! Stop at once!"

Tom tramped on, turning a deaf ear. The pattering feet drew closer, and James Silverson overtook him at last.

Breathless and gasping, the master of the Fourth swung into Tom's way, and then the junior had to stop.

His face flamed with anger and exertion. James was not in good condition for a foot race. He was seldom in good condition. Too many cigars and too many whiskies-and-sodas in the privacy of his study did not conduce to fitness, and James was in a very warm, moist, breathless, and uncomfortable state after his run.

"You young rascal!" he panted. "How dared you not stop when you heard me call to you!"

Tom gave him a look of cool contempt.

"You have no right to order me to stop, Mr. Silverson!" he retorted. "I've told you that before; now I'm telling you again!"

"You are out of detention!"

"No bisney of yours!"

"What?" gasped Mr. Silverson. "What?"

"Don't I speak plain English?" asked Tom.

"I said that it is no business of yours, Mr. Silverson!"

James panted for breath, and wiped a perspiring brow with a damp handkerchief.

"You impertinent young rascal!" he gasped.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Tom unceremoniously. "Do you think I don't know why you've butted in, James Silverson? You made it pretty plain, the day I saw you at Laurel Villa, in the hols. But you can't land me in a row with my Form-master this time—the detention class was dismissed, and so far as I know, not a fellow has gone back."

"The detention class was dismissed by mistake!"

"Monsieur Morny's mistakes are no business of yours!" said Tom coolly. "Why haven't you gone after the other fellows? Why me especially?" His lip curled with contempt.

"You will go back at once!" said Mr. Silverson.

"I shall do nothing of the kind."

"I order you back to the school!"

Tom Merry laughed contemptuously.

"You can order me till you're black in the face," he answered. "I shall not take the slightest notice of your orders, Mr. Silverson!"

James stood breathing hard.

"You have broken out of detention," he said venomously. "It is my duty to see that you return to the school at once."

"You're such a whale on duty!" said Tom.

"Why not hunt for some of the other fellows, and tell them that it is your duty to see that they return to the school at once?"

"Will you go back?"

"No!" answered Tom. "I won't!"

"If you refuse to go back, Merry, I shall walk you back to the school by your collar!"

Tom's eyes glinted.

"You'd better not try it on; Mr. Silverson!" he said quietly. "You're not my Form-master; you can report me to Mr. Linton, if you like, but you've no right or power to do anything else, as you jolly well know without my telling you! If you lay a hand on me, I shall knock it off."

"Do so!" said James grimly. "Whether I am

your Form-master or not, you young cub, you will be expelled if you raise your hand against a master of the school!"

"You'd like that!" said Tom, with bitter scorn. "You're a fool as well as a rotter, James Silver-son! Miss Fawcett would not turn me down, even if I were sacked from St. Jim's. Keep your distance——"

James Silverson did not keep his distance. He grabbed at Tom's collar, and grasped it.

Tom set his teeth.

"Will you let go?" he asked.

"I shall take you back to the school!"

"Let go my collar!"

"Come!"

Tom's clenched fist shot up, and fairly crashed on James' wrist. It was such a crack as might have come from a hammer, and James, with a yell of anguish, released his grasp on the junior's collar.

He stood clasping his right wrist with his left hand, spluttering with rage and pain.

Tom Merry backed away a step, his hands still clenched, his eyes gleaming. He had kept his word, and knocked off James' clutching hand. He was ready to knock it off again. Whatever the consequences might be, he would not allow James Silverson to lay hands on him, not if he was to be sacked from St. Jim's the same hour.

"You—you—you——" panted James.

"You had better leave me alone!" said Tom. "I've warned you, James Silverson, and you'd better keep your distance."

"You have struck me!" said James, in a voice husky with rage, but at the same time with a glitter of triumph in his eyes. "You will answer for it to your headmaster!"

"Crawl home like the cur you are, and tell Dr. Holmes that I knocked your cheeky paw off my collar!" said Tom. "Tell him, at the same time, that I called you a cur, and a rat, and a scheming worm!"

Panting with rage, James fairly hurled himself at the junior. He forgot even his wary cunning in his rage. Both hands grasped at Tom Merry and clutched him. Without the slightest hesitation, the junior struck out, a heavy thump landing on Silverson's chest—so hard and heavy that it jerked him off his feet, and he went backwards into the grass.

"Oh!" gasped Silverson.

He sat in the grass, spluttering.

Tom's eyes flashed at him.

"That's for you, you cur!" he said; and leaving Silverson sitting and spluttering for breath, he walked round him and went on his way.

THE MAN FROM THE SKY!

"OH!" breathed Tom Merry.

Looking up at the steely blue sky, Tom forgot his own troubles—on which his thoughts had been concentrated.

He had not given a single backward glance after leaving James Silverson sitting in the grass of the woodland path. James had not followed him farther, and he had no doubt that his enemy had gone back to the school.

Having reached the towpath of the Rhyl, Tom Merry did not proceed farther on his way. He

As Tom looked down he saw that it was a master who had got the ink. "Silver-son!" he breathed in horror.



stopped and leaned against a tree by the river, staring across the shining water in front of him, his boyish brow deeply corrugated with thought.

The spot for which a crowd of St. Jim's fellows had headed, that afternoon, to see the fallen enemy plane, was more than a mile farther on. Tom was no longer inclined to join the crowd there.

His mind was deeply troubled.

Breaking detention, in the circumstances, was a trivial matter—but what had happened since was far from trivial.

It was true that James Silverson had no authority over him—no right to order him back to the school, and much less to take him by the collar and march him back. But that, in the eyes of a headmaster, could be no excuse for a fellow raising his hand against a master. Tom had not exactly struck him—but he had thumped him on the chest to make him let go—and the distinction was a very fine one. What was the outcome going to be?

"The 'sack'!"

Ten to one, a hundred to one, he was going to be sacked when he got back to St. Jim's. His temper had flamed out at the grasp of Silverson's angry hands—and it had landed him in this!

It was what James had schemed for, planned for; not for the first time, he had played right into his enemy's hands. Yet what help had there been? When he thought over it, he knew that he would have done the same again rather than allow the man to march him off by the collar. And yet he knew that nothing could have suited James' game better.

With such thoughts in his mind, Tom had little inclination for the company of a crowd of fellows. He remained where he was, gloomily staring across the shining river at the woods beyond, stretching towards Abbotsford Air Camp. That false alarm, which had freed him from extra, had not been such a stroke of luck after all.

The roar of an aeroplane caused him to look upwards. Since the September days, planes had seemed as numerous as birds in the sky, and the drone of engines was almost always to be heard. Tom, like other fellows, often followed them in his thoughts, thinking of the brave men who piloted them, counting the direst perils as nothing in their country's cause. He watched the plane for some moments—realising that it was in some trouble. And the sudden knowledge that the man far above him was in danger was quite sufficient to banish the thought of his own troubles from his mind.

He stepped away from the tree on which he had been leaning, and stood with his head thrown back, staring up at the steely October sky.

Suddenly, from the plane high up, something dropped that looked like a toy in the distance. He knew what it was—a man abandoning the plane in a parachute; and with intent eyes and beating heart, he watched the parachute open and the drop like a stone become an easy descent.

The falling man was far away, over the tree-tops across the river. The plane was diving on, and looked like crashing on Tom's side of the Rhyl.

He stood breathless.

Another dot dropped from the whirling plane. The plane was low now—slanting down—and Tom, with a pang at his heart, dreaded that there was no time for the second man's parachute to open.

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Either it was that, or something was wrong with the apparatus, for the man shot down like a plummet of lead.

Tom Merry gave a sharp cry, unconscious of what he did. The fall meant death—sudden crashing death—a brave man blotted out like a snuffed candle.

Then his face lighted up as he saw that the falling body, shooting down like a stone, was directly above the river in front of him. The pilot was shooting down, not to hard earth that would have crushed him, but to water—and even as Tom panted with relief, there was a mighty splash as the falling man struck the surface of the Rhyl—with a force that shot him down to the bed of the river.

Another moment, and he was on the surface again. Tom Merry leaped to the edge of the bank to give a helping hand. He did not heed the last plunge of the plane, crashing in the woods at a distance.

He had a partial glimpse of a face that was like wax. He realised that the man was hurt.

At that point the Rhyl ran swift and strong. Under Tom's eyes the airman swept helplessly down the current, struggling feebly and dipping under.

A faint cry reached Tom's ears. Perhaps the man had seen him there on the bank, or perhaps he called from instinct.

"A moi! A moi! Au secours!"

He was calling for help in French. It was a French airman—the pilot of an Allied machine, making for Abbotsford Camp when disaster had come.

Then, as if remembering, even in that wild moment of peril, that he was in Angleterre, the man shouted in English:

"Help!"

Tom Merry had already flung off his cap, and was tearing off his jacket. Tom was a good swimmer, and there was only one thought in his mind at the moment—to go to the help of the fallen airman. The river was deep, the current was strong, but no thought of either was in the mind of the St. Jim's junior.

He dived from the bank and shot towards the drowning man like an arrow, cleaving the water with lightning strokes.

Swift as he was, and twice, thrice, he went under before Tom could reach him.

But the schoolboy's grasp was on him at last.

The man was going under again when Tom seized him and dragged him up.

"Hold on!" he panted.

Two dark eyes glistened at him from the water.

"Au secours!" came a faint, husky voice.

The man was hurt, and he was almost at the last gasp. His feeble struggle was ended. He would have gone down like a stone but for the schoolboy's grasp that dragged him back from death.

He held on to the St. Jim's junior. He was still conscious, and evidently quite cool in the very shadow of death, and Tom, with the man clinging to him, struck out for the bank.

Up to that moment the thought of peril to himself had not even crossed Tom's mind. Now he had to think of it, as he fought against the current to reach the shore.

Twice he was within reach of the bank. Once his grasp caught at a trailing root, but the root tore away in his hand. Each time the current eddied him out again.

Tom was as good a swimmer as any fellow at St. Jim's. He was at home in the water. But swimming in swimming garb was very different from swimming with his clothes on—soaked clothing and water-logged boots dragging him down, with a heavy and helpless burden added.

Tom shut his teeth as his head went under.

He came up again, still fighting hard. But the bank seemed terribly distant, and the trees were floating before his dizzy eyes.

He heard a husky whisper.

"Brave garçon! Pas utile—je m'en vais!"

"Hold on!" Tom panted. "Hold on, I tell you!"

The airman had said that it was useless—that he would let go. But at Tom's word he held on, and the St. Jim's junior put all his remaining strength into a fierce struggle to reach the bank.

By a miracle, it seemed, he reached it. His grasp fastened on a willow root, and it held.

"Hold on!" gasped Tom. "Hold on! O.K. now! Hold on!"

For a long minute he held to the willow, tossing in the current that strove to tear him away. Then he scrambled to the bank with the last spot of strength in his aching muscles, and dragged the airman ashore. Both of them sank down in the grass of the towpath, too utterly exhausted to stir.

MOSSOO'S BROTHER!

"**B**RAVE garçon!"

Tom heard a murmur at last from the man he had saved. For fully ten minutes they had lain in the grass, silent. But the airman raised himself on his elbow at last, his eyes on Tom, and murmured the words.

Tom Merry sat up dizzily.

That desperate struggle for life in the deep waters had left him utterly spent. But his strength was reviving. He sat up, drenched and dripping, and gave the Frenchman a faint smile.

"All right now!" he said.

"Mais oui! But yes! You save me the life!" said the Frenchman. He eyed Tom curiously.

"Vous etes ecolier, n'est-ce-pas—you are one schoolboy?"

"Yes," answered Tom. He made a gesture towards a grey old tower that showed over the tree-tops in the far distance. "That's my school—St. Jim's."

"St. Jim's!" repeated the Frenchman, as if the name of Tom's school was familiar to him.

"St. James' School, really, but we call it St. Jim's," said Tom, with a smile.

"Allons! Maintenant, je comprends! Now I understand. Zat is ze school where I have one brozzer."

Tom stared. There was, so far as he knew, no French fellow in any Form at St. Jim's.

"A brother—at St. Jim's!" he exclaimed.

The airman gave him a cheery grin.

"Oui, oui, ze old brozzer—not a garçon comme vous—pas dutout—ze old brozzer—le nom est Morny."

"Morny! Oh!" gasped Tom. He realised that the Frenchman was a young brother of Monsieur Morny, the French master at St. Jim's.

"Vous connaissez Monsieur Morny?" asked the airman. "You know Mistair Morny?"

Tom smiled again. "Mistair Morny" had been his detention master that afternoon!

"Yes, our French master," he answered. "We all like Monsieur Morny at St. Jim's."

"C'est ca! My brozzer!" said the Frenchman. "Ze old brozzer. I zink zat I see him when I am order to Angletterre, to Abbotsford Camp; but now—now I zink I shall be knock out—le jambe—ze leg is damage."

Tom struggled to his feet.

He had saved the French airman's life. But the man was hurt, though he gave no sign of wincing; he still needed help. Somehow he had to be got to Abbotsford Camp, for which he had been heading in his plane when the disaster occurred. The other man in the plane had landed safely with his parachute, but far beyond the tree across the river, out of sight.

"I shall get help as quickly as I can," said Tom.

"Merci bien! Brave garçon, you save me ze life!" said the airman. "Give me your name, so zat I tell my brozzer at your school when zat I speak telephoniquement."

"Tom Merry," answered the junior, smiling.

"I remember zat name—Tom Merrec—all ze life!" said the Frenchman. "Albert Morny will not forget zat name. Mais, allons, vat is to do?"

He stared round at the shining river and the sweeping brown woods. Not a building was in sight.

"Can I help you up?" asked Tom. "There's a road on the other side of that wood, and any passing car would give you a lift to the camp."

Morny made a grimace and shook his head.

"Ze leg he is damage," he answered. "It is not zat I can walk, and you, mon garçon, could not carry me so heavy."

"I'll cut across to the road and get help as quickly as I can," said Tom.

"C'est ca! Lose not ze time, zen!" assented Albert Morny.

Tom Merry cut off at once. He was hatless, and in his shirtsleeves, and drenched with water. His cap and jacket were on the bank far above the spot where he had landed with the rescued pilot. But he gave no heed to that. In the distance there was a glow of flame, where the fallen aeroplane was burning, more than a mile away. Tom cut off by a path through the wood, and in a few minutes reached the road on the other side.

There was no car in sight. Once the Abbotsford road had been almost alive with cars, but the petrol restrictions had cut down car traffic. Tom stared in either direction, longing to see a vehicle of some sort.

The first vehicle that came in sight was the cart of old Cripps, the local carrier, jogging on with his old horse.

Tom stepped into the road and waved his hand, and the ancient carrier pulled in, staring in astonishment at the St. Jim's junior.

"You been in the water, Master Tom?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, yes! Hold on, Mr. Cripps! There's a plane down—"

"I see 'un burning," said old Cripps, with a jerk of his whip towards the distant column of smoke and flame. "I be going to give word at the camp."

"The pilot's just by here. He fell into the river," said Tom. "Come and give me a hand to get him to your cart, Mr. Cripps, and carry him on to Abbotsford. He needs a doctor at once."

"You don't say, Master Tom!" ejaculated old Cripps. And ancient as the Rylcombe carrier was, he clambered down actively and tied his horse by the roadside.

"This way!" said Tom.

He hurried back through the wood to the tow-path, old Cripps at his heels. Albert Morny was lying where Tom had left him, smoking a cigarette as he lay.

"You have find somevun, mon garcon?" he said, as Tom reached him.

"Yes. Now we've got to get you to the road, where there's a cart waiting," answered Tom. "We can manage it between us."

"Allons donc!"

Old Cripps took the shoulders, Tom Merry the legs, and they lifted the airman. Even with the two of them it was no easy task to carry him to the road, and lift him into the carrier's cart. But they managed it with a combined effort, and Monsieur Morny was made as comfortable as possible on a heap of sacking which was all that the cart contained.

"Zat is O.K.!" said the Frenchman, with a wave of the hand to Tom, as old Cripps gathered up his reins. "Many zanks to you, mon garcon—zousand zanks!"

And the carrier's cart rolled off to Abbotsford, and Tom Merry was left by the roadside, looking after it till it disappeared. Then at last he turned and tramped away through the wood, heading for the spot where he had left his cap and jacket.

UP FOR THE SACK!

"YOU fellows heard?" burred Baggy Trimble.

Baggy was full of news.

He was at the gates when a little party of juniors came in—Manners and Lowther of the Shell, and Blake & Co. of the Fourth.

They were coming in in time for tea, after their trip up the river to see the German plane. They had seen it, though Manners, to his disappointment, had not been allowed to take photographs.

The detention class which had, after all, consisted of only three or four fellows, had been dismissed by that time. Baggy had had to go through extra, but he was consoled by the exciting news he heard when he came out—news that he was eager to pass on to fellows who had not yet heard it.

"Heard what?" yawned Blake. "Any news?"

"Yes, rather!" said Baggy impressively. "It's about Tom Merry."

"Tom!" exclaimed Manners. All the party took notice at once as soon as Tom's name was mentioned. "He was in extra all right. He told us—"

"He, he! Yes, he was, but he got out," grinned Baggy. And the fat Baggy proceeded to relate Mossoo's little mistake about the electric sweeper.

The juniors chuckled.

"Only four fellows got rounded up after the alarm," went on Baggy. "The others cleared off. They're going to make out that Mossoo dismissed them, you know—and I don't see what he can say. He jolly well did dismiss them!"

"Tom's one of those that cleared off, I suppose?" asked Manners.

"You bet!" grinned Baggy.

"Well, he's all right as the matter stands," said Monty Lowther. "Only one of a crowd, at any rate."

"You don't know yet what he's done," chuckled Baggy. "It's all over the school. You should have seen Silverson when he came in."

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"Silverson!" exclaimed Manners and Lowther together.

"Bai Jove! What had that wot Silvahson to do with it?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"He went after Tom Merry," explained Baggy Trimble.

"Like his cheek!" said Lowther. "And Tom's the man to tell him so!"

"He did more than tell him so, from what I hear," grinned Baggy. "He hit Silverson—"

"Wha-a-t!"

"Gweat pip!"

"Rot!"

"Pack it up, you fat fraud!"

"He jolly well did!" asserted Baggy. "A dozen fellows heard Silverson tell Railton when he came in. I believe he wanted fellows to hear. Anyhow, they jolly well did hear and it's all over the school. Tom Merry knocked him down, and—"

"Knocked Silverson down!" gasped Manners.

"Hit him right in the eye, I hear," said Baggy. "In fact, in both eyes. From what I hear, both Silverson's eyes are black."

"Rot!" snapped Manners.

"Well, you haven't heard, and I have," said Trimble. "I didn't see him when he came in, being in that mouldy extra, but I've heard. His nose was smashed in, too!"

"You fat chump!"

"Smashed right in!" roared Baggy indignantly. "And, from what I hear, some of his teeth were knocked out."

"Pile it on!" snorted Blake.

"I can jolly well tell you that his nose was blacked—I mean, his eye was blacked—blacker than the ink yesterday. From what I hear, all his front teeth went," declared Baggy.

"Any part of him that wasn't damaged?" snorted Herries.

"Well, he had a couple of thick ears, too," said Baggy.

"Only a couple?" asked Digby. "Sure he hadn't five or six?"

"Well, from what I heard—"

"Oh, bother you, and what you heard!" snapped Manners. "Look here! Is it true that Tom punched Silverson?"

"Haven't I just told you that he fairly smashed him up? Black eyes, nose caved in, teeth knocked out! And I can jolly well say—Yaroooh!"

That something had happened, and that it was something serious, Tom Merry's friends did not doubt, and it troubled them deeply. But it was plain that the worthy Baggy was wildly exaggerating; and Tom Merry's friends had no use for wild exaggerations at such a moment.

So they grasped the fat Baggy, and sat him down in the gateway, with a heavy bump.

Baggy bawled as he bumped.

"There, you fat chump!" snapped Manners.

"There, you burbling blitherer!" snorted Lowther.

"Ow! I tell you it's official. The Head's only waiting for him to come in to sack him!" spluttered Baggy.

The six juniors hurried on to the School House. They were deeply dismayed and alarmed.

More than once Tom Merry had lost his temper, under the catlike persecution of his enemy. More than once—many times—he had landed in trouble, because he could not check his angry indignation in dealing with the "Worm." Now it looked as if he had gone right off at the deep end.

They were anxious for news—more accurate than Baggy Trimble's.

They found Talbot of the Shell at the door of the House. His handsome face was deeply clouded.

"Seen Tom, you fellows?" he asked eagerly.

"No. We thought he was safe in extra," said Manners. "Has anything really happened with Tom and Silverson?"

"I'm afraid so. According to what a crowd of fellows heard the brute say to Railton, he came on Tom out of gates, a mile from the school. Happened to see him—"

"Yes, we know exactly how he happened to see him," said Manners, between his teeth. "The cur went after him, of course."

"Anyhow, he saw him, and ordered him back," said Talbot.

"He has no right to order a Shell fellow back," said Lowther fiercely. "The meddling cad!"

"The wotten, cheeky wat—"

"Well, he did, and, as Tom refused, he grabbed him by the collar, from what he was heard to say," said Talbot, "and Tom knocked him down—from what he said."

"You heard him say that?" gasped Blake.

"Yes. I was there when he talked to Railton."

"Knocked him down!" said Herries, with a whistle. "Serve the brute right, if you come to that, but—"

"But you can't knock a beak down," said Dig.

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus. "I would dwench the wottah with ink any day in the term; but you weally can't knock a beak down. I have been stwongly tempted many times to knock the bwute down, but it isn't done, you know."

"Most likely he was lying," said Blake. "I dare say Tom pushed him off, or something like that, and the cur calls it knocking him down."

"Tom hasn't come in yet?" asked Lowther.

Talbot shook his head.

"Didn't he come on after you?" he asked.

"We never saw him. Blessed if I know why he's still out of gates, as he never came after us. This is a go!" groaned Manners.

"That wottah has dwiven him to it!" said Arthur Augustus. "Poor old Tom Mewwy would

nevah have lost his tempah to such an extent if he had not been dwiven to it!"

"That's a cert!" said Blake. "But—"

"But—" murmured Herries.

"But you can't punch a beak," said Dig. "This will have to go before the Head. Bet you the Worm will see to that!"

"It's up to the Head already," said Talbot dismally. "Railton said that he would be taken to Dr. Holmes as soon as he returned to the school."

"That means the sack," muttered Blake.

Manners clenched his hands.

"And that means that that cur has got by with it," he said. "That's what he's been aiming at, and he's landed Tom at last."

They went into the House with clouded faces. Mr. Silverson's sharp voice called to them as they came in.

"Manners! Lowther! Where is Tom Merry?"

Manners and Lowther stared grimly at the master of the Fourth. Never had they detested the Worm of St. Jim's so deeply as at that moment, when it seemed that he held their chum in the hollow of his hand at last. They did not answer; they were not bound to answer the Fourth Form master's questions, and that, at least, they could make clear.

"Do you hear me, Manners?" snapped Silverson.

"I'm not deaf!" answered Manners.

"Will you answer my question?"

"No, I won't!"

"Same here!" said Monty Lowther.

Blake & Co. did not speak; they were in Silverson's Form. But the two Shell fellows made their remarks as unpleasant as they could.

Silverson's face flushed with rage. At that moment Mr. Linton came out of his study.

"Manners! Lowther! Has Merry come in with you?" he asked.

"No, sir!" answered Manners.

"Have you seen him out of gates?"

"No, sir!"

"Very well!"

Mr. Linton went back to his study, his face darkly overcast. The juniors could guess from his look that the master of the Shell was expecting an expulsion in his Form. He did not address

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Silverson or look at him; quite probably he was feeling as angry with the meddling master of the Fourth as the juniors were.

Mr. Silverson gave the juniors a dark look and went out into the quadrangle. He was keen to see Tom Merry come in—to pay his last visit to the Head's study and hear his sentence of expulsion from St. Jim's. More than once before the schemer of the school had felt himself near to success, but the cup had been dashed from his lips at the last moment. Now, at last, success was certain.

"Well," said Jack Blake, with a deep breath, when Silverson had gone, "this is a go!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The rotter!" breathed Manners.

"The cur!" said Lowther.

"The uttah wat and wapsallion!" said Arthur Augustus.

But there was little comfort in slanging Silverson. Tom Merry was up for the sack, and that fact was overwhelming to his friends. Any minute now he might walk in, and as soon as he appeared he was going to the Head—to be expelled from St. Jim's! That plotting rascality could triumph over truth and honour seemed an impossibility, and yet it looked as if the Worm had won his game.

ADVICE FROM AN EXPERT!

TOM MERRY came in at the gates only a few minutes before Taggles came down to lock them in the falling October dusk.

He looked tired, and he did not look very cheerful. He was still feeling the effects of that desperate struggle in deep waters. He had had

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to walk half a mile to a cottage to get his clothes dried, and he had rested there till it was necessary to return to the school to avoid being locked out. And he was expecting a first-class row when he got in.

Dozens of fellows in the quad spotted him at once when he came in. A good many were waiting at the gates to see him as soon as he appeared. Eyes turned on him from all sides.

But though he was expecting a row, Tom was not expecting—as he had at first—the sack. It was true that he had thumped Silverson, and that such an act was asking for the sack, especially as Silverson would make the very worst of it. But the rescue of the French airman had happened since then.

Tom was not the fellow to make capital out of what he had done. But it was a fact that, had he turned back to the school at James Silverson's order, Albert Morny would have been drowned in the depths of the Rhyl. He saw no reason why he should not state to the Head what had happened, to the extent that he had gone to the aid of a fallen Allied airman. He could not have done so had he not thumped Silverson and kept on his way.

There was, at least, a chance in this, and Tom hoped that it might prove a winner. But his mood was not very cheerful, and he was not in the best of tempers when he tramped in at the gates. He was, in fact, in a mood to handle Silverson again in precisely the same way if the man asked for it.

"Bai Jove! Heah you are at last, old chap!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as his eyeglass spotted Tom Merry, and he came hurrying up.

"Here I am!" agreed Tom.

"Did you hit Silverson?" almost gasped Manners. "Everybody's saying here that you knocked the brute down."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I expected him to shout it all over the school!" he answered.

"But did you?" exclaimed Lowther.

"He sat down," answered Tom. "He seemed to have a fancy for sitting down in the grass. He was rather tired, I think, after cutting after me."

The juniors stared at him.

"But you hit him!" exclaimed Blake.

"A thump on the chest," said Tom coolly—"two thumps, in fact. First I knocked his cheeky paw off when he had the impudence to grab my collar; then I thumped him on the chest when he clutched hold of me. He sat down, and I left him sitting."

"Oh!" gasped the juniors.

"He's been to the Head about it," said Herries.

"He would!" agreed Tom.

"The way he puts it is that you knocked him down," said Dig.

"I suppose it would come to that," admitted Tom. "I didn't exactly knock the cur down; I thumped him off, and he sat down. But if he'd tried it on again I should have let him have it right in the eye, so I suppose it comes to much the same thing."

"Bai Jove!"

"It's the sack, old man!" groaned Manners. "We know the brute asked for it, and wouldn't take 'No' for an answer; but—"

"The Head's waiting to see you, Tom!" muttered Lowther.

Tom nodded.

"I guessed that one," he answered. "I'm ready to see him. Always a pleasure to see such a benevolent, old bean!"

"Tom!"

Tom Merry laughed again.

"Don't you worry," he said. "I've still got a card to play. I don't think the Worm will wriggle away with it this time. If he does it can't be helped. I'd thump him again if he laid hands on me! There's a limit, and that's the limit!"

"Are you going to tell the Head that?" asked Racke, with a grin.

Tom glanced at Aubrey Racke.

"Certainly, if he asks me!" he said.

"Looked out your train home?" asked Racke.

"I say, Tommy, old chap, suppose you tell the Head it was an accident?" suggested Baggy Trimble.

"It wasn't," answered Tom.

"I know it wasn't, but the Head doesn't," explained Baggy. "I mean to say, you have to stretch it a bit when you're up before the big beak. Suppose you say your foot slipped, and you fell against him by accident—what?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You uttass, Twimble, dwy up!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Well, I'm only giving the chap good advice!" said Baggy warmly. "I don't want to see Tom Merry sacked, if you do. I think he's a good sort."

"Thanks!" said Tom, laughing.

"Well, I do," said Baggy stoutly; "and if it was any use I'd be ready to bear witness that you weren't there at all!"

"Wha-at?"

"If it's any good I'll come with you to the Head, and swear that you were in my study at the time, and went out afterwards!" declared Baggy. "Then he might think that Silverson made a mistake. If you think it will do any good I'll do that much for you, old fellow."

Tom stared at the fat Baggy. Evidently Trimble was inspired by friendly motives; he really did not want to see Tom sacked. But Tom was not likely to accept that extraordinary offer of aid.

"Much obliged, Baggy!" he said, with a chuckle. "But it wouldn't be any good, old fat frump!"

"You uttass, Twimble——"

"You shut up, D'Arcy!" said Baggy. "Look here, Tom Merry, what are you going to tell the Head?"

"Just what happened," answered Tom.

"Well, it's not sense to ask for the sack," said Baggy. "You'll have to spin some sort of a yarn. Can't you see that? I'm pretty good at it, and I'll help you make one up, if you like, before you see the beak."

"Oh, I've got a yarn to spin, thanks!" said Tom.

He caught sight of James Silverson, who had spotted him in the crowd near the gates, and was coming up. Deliberately he spoke loudly enough for James to hear.

"Oh! What is it?" asked Baggy eagerly. "Tell me what you're going to say, and I'll tell you whether it's any good."

"Shut up, you burbling ass!" hissed Manners.

"Shan't!" retorted Baggy. "The poor chap's up for the sack, and he's in need of good advice! And you jolly well know that when it comes to spinning a yarn to a beak, nobody in the Fourth has a thing on me."

"Oh, I'll tell you!" said Tom, still with the corner of his eye on the master of the Fourth.

"Suppose I saved a man's life while I was out this afternoon."

"Tom!" gasped Manners, while Lowther stared blankly.

Baggy shook his head.

"Too thick!" he answered. "Altogether too dramatic! You can't spring film stuff on a headmaster. That won't wash."

"Think not?" asked Tom.

"Sure not!" declared Baggy. "I've had some experience in this sort of thing, you know, and I know what will go down and what won't! Schoolmasters won't swallow anything of that kind—it's too rich a mixture, if you know what I mean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I think I shall stick to that!" said Tom. "I haven't had your experience, Baggy, and a fellow can only do his best."

James Silverson was no longer approaching. He was hovering at a little distance—drinking all this in. Hardly a fellow noticed him in the offing, all eyes being fixed on Tom Merry.

"Well, look here," said Baggy. "My advice is, drop it—and I'm a fellow that knows. But if you stick to that yarn, old chap, the Head will ask you for details—have you thought of that?" Baggy shook his head again. "Of course, if the big beak did believe that you had saved a man's life, it would make a lot of difference—they couldn't sack a man who had done that!"

"I hope not!" agreed Tom, while his friends stared at him in blank amazement, unable to make head or tail of this.

"But it wants some getting down!" urged Trimble. "It's a bit too improbable, you know. Still, I've found that even a steep yarn will go down, if the trimmings are well worked out. But you have to have it all pat! For goodness' sake, don't forget that, old fellow."

"I won't!" promised Tom.

"F'rinstance, the Head will say at once, where did it happen?" said Baggy. "Have you got that ready for him?"

"Quite! What about a man falling into the Rhyll, and I helped him out?" said Tom gravely.

"Not bad," admitted Baggy thoughtfully. "Not bad at all. But the Head would want to ask the man—and how are you going to account for him not being available?"

"Suppose he was a foreigner!" suggested Tom. "Say, a Frenchman!"

"Well, there aren't a lot of foreigners about, except French air chaps at Abbotsford Camp," said Baggy. "And if you made it one of them——"

"That's the idea!" said Tom. "A French airman going to Abbotsford Camp—won't that wash all right, Baggy?"

"Look here——" said Manners.

"Tom, old chap——" muttered Lowther.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Let Baggy speak!" said Tom. "Baggy knows this game from A to Z. What's your opinion, Baggy?"

"Well, it's pretty thin," said Baggy. "I've heard that there was a French plane crashed this afternoon, and the men in it came down by parachute—I suppose that's what put this into your head?"

"That's what!" agreed Tom. "Exactly."

"They might inquire at the camp," said Baggy. "The camp's on the phone—old Morny rings them up every day to hear whether a

relation of his has got there. The Head might ring up the air camp!"

"He might!" assented Tom.

"Well, that would put the kybosh on," said Baggy. "Are you going to risk that?"

"I shall have to, in the circumstances," answered Tom.

"Well, it's awfully thin," said Baggy. "I'd advise you to make it a kid upset from a boat. That's more touching, and a bit more probable."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thanks for your advice, old fat bean," said Tom, laughing. "But I'm not an expert at this game. I may do better with a bit more practice, but this time I shall stick to the French airman, and chance it."

"You won't get by!" said Baggy. "Look here—"

"Shut up, you burbling ass!" breathed Jack Blake. "There's Silverson sneaking round—taking it all in!"

"Oh, jiminy!"

"Silverson's welcome to hear, as far as I'm concerned!" said Tom Merry. "I don't mind in the least."

A dozen fellows looked round at Silverson. James came through the crowd towards Tom Merry.

"So you have returned!" he said grimly.

"You've known that for a good five minutes, Mr. Silverson, as you have been standing there listening!" answered Tom coolly.

"Follow me at once to your headmaster!"

"I don't know how many times I've told you, Mr. Silverson, that I'm not under your orders!" answered Tom. "I'll tell you again, though, if you like! I shall not follow you to the headmaster, or anywhere else."

James' eyes glittered green at him. He made a movement as if to grasp the captain of the Shell by the collar.

Tom did not recede an inch, but his hands clenched, and his eyes glinted.

"Hands off, Mr. Silverson!" he said quietly. "If you put your paws on me, you'll take the consequences."

James breathed hard and deep. Probably he would have been glad enough to see Tom repeat his reckless action, in sight of half the school. But he had no excuse whatever for laying hands on the captain of the Shell now—and it would have been rather too palpable. Mr. Linton, who had now seen Tom in the quad, was coming from the direction of the School House.

"Here is the boy, sir!" said James, as the master of the Shell came up. "I have already told him to go to the headmaster, and he has refused, with his usual insolence."

Mr. Linton gave him an icy look.

"I see no reason whatever why you should intervene, Mr. Silverson!" he answered. "Now that Merry is here, I am quite able to deal with him, and it is unnecessary for you to give orders to boys in my Form. Merry, follow me at once to your headmaster."

"Yes, sir!" answered Tom.

He followed Mr. Linton into the School House—James bringing up the rear, with tight lips. And a crowd of dismayed juniors followed on—Baggy Trimble shaking his fat head very seriously. Baggy had been kindly willing to help—and he could only regret that Tom Merry had refused to take the advice of an expert!

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Tom struck out without hesitation as Silverson opened the headmaster's chest, sending the contents flying.

TOM FACES THE MUSIC!

DR. HOLMES glanced very keenly at Tom Merry as he followed his Form-master into the august presence.

It was rather a new experience for Tom to be "sent up" to the Head; but during that term the headmaster had heard a good deal about him, and he had not been pleased by what he had heard.

Fellows were not expected to give too much trouble, and Tom Merry seemed to have been giving trouble, in one way or another, almost ever since the term had started.

Now the climax had come, and sorry as the Head was to deal drastically with a junior who, until recently, had been regarded on all sides as a credit to his House and his school, he felt that he had no choice in the matter.

Obviously, no fellow in any school could be allowed to raise his hand against a master—even admitting provocation. Such things were not done, and could not be done. And the Head, totally unaware that James was anything but an ordinary temporary master obtained from the usual agency, did not suppose that there had been any special provocation.

It seemed to him, as it seemed to Tom's House-master and to many others, that Tom Merry was out of hand that term—that he was discontented, mutinous, regardless of authority, and a trouble all round. Now he had gone over the limit, and there was only one possible outcome.

"Here is Merry, sir!" said Mr. Linton very quietly. The master of the Shell was more



... came at him. His blow landed on the Fourth Form
... nding him reeling backwards

grieved than angry—his anger, indeed, was turned more towards Mr. Silverson than towards the offender. What Tom had done admitted of no excuse in the eyes of his Form-master; yet it could not have happened had James Silverson minded his own business, as Mr. Linton had once plainly requested him to do.

"Merry!" said the Head in a deep voice. "You are accused of having struck a member of my staff. Have you anything to say?"

"Yes, sir!"

Tom's heart was beating rather hard, but he was quite cool and collected. If there was a chance of getting through this, he was not going to lose it.

"I will hear you!" said Dr. Holmes. "I have heard some bad reports of you this term, Merry, but I never expected anything of this kind. Whatever you have to say, I will hear it."

"I would like to ask you, sir, and Mr. Linton, whether the master of another Form has the right to give orders to boys in the Shell!" said Tom.

He caught the glint in Linton's eye. He had touched the right chord, so far as the master of the Shell was concerned.

But the headmaster's face was cold and grim.

"In the circumstances, Merry, as Mr. Silverson found you breaking detention, he had a right to order you back to the school," he said. "I should have expected the same of any master."

James smiled faintly. He was safe there.

"It appears that you refused to obey the order, Merry," said Dr. Holmes.

"I did, sir," said Tom. "Mr. Linton will tell you that I have never disobeyed an order from him."

"That is certainly true," said the master of the Shell at once, "and I feel it my duty to say, sir, that I have resented Mr. Silverson's interference in matters connected with my Form, and have requested him to refrain from such interference. This unhappy affair could not have occurred if he had heeded my request, as I had a right to expect."

"In the circumstances, sir, finding a boy out of detention, in defiance of all authority—" said Mr. Silverson.

"This is not the first time," retorted Mr. Linton, "and when Merry refused to obey your injunction to return to the school you should have left the matter where it was and reported him to me. You had no right whatever to lay hands on a boy in my Form!"

"That undoubtedly is correct, and I must express my regret that you did so, Mr. Silverson," said the Head. "It is very much to be regretted that you overstepped your own province to such an extent."

James took that in silence.

"But that does not alter the fact," went on the Head in a deeper voice, "that the boy raised his hand against a master."

"Unfortunately it does not," admitted Mr. Linton.

"For this, Merry—"

"I had no choice, sir," said Tom stubbornly. "I was not going to be dragged back to the school by my collar. I should do the same again."

"Merry!"

"That's the truth, sir!" said Tom steadily. "If I stay at this school, and that man lays hands on me again, I shall make him take them off. Mr. Linton has never treated a fellow in such a way—no other master in this school has till Mr. Silverson came. If he had let me alone there would have been no trouble."

"You will not remain at this school, Merry," said the headmaster coldly. "After what you have done that is impossible. I am sorry, and still more sorry to give pain to the estimable lady who is your guardian, but such an outbreak of insubordinate temper is beyond pardon."

Tom drew a deep breath.

"Have you anything more to say?" asked Dr. Holmes.

"Yes, I've something more to say, sir," answered Tom. "If I had obeyed an order which Mr. Silverson had no right to give, and if I had allowed him to drag me back to the school by the collar, a man would have been drowned in the Rhyll this afternoon."

"What?"

"Merry!" ejaculated Mr. Linton.

A sneering smile came over James' face. He had been expecting this, after what he had heard in the quad. He could only wonder at Tom's nerve in carrying on with that yarn when he knew that Silverson had overheard his discussion with Baggy Trimble.

"There was an accident to a French plane this afternoon, sir," said Tom. "The plane came down and was burned—"

"I have heard of this," said Dr. Holmes. "But what—"

"One of the airmen fell into the Rhyll. He dropped when the plane was low, and his parachute did not open. I helped him out," said Tom.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"Was the man in danger when you helped him out, Merry?" asked Mr. Linton, with a very curious glance at the captain of his Form.

"Yes, sir. His leg was damaged and he was tangled up, and he had no chance of swimming. He would have been drowned if I had not got hold of him and helped him on to the bank."

Of his plunge into the deep water, of his desperate struggle for life, Tom said nothing, and intended to say nothing. Not to save himself from the sack would he have told of what he had done. He had helped the French airman out of the river, and he left it at that.

A silence in the Head's study followed his words. It was broken by James Silverson's sardonic voice.

"I beg you, sir, to pay no attention to this boy's barefaced falsehoods," he said. "Nothing of the kind occurred."

The Head started and looked at him.

"And how," snapped Mr. Linton, "can you possibly know anything of the kind, Mr. Silverson? Were you on the spot?"

"I was not. But I was on the spot when I heard this boy concocting the story with another untruthful young rascal," said James, with a bitter sneer. "It is false from beginning to end."

"Merry—" began the Head. He paused.

"It is perfectly true, sir," said Tom calmly. "Mr. Silverson misunderstood what he heard in the quad. He very often does misunderstand what he hears behind fellows' backs."

"Merry!" exclaimed the Head.

"Dr. Holmes"—James' voice trembled with rage—"I repeat that I heard this boy concocting the story—a crowd of other boys heard him—and the boy he was consulting, Trimble, even advised him to drop it, as too improbable, and further advised him to say that it was a child in a boat and not an airman at all. Send for Trimble, sir, and question him before you think of placing faith in this unscrupulous boy's falsehoods."

Dr. Holmes drummed on his table with his slim fingers for a moment or two. He was obviously puzzled and perturbed.

"Merry," he said at last, "if you gave aid to an airman in distress and danger, I should be bound to take it into consideration. It would be no excuse for your action—your mutinous action—yet if the result of your disobedience was to save a man's life, the life of a brave man allied to this country, I am bound to feel glad that you were there on the spot. But—"

"But it is quite untrue, sir!" said James. "It is an impudent fabrication from beginning to end, concocted in the hearing of a crowd of boys."

"That," said the Head grimly, "is what we shall ascertain. I shall send for the boy you have named, Mr. Silverson, and question him. And if I find, Merry, that you have been attempting to delude me, you leave the school within the hour."

He touched the bell, and the House page was despatched for Trimble of the Fourth.

BAGGY BEFORE THE BEAK!

BAGGY TRIMBLE trundled into the Head's study with a slightly uneasy expression on his fat face.

In the quad Baggy had been full of beans—far from the Head and his keen eyes. He had been sympathetic; he had meant what he said; he was ready to do anything to help Tom Merry out of his scrape, and Baggy's idea of helping him ran

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naturally to telling fibs—that being Baggy's invariable method when in a fix. Generously Baggy was prepared to place his unlimited powers of fibbing at Tom's service.

But when it came to translating words into deeds, Baggy felt a qualm. His tongue, in fact, was longer than his heart was stout. Sent for to the Head's study, Baggy had no doubt that Tom had accepted his offer of witnessing on his behalf, and Baggy was in considerable trepidation.

"Trimble," said the Head, his eyes fixed on Baggy's uneasy fat face, "I desire to put some questions to you. It appears that Merry was discussing with you in the quadrangle a certain statement that he intended to make to me."

"Oh, no, sir!" said Baggy. "Nothing of the kind, sir. I don't remember seeing Tom Merry when he came in, sir. Besides, I only wanted to help a chap out of a row. I—I was so sorry he was going to be sacked, sir."

"Tell your headmaster the truth, Trimble!" said Mr. Silverson sternly.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Mr. Silverson heard you discussing this matter with Merry, Trimble," said the Head sternly.

"I—I couldn't help that, sir!" stammered Baggy. "Mr. Silverson walks about so quietly, sir, that a fellow never knows whether he's just behind him."

"Wha-at?" ejaculated the Head.

"I never knew Mr. Silverson was there, sir, till a fellow suddenly saw him," pleaded Baggy. "And I was only giving Tom Merry some advice, sir."

"Did Tom Merry say that he had a yarn to spin, Trimble?" demanded Mr. Silverson. "Did he use those very words?"

"Oh jiminy!" groaned Baggy.

"Answer, Trimble!" exclaimed the Head.

Baggy gave Tom a dolorous look. All his courage—such as it was—had petered out by this time. He was unwilling to let Tom Merry down, but he was palpitating with dread.

"Don't be an ass, Trimble!" said Tom, half-smiling. "Tell the Head everything. Why shouldn't you?"

"Oh!" gasped Baggy. "You—you don't mind?"

"Not in the least!"

"Oh, all right, then!" gasped Baggy, in great relief.

"You need not speak to Merry, Trimble," said the Head severely. "Answer me at once! Merry used the words Mr. Silverson has mentioned?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Baggy.

The Head's face grew grimmer. There was distress in Mr. Linton's. Tom Merry stood quiet and calm.

"And what was the story that Merry intended to tell me, Trimble?" asked Dr. Holmes quietly.

"You—you don't mind, Tom Merry?" gasped Baggy.

"Not at all."

"Well, it was about a French airman falling into the river, sir," said Baggy. "I—I advised him not to try to put it across, didn't I, Merry?"

"You did," assented Tom.

"I—I said it was no good trying film stuff like that on a beak, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did."

"I—I meant to be giving him good advice, sir," groaned Baggy. "A fellow might stretch a point—but what's the use of piling it on too thick? That's how I looked at it, sir."

"And Merry persisted that he would tell exactly that story to Dr. Holmes?" said James Silverson.

"Yes, sir," mumbled Baggy. "You did, didn't you, Tom?"

"I did," said Tom.

"Did you advise Merry, in your own words, to make it a kid in a boat, instead of an airman from a plane?" asked Mr. Silverson grimly.

"Well, I—I thought he had better make it a bit more probable, sir," stammered Baggy. "I mean, it isn't easy to pull the Head's leg."

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Holmes. He was gazing hard at the fat and fatheaded Baggy.

"And what did Merry say?" further inquired Mr. Silverson.

"You—you don't mind if I tell the Head, Tom?" groaned Baggy.

"Go ahead!"

"He—he said he would stick to the French airman, and—chance it, sir!" moaned Baggy. "I thought it sheer rot—altogether too thick. Piling it on like that is simply asking for it. But—"

"I think, sir, that the matter is now sufficiently clear," said Mr. Silverson.

"It certainly appears so," said Dr. Holmes. "If you were not concocting this story, Merry, with Trimble's assistance, why did you discuss the matter with him at all?"

"I will tell you, sir," said Tom, with perfect coolness, "I knew that Mr. Silverson was listening, and I talked as I did to make a fool of him."

"What!" exclaimed the Head.

"I thought that if he chose to hang about, listening, I would give him something to listen to," said Tom, in the same cool tone. "Trimble thought I was making up a yarn, but in actual fact I was telling him exactly what occurred. I did help a French airman out of the river this afternoon, though Trimble can't believe that I did, and Mr. Silverson doesn't choose to."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Dr. Holmes.

"If Mr. Silverson chooses to walk about like a cat, and listen to what fellows are saying to one another, he must expect to get his leg pulled, sir," said Tom. "I was pulling it, that is all. I let Trimble run on simply to let Mr. Silverson hear me, and draw his own conclusions."

James' face was a picture as he heard that.

Tom Merry was not mincing his words. He did not intend to mince them. James Silverson was a spy and a listener, and Tom Merry said so, in plain English.

"Then," said Mr. Linton, breaking in, "you adhere to your statement, Merry, in spite of what Mr. Silverson heard you saying to Trimble?"

"Certainly, sir!" answered Tom.

Dr. Holmes made Trimble a sign to leave the study. Baggy vanished like a ghost at cock-crow. Never had he been so glad, and so prompt, to get out of a study.

Then the Head fixed his eyes on the captain of the Shell.

"You have made an improbable statement, Merry," he said icily, "and it now appears that you discussed that improbable statement in advance, with a boy who is utterly untruthful. Your explanation is that you did so with a view of deluding a master who was near at hand—an explanation that adds to your offences."

"I have told the exact truth, sir," said Tom quietly. "I have explained why I talked to Trimble as I did."

"That may, or may not, be correct," said Dr. Holmes grimly. "But even if true, it adds to your offences, as I have said."

"Merry may be able to offer proof, sir," said Mr. Linton.

It was his last word in favour of the captain of his Form.

"Proof of something that certainly never occurred," said Mr. Silverson, with a curl of the lip.

"I must decline to hear anything further from Merry, Mr. Linton," said the Head. "And I must now decide—"

The Head was interrupted.

There was a knock, or rather a bang, at the door. It hurtled open. The three masters and Tom Merry stared round in surprise as Monsieur Morny bounded into the study like a jack-in-the-box.

"Le garçon est ici—ze boy is here!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny. "Zey tell me zat he is here viz himself."

"Monsieur Morny," exclaimed the Head angrily, "what—"

"Pardonnez moi, sair—mille pardons—zousand excuses!" spluttered Mossou. "I hear zat he is here—zat zere is trouble for zat so brave boy. I come here viz speed of ze most rapid. I fly, I bunk, sair! Ce brave garçon! Ce brave Merree!"

And the excitable little gentleman, heedless of the Head's astounded stare, darted at Tom Merry and embraced him, and kissed him on both cheeks. Tom gasped and wriggled, and the Head, the master of the Shell, and James Silverson gazed on at that remarkable scene with wide-open eyes.

TOM MERRY'S TRIUMPH!

"MONSIEUR MORNY!" the Head almost thundered.

"Ce brave garçon!"

"What does this mean?"

"Zis brave Merree!"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

"Zis garçon so brave!" spluttered Monsieur Morny. "Zis garçon zat save ze life of my brozzer!"

"What nonsense is this?" exclaimed Mr. Silverson.

"And you are not drown, you brave Merree!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny. "You are not damage. It is to touch and to go, but you are not drown, and my brozzer he is not drown. Brave garçon!"

"Will you tell me what all this means, Monsieur Morny?" exclaimed Dr. Holmes. "What all—"

"Allons! Mais oui! My brozzer tell me what come to happen, sair," said Monsieur Morny.

"Your brother?" repeated the Head. "I was not aware that you had a brother in this country. And what—"

"Zat brozzer, zis morning, he is in France," said Monsieur Morny. "Zat brave Albert, mon frere tres jeune—ze young brozzer, sair. Zis morning he is in France, but he come ovaïr, sair, to ze air camp in ze plane, and zat plane, sair, he go bang!"

"Bless my soul!" said Dr. Holmes. "I have heard that a French plane crashed a few miles from here this afternoon. Do you mean to say that your brother was the pilot, Monsieur Morny?"

"Mais oui. But yes, sair. And ze moment zat I dismiss ze detention class zis afternoon, I am call telephoniquement from ze air camp at Abbotsford, and it is my brozzer's voice zat I hear on ze telephone. Mon brave Albert!"

"But—"

"He is hurt—he is damage. He have what you call in English one kybosh," explained Monsieur Morny. "On ze hospital bed he speak telephoniquement, and I rush to Mr. Railton, sair, and I beg him to drive ze car of ze most rapid zat I may see mon pauvre frere—my poor brozzer. Zat good Railton he make vat you call ze fur to fly. He rush, he whiz, he bunk verree fast, and I am at ze camp, sair, and at ze bedside of my brozzer."

Monsieur Morny paused for breath; but only for a moment.

"He tell me, sair, what come to go to happen," he went on. "When zat ze plane plunge, ze ozzer man he drop viz vun parachute, and he is safe, but my brozzer, sair, he fell into ze river, and he is damage, and he sink; he go to drown, and he is one dead man but for zat brave garcon Merree."

"Oh!" said the Head.

"Oh!" said Mr. Linton.

Tom Merry smiled at the expression that came over Mr. Silverson's face. It was such a look as a cat might have had when it saw a mouse escaping from its claws.

"Pray calm yourself, Monsieur Morny," said the Head, "and let me know precisely what has occurred? Merry has stated that he gave assistance to, a French airman from the fallen plane, but—"

"That statement is now amply confirmed, sir!" said Mr. Linton.

James bit his underlip hard.

"It certainly appears so," said the Head. "But—"

"He have tell you zat he help!" exclaimed Monsieur Morny. "He tell you zat he plunge in ze vatter—"

"No, he has not told me that," said Dr. Holmes. "He has stated that he helped the airman out of the river, that is all."

"Ah! He do not tell you all, zen! But my brozzer, he tell me all!" gasped Monsieur Morny. "He tell me everyzing, and he tell me how almost zat brave Merree lose him ze life to save him."

"What?"

"And I come back to ze school, sair, to see zat brave Merree, to zank him, sair, zat he save ze life of my brozzer, and I hear zat he is viz you, sair, and zere is trouble!" panted Monsieur Morny. "So I come here, sair—I rush—I fly—I come to beg you, sair, to pardon zat brave Merree—I will beg you, sair, on ze knee—"

"Please do nothing of the kind, Monsieur Morny!" exclaimed the Head hastily. "Calm yourself and tell me—"

"But yes, sair! Albert, he tell me all!" gasped Monsieur Morny. "He is in ze vatter, he is to zink, he is to drown, and zat brave garcon he can swim, he help—and almost, sair, he go down to death viz my brozzer! My brozzer he tell me—he say to zat garcon zat he let go, so zat two life be not lost—but sat boy, sair, zat brave Merree, he say 'Hold on!' and at last, sair, he save my brozzer and he save himself—but it is what you call a touch and a go—zey are bofe so near to death zat it is a touch and a go—"

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"Merry has told me nothing of this," said the Head.

"He tell you not zat he go almost to la mort—to ze death—to save my brozzer!"

"He has said nothing of the kind."

"Ah, ca! Zat is like ze brave garcon—he would not what you call swank," said Monsieur Morny. "He say nozzing—but zis day, sair, it is almost zat he go to death to save mon frere—my brozzer!"

Monsieur Morny turned towards Tom Merry, evidently intending to embrace him again.

Tom backed away rather in haste.

"Mon brave garcon!" trilled Monsieur Morny. "I zank you from ze top of my heart! It is because of you zat my brozzer he live! Merci, merci, merci, cent mille fais—zanks and zanks and zanks a hundred zousand time!"

"Merry," said the Head, "you should have told me this!"

"I told you that I had helped a French airman out of the river, sir," said Tom.

"You should have told me more! You have risked your life to-day to save a life—it is from that that you have returned!" exclaimed the Head, deeply moved. "Whatever else you have done, you have acted bravely and nobly—you have saved a brave and valuable life!"

He paused and turned to Mr. Silverson.

"Mr. Silverson, in view of this, I have no doubt that you are willing, indeed eager, to overlook Merry's actions this afternoon, and to dismiss the whole affair from your mind," he said.

James Silverson did not dare to let his face express his feelings. He did not dare to tell the Head what he thought of him. But it was not easy for him to hide his bitter and malicious disappointment. His answer came through his teeth.

"Even if this is correct, sir—"

"If!" repeated the Head. "You have heard Monsieur Morny's statement, Mr. Silverson. What do you mean?"

James realised that, in his bitter anger and malice, he had made a false step.

"I—I mean, granting that this is correct, it makes no difference to Merry's offence, sir—that he has struck a master—"

The icy look on the Head's face checked him.

"I am surprised at this, Mr. Silverson," said Dr. Holmes. "I certainly expected you to take my view—that a gallant action, involving risk of life, should be regarded as obliterating that offence. We must all be thankful that Merry was on the scene at the time, as he could not have been had you forced him to return to the school—an action on your part, sir, which, as Mr. Linton has remarked, was quite outside your duties here."

James seemed about to choke for a moment.

"If you do not agree with me, Mr. Silverson, I am sorry!" went on the Head. "But I shall, nevertheless, act according to my own judgment! Merry, I must warn you to be more careful on future occasions—but the present matter is entirely dismissed, and will not be referred to again. You agree, Mr. Linton?"

"Most decidedly, sir!" said the master of the Shell.

"Merry, the matter is at an end. You may leave my study."

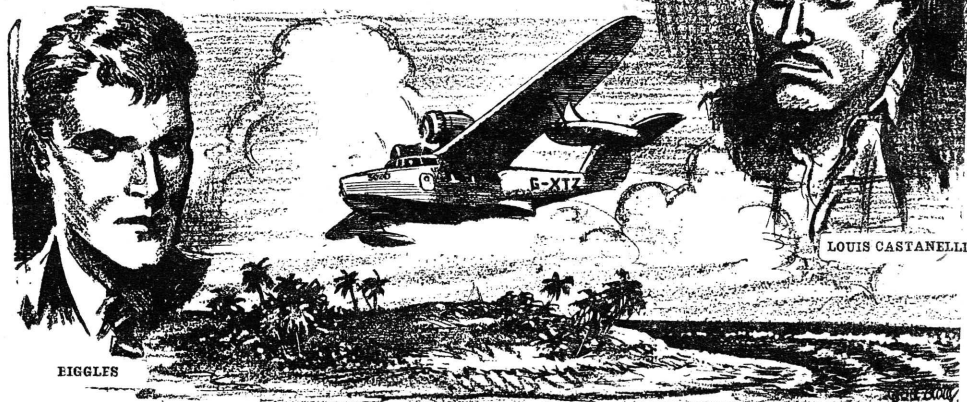
"Thank you, sir!" said Tom.

And he left the Head's study, dodging another embrace from Monsieur Morny as he went.

(Continued on page 36.)

BIGGLES & CO. GIVE CASTANELLI A SHOCK—AND THE CORSICAN RETURNS THE COMPLIMENT!

BIGGLES' SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!



By CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS.

THE RESCUE PARTY!

HAVING discovered a rich pearl-bed in the South Seas, Sandy Macaster, a Scotsman, enlists the help of Major James Bigglesworth, and his two companions, Ginger Hebblethwaite and the Hon. Algernon Lacey, in financing an expedition.

Biggles & Co. thereupon buy a flying-boat, the Seud, and depart for the South Seas.

Louis Castanelli, the crook skipper of a schooner trading among the islands, also knows about the pearl-bed, but he is unaware of its exact position. So he kidnaps Shell Breaker, a young Marquesan who, with his girl friend, Full Moon, once rescued Sandy from a small atoll near the pearl-bed.

Biggles & Co. arrive at Rutuona, the island home of Shell Breaker, having decided first to rescue the Marquesan from Castanelli.

Suddenly a warrior dashes up to say that Castanelli is coming in his schooner. Sandy and Biggles go down to the beach to see what is happening.

There was no need to go far, for most of the village had assembled on the beach, and the warriors were chattering with excitement.

Sandy listened for a moment or two to the natives' talk.

"That's awkward," he said, turning to the others. "It's Castanelli all right, but he has put into a bay on the far side of the island. I ought to have thought of that. He is probably afraid to come in here in case somebody sticks a spear into him. Some of the young bloods are talking about doing it. I've told them not to; we don't want murder done—at least, not while we're here."

"Well, what's the best thing to do?" asked Biggles. "How far is it round the coast to this bay?"

"You can't get round the coast—except, of course, by canoe. I should say it would be between fifteen and twenty miles."

Biggles whistled.

"As much as that? How far if we cut across the island?"

"Seven or eight miles; but it isn't easy going. I've never done it, but I've been part of the way. It's the dickens of a pull across that central ridge; it goes up to over three thousand feet, you know. And it's dangerous; not only on account of falling, although if you miss your step you might drop a thousand feet before you hit the jungle underneath. But there are wild animals."

"What sort of wild animals?" asked Ginger.

"Bulls and dogs. The dogs are the worst. I'm only speaking from hearsay, but I've heard tales about a pack of white dogs that run wild on a plateau somewhere up there. It's a tame breed gone wild; the dogs must have been left behind by a trader or a whaling ship years ago. Cats go wild in the same way on many of the islands."

"I can't think that they'd be likely to worry us," replied Biggles. "But I leave it to you. Is the trip practicable? We don't want Castanelli to get away with that boy if we can prevent it."

"I'll ask Roaring Wave," answered Sandy, walking over to the chief. He was soon back. "Yes, he says it can be done," he announced, "but it's tough going. He will let us have some boys who know the way to guide us."

"Then the sooner we start the better," declared Biggles. "What about weapons—had we better take rifles?"

"We don't want to clutter ourselves up more than is necessary," returned Sandy. "And we don't want to start a gun battle. We've all got revolvers. They ought to be enough."

"All right. Then tell the chief we are ready to start."

In a few minutes they were on their way, escorted by half a dozen warriors with torches, and soon found themselves following a trail up a steep mountainside, hemmed in on both sides by impenetrable jungle, all the more sinister on account of the flickering torches.

Crossing a brook, Ginger felt a hand slipped into his, and looking down to see who it was, he was amazed to find Full Moon.

"Kaoha," she said, showing her white teeth. "Me come."

Ginger regarded her bare feet in alarm.

"You'll get your feet cut to pieces," he said.

"No cut," declared Full Moon. "Plenty hard—run on coral."

Biggles, hearing talking, turned round.

"Here, what are you doing?" he asked, as his eyes fell on Full Moon.

"Oh, leave her alone!" put in Sandy. "You needn't worry about her. In fact, she may come in useful. Shell Breaker is her friend, don't forget."

"All right, if you say so," returned Biggles briefly, and went on up the trail, which now followed the course of the brook.

Wild flowers, including many species of orchids, grew in luxuriant profusion among giant maiden-hair ferns, or hung in garlands from tree-ferns. Thousands of guinea-pigs scampered away in front of them.

The path became steeper and steeper, climbing higher and higher above deep gorges and skirting fearful precipices. The breadfruit-trees and coconut-palms were left far below. The trail disappeared under enormous boulders, and it was often necessary to leap from rock to rock.

Looking back while passing across an open space, Ginger saw that they were on the saw-like ridge of what must have once been the crater of a volcano. Far below lay the anchorage, the Scud, her white planes reflecting the moonlight, looking like a minute winged insect inside the sweep of the bay. Beyond, the open sea gleamed like quicksilver, stretching, it seemed, to eternity.

The path went on up. Ginger had climbed many mountains, but never one like this. It seemed as if the earth itself had exploded, pouring out its rocky heart, and leaving it in every conceivable fantastic shape.

Now in single file, the torch-bearers, unconcerned, skirted a chasm so deep that Ginger dare not look at it. He remembered it afterwards for a long time. It haunted him in his sleep. But he struggled on along the jagged ridge, clutching at the handholds whenever they offered. Full Moon leapt lightly from rock to rock, laughing at Ginger's nervousness.

It was the summit, or, rather, the apex of the ridge, and thereafter the trail began to fall quickly towards a deep, basin-like depression, clear of trees, which Ginger suspected was the crater of the extinct volcano. Reaching the centre of it, the warriors extinguished their fast-expiring torches and sat down to rest.

Ginger was glad of it, and threw himself down beside the others. Hardly had he done so than he was brought to his feet again by the blood-curdling howls of what sounded like a wolf pack in full cry. The warriors also sprang up in alarm, and took refuge behind the white men.

"The dogs—the dogs!" cried one.

"By gosh, they're right! Here they come!" snapped Biggles, jumping up and taking out his automatic as a pack of white dogs, ghostly in the

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moonlight, burst into view. They ran straight at the party.

Ginger grabbed Full Moon and thrust her behind him, at the same time levelling his weapon. Shots rang out. A great white beast was nearly on him. He fired point-blank, and then side-stepped, dragging Full Moon with him away from the howling animal, which was instantly set upon by others and torn to pieces.

The crater rang with the crash of shots and the snarls of wounded animals. The warriors had lighted their torches again, and, flinging handfuls of dry grass on them, soon had a fire blazing. The dogs backed away and sat down in a circle, tongues lolling, like a ring of ghosts. Some had dragged away their wounded companions, and these they now devoured with much snarling.

"Well, what do we do next?" Biggles asked Sandy, who was in earnest conversation with the warriors.

"The boys say they will have to make fresh torches; the dogs won't face fire," answered Sandy.

"I'm pleased to hear it," returned Biggles grimly. "otherwise we look like being stuck here till morning."

The natives were already collecting bunches of dry grass, and these they now tied on the ends of sticks while others kept guard. However, the dogs made no attempt to attack again, and when the fresh torches were lighted, flooding the scene with a ruddy glare, they began to slink away. The retirement became a rout when the natives began hurling firebrands and rocks at them.

Once the crater had been crossed the path dropped quickly, and the party was once more hemmed in by jungle. Soft moss flourished underfoot. Nothing more was seen of the dogs.

Ginger reached for an exquisite feathery flower, intending to give it to Full Moon, but the girl seized his arm and pulled it away.

"Puke," she said quickly. "Puke."

Sandy looked round.

"Hi, don't touch that!" he shouted. "It's puke!"

"What's puke, anyway?" inquired Ginger.

"You touch it and you'll know—and you'll never forget," returned Sandy. "It stings like fury. Stinging-nettles are balm compared with that stuff."

Ginger went on thoughtfully, a trifle resentful that South Sea Islands were not living up to the reputation with which he had credited them.

Another hour of steady walking—the last part accompanied by a heavy shower of rain—brought the party once more to the region of coconut-palms. The natives stopped and put out their torches. One of them spoke quickly to Sandy.

"They say the bay is just ahead through this palm-grove," he translated.

"I'll go forward and reconnoitre," said Biggles, and disappeared between the towering boles of the palms. He was soon back. "They're quite right," he said. "The schooner's there, about a hundred yards from the beach. There's a light on her, but I can't hear a sound, so I don't know whether the crew is on board or not. I can see a bit of a village a little way along. They might be there."

"I should say Castanelli will be on the boat, and the boys in the village," opined Sandy. "The boys would come ashore, if Castanelli would let them, to drink brandy."

"Brandy?"

"I mean native brandy. They make it out of the coconut flowers."

"I see. Well, it doesn't matter. I'm not standing for any nonsense from Castanelli. It's no use mincing matters with fellows of his kidney. If he wants trouble he can have it. There are some canoes on the beach, so I propose taking one and going over to the schooner to demand Shell Breaker. In fact, we can all go in one canoe. Ginger and I will tackle Castanelli. You, Algy, guard our rear in case his boys are about. And you, Sandy, had better remain in charge of the canoe. Tell our boys to stay where they are until we come back."

When he had finished speaking Biggles began to move forward towards the sea, which could be seen shimmering through the palms.

There was no sign of life as they finally emerged from a dense glade of breadfruit-trees near the beach. A fire smouldered near the village. Only this and the schooner riding at anchor on the bay revealed that human beings were in the vicinity.

Silently they made their way along the beach to where three rather dilapidated canoes were lying, and launched the one that appeared to be in the best state of repair. For a moment or two it floated on the moonlit water with hardly a ripple, and then, under the impetus of the paddle Sandy had picked up, it forged towards the schooner, leaving behind it a wake that gleamed like living fire. Nobody spoke as the canoe came quietly under the schooner's counter.

Biggles reached up and swung himself aboard. Ginger and Algy followed him. Sandy remained in the canoe.

"Stay here and keep your gun handy. If you have to use it be careful, or you may hit one of us," Biggles told Algy, and then walked towards the companion.

"Who's that?" roared a voice, as they reached the bottom of the steps.

Biggles opened the door of the cabin from which the voice came, and was met by the reek of tobacco smoke and brandy. The yellow light of an oil lamp was half smothered by the fumes. A cheap deal table occupied the centre of the cabin. On it was a chart which Castanelli had apparently been studying. He rose slowly to his feet, staring incredulously at Biggles and Ginger standing in the doorway. Then, ripping out an oath, he thrust the table aside.

"What in thunder do you want?" he snarled.

"I've come for that Rutuona boy you've got aboard," answered Biggles curtly.

"Oh, you have, have you?" grated Castanelli, panting with fury.

"That's it," nodded Biggles. "Are you going to hand him over, or do we take him?"

"I'll see you—" began Castanelli.

Biggles cut him short.

"All right, that's enough," he said. "We'll take him. Go and find him, Ginger!"

Ginger turned and walked along the narrow corridor, shouting the boy's name. He was answered almost at once by a weak voice from the direction of the stern. He found a door and tried it, but it was locked.

"Are you in there, Shell Breaker?" he called.

"Yes, in here!" came the voice.

Ginger put his heel against the lock, and, bracing himself against the far side of the corridor, kicked out with all his strength. The door burst open. A foul stench assailed his nostrils, but he could see nothing, for the place was in darkness. Striking a match, he saw a

native boy facing him. He looked weak and emaciated.

"Are you Shell Breaker?" asked Ginger.

"Yes, me Shell Breaker."

"Good!" Ginger told him. "I've come to take you away. Come on!"

He walked back down the corridor, with the boy following him.

"It's all right, here he is," he told Biggles, who was still standing at the door of Castanelli's cabin, now holding an automatic in his hand.

Castanelli was mouthing like an animal, spitting out the most blood-curdling threats.

"If I have any further trouble with you, you blackguard, I'll close your foul mouth for good and all," said Biggles coldly. "Stay where you are. You show your head on deck and I'll knock it off!" He turned to Ginger. "Get the boy into the canoe!" he ordered.

They went up on deck, and found Sandy staring towards the beach, where a canoe was just being launched by several shadowy figures.

"Looks like Castanelli's crew coming back," observed Sandy. "What shall we do about it? They'll make trouble."

"No trouble," said a small voice from the water near the side of the canoe.

Looking down, Ginger saw the smiling face of Full Moon.

"What are you doing here, you little monkey?" he said.

"I show you," said the girl, and disappeared under the water like a fish.

"Into the canoe, everybody!" ordered Biggles. "We'll get back to the beach."

By the time they had pushed off the other canoe was already moving rapidly towards the schooner. Castanelli appeared at the rail of the ship, and seeing the other canoe coming, shouted something.

"What did he say, Sandy?" asked Biggles, for Castanelli had used a language unknown to him.

"He told his boys to sink us."

"Is that all? Well, let them try it!"

The battle which appeared imminent did not take place, however. The schooner-bound canoe, in accordance with Castanelli's order, swung round to intercept the other; but while it was still several yards away a commotion occurred which those in the other canoe could not at first understand. There was a sudden splashing in the water, a sharp crack of breaking wood, and the canoe capsized, throwing its occupants into the water. A peal of girlish laughter floated across the water above the guttural cries of the Solomon Island boys.

"Ha-ha-ha-ha! Full Moon sink canoe!" chuckled Shell Breaker, and slid into the water.

Ginger watched for him to reappear, but did not see him.

"My gosh, Sandy, you were right when you said these people were like fish!" he remarked.

They left Castanelli's crew swimming towards the schooner, and went on to the beach. When they reached it they found Full Moon and Shell Breaker waiting for them.

"Good!" said Biggles. "I think that settles our business, so we may as well start back."

Several natives had appeared from the direction of the village, but they were disposed to be friendly, and after a short conversation with Shell Breaker they returned to their huts.

Biggles led the way back to where their own boys were waiting for them, Shell Breaker's appearance causing a minor sensation.

Before starting on the return journey Sandy

distributed some biscuits and chocolate which he had brought for the purpose.

"Atanelli, he ask plenty question, eh?" he asked Shell Breaker.

"Yes, he say I show him island where you stay long time."

"Did you tell him where it was?"

"No. I say island plenty far, but he say me plenty liar. Say make me show."

"Well, you won't have to show him now," answered Sandy, patting the boy's shoulder.

"You are coming back to the village with us."

Castanelli's voice, still cursing, reached them faintly as they set off up the hillside.

Dawn had broken by the time they reached the central crater, and this may have accounted for the fact that they saw no signs of the wild dogs. Moreover, being daylight, their task was much easier than it had been in the dark. Nevertheless, it was a weary party that finally marched down through the coconut-grove into the village, where Shell Breaker was received like one returned from the grave.

Tired out, the others retired to their hut, and having arranged with Roaring Wave for a watch to be kept for Castanelli's schooner, should it come that way, passed the rest of the day in sleep. Departure for Sandy's Island had been postponed until dawn the following day.

CASTANELLI STRIKES!

GINGER woke up with a wild shout ringing in his ears. Startled, and still in a daze, he sprang to his feet, conscious of impending trouble. Running to the door, which overlooked the bay, he stared out, and saw that dawn had not long broken, for a faint flush of pink still suffused the pale azure sky. The palms stirred uneasily, and a ripple spread across the face of the tranquil water as the dawn wind disturbed them. He looked first at the Scud. It was still at its moorings, rocking gently as the ripple reached it. Then another movement caught his eyes. A brown figure was racing along the beach. It was Full Moon.

"Atanelli, he come!" she cried.

"What's that?" asked Biggles, from inside the hut. He had risen, and was putting on his jacket.

"It's Full Moon. She says Castanelli is coming," answered Ginger.

Two steps brought Biggles to the door.

"Where is he?" he asked.

"I don't see him," replied Ginger. "Yes—look!" He pointed to a rugged mass of rock, a small islet which stood near the mouth of the bay, from behind which now appeared the schooner, all sails set to catch the light breeze before which it moved over the water as silently and gracefully as a bird. It heeled a little as the wind freshened, and came straight towards the beach as if Castanelli intended coming close inshore before dropping anchor.

"What's he doing? Why doesn't he shorten sail?" asked Sandy, who had now joined the others outside the door.

The schooner itself supplied the answer. It suddenly swung round and bore down on the Scud.

"Look out! He's going to ram us!" cried Biggles.

For a moment a sort of panic prevailed, everybody acting as he thought best. Ginger dashed down to the water, waded in, and struck out for

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the Scud, for the nearest canoe was some distance away. Full Moon joined him, slipping through the water with the effortless ease of a fish, the blue pareu she wore clinging to her lithe body like a skin.

"What you do?" she asked Ginger naively.

"Cut the cable!" gasped Ginger. "Atanelli ram her!"

"Me cut," said Full Moon, smiling, and went on at a speed which left Ginger far behind.

It was only about a hundred yards to the Scud, but to Ginger, in his haste, it seemed more like a mile. Long before he reached the machine he saw Full Moon swarm nimbly up the anchor rope and sit astride the nacelle. Her knife flashed in the bright sunlight. By this time the schooner was only a cable's length away, and travelling fast before the swiftly freshening breeze.

Fortunately the wind came from the sea, so as soon as the cable was severed the Scud began to drift inshore. Instantly the Avarata altered its course to follow, leaving no possible room for doubt as to Castanelli's intention.

The direction of the Scud's drift being inshore, however, lessened the distance Ginger had to travel. It came towards him broadside on, threatening to force him under water, but he grabbed a wing float and hung on. His weight on the float caused the wing to tilt down, and upon it he now climbed, squelching water and gasping for breath, for the fast swim had taken the wind out of him.

Full Moon was still sitting on the nose of the machine, watching the approaching schooner helplessly. Yelling to her to hold tight, Ginger ran up the wing, across the centre section, and then to the tip of the far wing, which was, of course, nearer to the schooner. He knew that if the Avarata struck the flying-boat her sharp bows would crush it beyond all hope of repair, and for a moment or two it seemed as if nothing could prevent this from happening.

There was no means by which Ginger could move the Scud out of the track of the schooner. There was no time to start the engines. Castanelli evidently realised this, for his warthy face was wreathed in smiles as he stood at the wheel with his boys around him.

But Ginger knew something that Castanelli did not know—that a flying-boat, owing to its shallow draught, rests on water as lightly as a feather, so that a child moving on a firm platform can move it. Ginger had no platform to stand on, for he was standing on the machine itself and, therefore, unable to move it. But he knew that if he could reach the schooner's bows before they struck the machine he would be able to fend the flying-boat away.

It was now clear that the schooner would strike the Scud's seaward wing, so Ginger stood still, hands out, waiting. He nearly went into the sea as the machine tilted suddenly. Somebody else had climbed on board, but there was no time to see who it was.

At the last moment the bows of the schooner seemed to bear down on him like a monstrous guillotine. With the curious faculty for noticing details which come to one in such moments, Ginger saw that the iron anchor was still dripping water and mud.

Bracing his feet as far as he was able to on the main spar, which he could feel under the fabric, he leaned outwards and clutched at the schooner's bows with both hands. Instantly the wing under his feet seemed to slide away from

him as it took the weight of the schooner transmitted through his body.

For a second Ginger hung on, his body as rigid as a steel spring; then the Scud began to swing round, and he knew that he must fall. Even so, he gave a final thrust with his feet. The wing shot away from under him, and he fell headlong into the sea. A noise of rushing water filled his ears. A great black shape swept past him, and he struck out away from it into a strange world of profound blue. His lungs seemed as if they must burst.

Ginger felt his body rising, but by this time he was too far gone to swim. Flashes of white light began to dance in front of his eyes; they grew brighter and brighter; then, almost with the violence of an explosion, his head broke the surface of the water and he filled his lungs with a mighty gasp.

For a moment or two Ginger could only paddle feebly, just able to keep himself afloat; but then, as his strength returned to him, he looked around and saw the scene through a sort of hazy blur. Full Moon was a few yards away, streaking towards him. Nearer to the beach was the Scud, undamaged, with Biggles standing on the wing looking in his direction. The schooner was some distance away, her canvas fluttering as she came round.

Ginger would never have got to the machine or the beach unaided, for he was completely exhausted—indeed, he was half-drowned; but Full Moon came to his assistance, and made him put his hand on her shoulder. Biggles, seeing them coming, disappeared into the cockpit of the machine, and a moment later, to Ginger's surprise, the engines were started.

Reaching the Scud, he was dragged aboard by Sandy. Full Moon followed, and not until then did Ginger see the need for urgency. The Avarata had turned about, and was once more bearing down on them.

"Good work, laddie!" said Sandy. "And that goes for Full Moon, too!"

"Why doesn't somebody shoot that skunk?" gasped Ginger in a pained voice, staring at Castanelli, who was still at the wheel of the schooner.

"Because we don't want to start a pitched battle," returned Algy, who was busy stowing gear into place.

Ginger saw that Shell Breaker was also in the machine, and looked at Sandy inquiringly.

"If we leave him behind Castanelli may get hold of him again," explained Sandy, as the engines roared and the machine began to move forward.

"Gosh, we're taking off!" cried Ginger.

"There's no sense in sitting here and letting Castanelli ram us!" shouted Algy. "He means business. Biggles says he's going to clear out and save any further trouble."

Ginger nodded, and sat down with a jolt as the machine bumped badly.

"What's going on?" he asked anxiously.

Algy was staring forward over Biggles' shoulder, a startled expression on his face.

"What is it?" asked Ginger, now thoroughly alarmed, and got up to look.

One glance, and there was no need to ask further questions. The Scud was taking off into a sea which, except for a miracle or superb pilotage, would capsize them. He could guess what had happened. On account of the direction of the wind, Biggles had been compelled to take off towards the open ocean, unaware that outside

the bay a choppy sea was running. And because the machine was heavily loaded, it was taking an unusually long run.

Now, when the size of the waves could be seen, it was too late to stop. To attempt to turn the machine at the rate it was now travelling would have been the most certain way to wreck it. So Biggles dare not turn nor dare he throttle back, for the way the machine now had on it was sufficient to carry it into the white-crested breakers that surged across the mouth of the bay. So he could only go on, trusting that the machine lifted before it struck the curling combers.

SANDY'S ISLAND!

GINGER held his breath as the machine tore on at ever-increasing speed to what looked like certain destruction. Neither Sandy nor Algy spoke. Not a muscle of Biggles' face moved. Twice he jerked the joystick back in an attempt to "unstuck" the machine, but here again, by a sort of bitter irony, the very calmness of the water in the bay defeated him; for a heavily loaded machine needs the "kick" of a small wave to break it clear from the surface of the water.

The machine roared on over water that was now suddenly turbulent. A green-flecked, foam-crested breaker, curling over at the top, reared high in front of it, and then swept down as if determined on the flying-boat's destruction.

Biggles jerked the stick back into his stomach in a last effort to avoid the avalanche of water. The machine lifted, but only sluggishly. The wave broke. There was a mighty cloud of spray. The machine shuddered and rocked. Then a force seemed to rise up beneath it and fling it into the air. For a moment it hung, rocking, like a bird that has been wounded, while the propellers threshed the air; then, just as it seemed that it must stall and fall into the breakers, the engines picked up and it rose into the air. The danger was past.

Ginger sank down limply on a case of bully beef. The others did the same, except the two Polynesians, who had been blissfully unaware of the danger.

"Hey, mon, that's one way of taking off!" growled Sandy.

"It's one I don't like!" remarked Algy.

Now that the machine was steady, Ginger stood up and began wringing the salt water out of his clothes. Looking out of the side window, he saw the island fast disappearing astern, with the schooner looking like a toy boat on the water.

"I'm glad to be out of that!" he remarked. "I don't mind an occasional shock, but I don't like too many in quick succession—and without any breakfast, too!" he added plaintively.

"Don't worry. We shall be at the island in a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes," announced Sandy.

"Does Biggles know where it is?"

"I gave him the bearing yesterday."

"Then if it was correct he'll find it," declared Ginger.

In ten minutes the island came into view, and in as many more the Scud was gliding down to an anchorage in a lagoon so perfect that Ginger was enchanted. He looked at Shell Breaker and Full Moon and smiled, noting that they seemed to be taking their first flight not only calmly, but as a matter of course. He remarked on this to Sandy.

"Everything the white man does is marvelous," Sandy told him. "There can be nothing more wonderful to them than a box of matches or a gramophone. They've seen so many wonders in their time that they are past being astonished."

Biggles turned round and laughed quietly as the machine ran to rest on the calm water of the lagoon.

"Well, here we are!" he said cheerfully. "What did you think of my take-off?"

"Nothing," declared Sandy. "I was too scared even to yell."

"You were no more scared than I was," returned Biggles. "If ever I was sure my number was up, it was when that big wave reared up and grabbed at us. But let's forget it. I hope that now we are here we shall have a little peace. Where had we better moor the machine? The nearer it is to our camp the better."

"You can't do better than over there, near that group of palms," replied Sandy. "The water is fairly deep right up to the bank, so we can step straight out of the machine on to more or less dry land. That's where I had my hut—over there." He pointed to a low, palm-thatched shelter near the trees.

"And you lived there for three months?" murmured Ginger thoughtfully.

"I did," agreed Sandy, as Biggles taxied the machine slowly to the place he had indicated.

Presently the engines idled, and then stopped, leaving the machine floating on water so clear that it was hard to believe that it was there.

Biggles climbed out on to a bank of coral.

"We'll tie up here," he said. "Then we'll get everything ashore we're likely to need, and so be ready to start work in the morning."

The machine was accordingly made fast by the bows to a projecting piece of coral—a safe mooring, as there was not a ripple on the water. Stores and spare petrol were put ashore, and then carried to Sandy's hut, which on inspection was found to be serviceable enough to provide them with all the shelter they needed. Shell Breaker and Full Moon helped in the work, their lighthearted chatter lending an atmosphere of gaiety to the scene. The diving gear was left on board, as it would be needed the next day.

"Which way does the pearl-bed lie?" asked Biggles.

"Over there," answered Sandy, pointing. "By this time to-morrow we ought to be raising the shell."

"By jingo! I've just remembered something!" remarked Algy. "Who is going to open all the oysters?"

Sandy laughed.

"Open them? That's all right if you've only one or two, but you don't bother when you are dealing with the number we shall have to handle. We'd better rot them out, as it's called—that is, dump them on the beach. When the fish die the shells open. Then you feel inside to see if there is anything there. If not, you tip the stuff into a bucket and stir it up. If you happen to have missed a pearl, it falls to the bottom. Incidentally, you never open an oyster, and throw the refuse into the sea while diving is in progress. It attracts undesirable visitors—such as sharks."

"Doesn't all this rotting fish stink?" questioned Algy.

"Stinks like nothing on earth; but if we keep

it to the windward side of the island, it won't worry us."

While this conversation had been going on they had been preparing a meal, and now they sat down and enjoyed it. Ginger was in favour of making a raid on the pearl-bed right away, but Biggles vetoed it, as he said he wanted to look over the machine and get everything arranged in camp. In any case, Sandy announced that he would be some time assembling the diving kit.

Ginger amused himself exploring the lagoon with Full Moon and Shell Breaker. The only word that he could find to describe it was "fairyl-land." What impressed him most was the transparent blueness of the crystal-clear atmosphere, and the delicate blue of the sky in contrast to the emerald green of the palms, and deep, clear turquoise of the water through which swam hundreds of fish—some large and of every colour of the rainbow.

Here and there, close to the reef, which was half-hidden under a sun-filtered cloud of spray, great pieces of snow-white coral rose out of the sea. The floor of the lagoon was a kaleidoscopic world of mystery—the home of coral of every hue and shape. Delicate antennae of rose or azure curled upwards like living plants; some were shaped like fans, some like cones, and others like gigantic toadstools. It was a brilliant world, yet soft and harmonious, magical, and almost unbelievable.

Once Ginger saw a huge slug, two feet long, crawling on the bottom, and he shuddered, remembering Sandy's words about beauty and horror going hand-in-hand. Full Moon, noting his disgust, dived into the water, and, swimming without effort to the bottom, picked up the slug and brought it to the surface, laughing loudly at Ginger's expression of loathing. She threw it away and climbed out, shaking the water from her skin like a dog.

Ginger judged that the island was three or four miles long, but not more than three hundred yards across at its widest part. On the lagoon side the water was as smooth as a lake, but on the other side the surf thundered in a cloud of glinting spray, and the coral was strewn with countless thousands of shells of all shapes, sizes, and colours, with the skeletons of fish, and even the teeth of sea monsters.

On the island itself there was not much vegetation except for the palms, which often grew to the water's edge, within reach of the spray. Lush grass and flowering shrubs covered the highest part of the atoll, however, although it was not more than twenty-five feet above water level, recalling to Ginger's mind Sandy's remark about atolls sometimes being swept by hurricane seas.

For the rest, the island was empty of life, except for thousands of hermit crabs that snapped in and out of their shells with a noise like hailstones falling, and a few sea birds.

Towards evening, when the tide began to ebb the silence was eerie, and in the trance-like calm that fell Ginger, depressed by the utter loneliness of the scene, walked slowly back to the others. Even Full Moon and Shell Breaker were subdued. He found a brick fire burning, and the cheerful atmosphere of a picnic about the camp.

Biggles called to him.

"You're taking the first watch!" he said. "I'm not risking Castanelli creeping in on us in the dark."

"Good enough, chief," acknowledged Ginger, squatting down on the coral sand with the others. "This place is certainly the end of the world," he observed thoughtfully. "I'm not so sure that I should like to be stranded here, after all."

The following morning, at break of day, after a night made restless by crabs which insisted on invading the hut, the party boarded the flying-boat with the object of visiting the pearl-bed. Sandy, Full Moon, and Shell Breaker had paid no attention whatever to the crabs, but the others, moving about, had disturbed them, so they were all rather tired. However, it was a perfect morning for their project, for even the open sea was flat calm, as could be seen by the complete absence of spray on the reef surrounding the lagoon.

Under Sandy's guidance, Biggles taxied cautiously towards the opening, for although there were no waves the tide poured through the narrow passage with considerable force. It was, Sandy declared, the only opening in the reef, so as the tide ebbed and flowed the water poured in and out with the power of a millrace. However, Biggles held the flying-boat's bows in the current without difficulty, for he had two engines, and owing to its shallow draught the flying-boat did not feel the tide as a boat would have done.

As soon as they were on the open sea Sandy pointed.

"That's the way," he said. "It's hardly worth taking off. It will be easier to stay on the water, but we must keep a look-out for reefs. You never know where they are going to pop up in these coral seas."

To Ginger, sitting astride the nacelle, this taxiing over blue water in the manner of a speed-boat was exhilarating, and he sang with joy as he gazed at the water ahead for possible obstructions.

For a quarter of an hour they drove steadily towards their unseen objective, and then Sandy told Biggles to slow down, for they were near the spot. Naturally, as it was not marked in any way, he could not be certain of it to within a few hundred yards, so Biggles throttled back to dead slow to allow Sandy to take soundings. But Sandy did not succeed in finding the bottom.

"It must be somewhere about here," he said. "Cruise around for a bit; keep her slow."

Biggles manoeuvred the flying-boat as Sandy had requested, while the others, choosing what they thought the best positions, gazed down into the tranquil depths, looking for the sea bed.

"All right, Biggles, stop her!" called Sandy. "Let her drift. We needn't waste petrol." He took a long look at the island and compared it with their position. "It's just about here somewhere," he said again. "The trouble is, the sea is normal; there's no swell—at least, not as much as when I was here last. That ought to make diving easier, but it makes the place harder to find."

Biggles throttled right back, leaving the engines just ticking over, so that the Scud rested motionless on the limpid surface of the water, her drift being imperceptible. Several minutes passed in silence, while the whole party gazed down into the depths beneath them.

"If anyone could see us they'd think we were crazy!" declared Biggles at last, laughing. "Looking for the bottom of the sea in a flying-boat. That would make a funny picture."

"You don't doubt that it's here?" demanded Sandy stiffly.

"Great Scott, no!" replied Biggles promptly. "It just struck me as funny, that's all."

"Hallo! What was that? I think I saw something!" cried Ginger.

Full Moon looked up into his face and smiled. "Me see," she said, and, with hardly a ripple, slipped into the water.

(Full Moon comes up with an oyster in her hand, and that's the start of new adventure for Biggles & Co.—adventure that leads to a life-and-death struggle on the sea-bed! Don't miss next week's thrills!)

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JACK DRAKE IS ON HIS METTLE WHEN HE IS CHALLENGED BY THE BULLY OF THE REMOVE TO A FIGHT!



THE BULLY'S SECOND!

EXCUSEZ moi, mon ami!"

"Eh?" Jack Drake looked round in surprise as he was addressed in French in the Greyfriars quadrangle.

It was Napoleon Dupont of the Remove who addressed him.

The French junior made a low and elaborate bow. Not all the chipping he received in the Greyfriars Remove could wean Napoleon Dupont from his polished Parisian manners.

Drake grinned. He was still new at Greyfriars, but he had seen Napoleon several times, and had been rather entertained by him. This was the first time he had come into direct contact with the French youth, however.

"Go it!" he said.

"Mais oui!"

"You speak English, surely?" said Drake. "Tip it in French, if you like, but I don't guarantee that you'll understand my answers. I'll try! Pourquoi venez vous parler a moi—what?"

Dupont grinned in his turn.

"Excusez!" he said. "I speak a small English—in fact, I have ze accent verree good, but ze words sometimes manque. When I shall have ze words at command, you shall not know zat it is not English person zat speak."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I am second!" explained Dupont.

"Which?"

"I have ze honair to be second."

"Do you mean— What the thump do you mean?" asked Jack Drake. "You're not in the Second Form."

"Non, non! Je suis—I am second to Bolsover, who is my studymate. It is zat you are going to fight ze Bolsover, and I am second."

"Oh, I see, you're Bolsover's second!" said
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FOES OF THE REMOVE! By Frank Richards.

Drake, comprehending. "All serene! Go ahead!"

"It is necessaire zat I see your second to make ze arrangements for ze combat," said Dupont. "You meet Bolsover major to-day?"

"Any time you like," yawned Drake. "Rodney will be my second. Come along and see him."

"Avec plaisir, mon ami."

Napoleon Dupont trotted along with Drake as he crossed the quadrangle in search of his chum. Dick Rodney was helping a crowd of Remove fellows to punt an old footer about to keep themselves warm, and to get an appetite for dinner. He came out of the crowd as Drake called to him.

"Anything on?" he asked.

"Only a fight with Bolsover major."

"Only!" said Rodney.

"You remember we had a row in the dormitory last night," said Drake carelessly. "Bolsover is thirsting for gore, it seems, and we are going to scrap. Dupont is his second—you're mine. Catch on? Fix it up how you like, when you like, and where you like!"

And Jack Drake plunged into the punt-about with the Removites, leaving the two seconds together.

Dick Rodney wore a worried look.

He was far from regarding the matter as lightly as his chum. Bolsover major, the burly and muscular bully of the Remove, was a very hefty antagonist for anyone to tackle; and though Rodney had faith in his chum, he did not feel at all sure about the result of the encounter. But he knew that it had to be. A fight with Bolsover major had been looming, as it were, over Jack Drake ever since that cheery youth had arrived at Greyfriars; and now matters had come to a head.

Napoleon Dupont bestowed a graceful bow upon Dick Rodney.

"Vat sall we make ze time, mon ami?" he asked.

"After lessons, of course," said Rodney. "Say at half-past four—"

"And ze place?"

"In the gym."

Napoleon shook his head.

"In ze gym zere vill be interruption," he said. "Peut-etre—perhaps some prefect he come down viz bang on us—Wingate, perhaps—stop ze fight. Vat do you say to ze Rag?"

"In the Rag, if you like," assented Rodney. "Gloves on, of course. I'll have my man there at half-past four."

The French junior nodded.

"Je vous remercie, mon ami—I zank you," said Napoleon. "My principal he sall be zere."

And Napoleon Dupont bestowed another graceful bow upon Rodney, and ambled away to acquaint his principal with the result of his embassy. He found Bolsover major toasting his toes at the fire in the Common-room.

"Well," grunted Bolsover major, as Dupont came up, "is the cad trying to get out of it now?"

"Non! He meet you at four hours and demi in ze Rag," said Bolsover major, rubbing his hands. "I'll make him sorry for his cheek."

"Mon ami—"

"I'll jolly well hammer him!"

"Mon cher ami—"

"Well, what are you burbling about, Nap?" asked Bolsover.

There was something like friendship between the burly Bolsover and the slim French junior—perhaps it was the attraction of opposites, for no two fellows could have been more unlike each other. Bolsover's strong arm had saved Napoleon from many a rough joke among the juniors; and Napoleon, on his side, had a great admiration for the stature and strength of his burly "ami." He was probably the only fellow in the Form with whom the bully never quarrelled.

"You're not going to ask me to let him off?" growled Bolsover. "No good if you do. I won't."

"I zink you are too big for him, mon ami," said Dupont. "Zere is proverb zat it is good to have ze strength of ze giant, but verree bad to use it like one giant. N'est ce pas?"

Bolsover major grunted.

"He shouldn't have cheeked me!" he answered.

"Mais; but—"

"No good, Nap; I'm going to smash him! He's too cheeky by half!" said Bolsover major. "What he wants is a jolly good hammering. That's what he's going to get! 'Nuff said!"

And Bolsover lounged out of the Common-room before Napoleon could say any more. The tender-hearted Dupont shook his head, and sighed.

"Zat pauvre Drake, he will be smash!" he murmured. "Helas! Zere is nozzing for him unless he make ze apologise; and he will not make ze apologise. He is too entete—piggy-headed! I do not wish to see him smash—zat is too mooch—perhaps—"

Napoleon reflected.

A smile came over his face as he reflected, and he nodded his head vigorously several times. Napoleon desired very much to act the kindly part of a peacemaker, and he thought he had found a way.

THE PEACEMAKER!

HARRY WHARTON joined Drake as the Removites came out after dinner that day. The brow of the captain of the Remove was very thoughtful.

"I hear you are going to fight Bolsover," he remarked.

"That's so."

"You're no match for him," said Harry.

"We shall see," smiled Drake.

"Nothing against you, you know, but you're not," said Wharton. "There are very few fellows in the Remove who can stand up to Bolsover—Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull, and Squiff, and perhaps myself. He has licked Fifth Form

fellows. Now, Bolsover's planted this on you, and if you like, we'll see to it that it goes no further. Bolsover isn't allowed to bully fellows just as the spirit moves him, and if you like we'll warn him off. You're not called on to scrap with a fellow half a head taller than yourself, and as strong as a horse."

"Thanks!" answered Drake, cordially enough. "But I'd rather go through with it. I know Bolsover's a big handful. But a fellow can only get licked, anyhow."

"A licking from Bolsover is not a small matter," remarked Frank Nugent. "Better think twice."

"That's all right; I'd rather go on with it. Besides, it's fixed up now."

"Just as you like," said Wharton, with a nod.

"Anyhow, we'll be on the scene, and you can chuck it any time you wish. But I think you're taking on rather too big an order. You're not exactly a giant, you know."

Wharton and Nugent walked on, and Drake was looking round for Rodney, when he was caught by the sleeve. He turned to see the French junior at his elbow.

"One word viz you, mon ami," said Dupont.

"Two, if you like," answered Drake, with a smile.

"Mon ami Bolsover—my friend—he is verree angry—"

"Let him rip!"

"But if you sall send ze apologise—"

"The what?"

"Ze apologise."

"Oh, an apology!" said Drake, laughing. "If Bolsover waits for an apology from me, the waitfulness will be terrific, as Inky would say."

"You send him one leetle message," said Dupont persuasively.

"Oh, certainly! Tell him—" Drake paused.

"Oui?" said Dupont eagerly.

"Tell him he's a beastly bully—"

"Vat?"

"And that what he wants is a hiding—"

"Mais—"

"And that I'll do my best to give him one. Is that enough?"

"Mon ami, if you vill say zat you are sorry, zen, perhaps, I can arrange ze affair—"

"Bow-wow!"

"But zink a leetle," urged Dupont. "Zis punching on ze nose he is verree painful. Ecoutez—"

"I'm sorry Bolsover is such a rotten bully," said Drake, laughing. "Is that good enough?"

And he walked away, leaving Dupont shaking his head. The peacemaker did not seem likely to have an easy task of it.

"But he say he is sorry," murmured Dupont. "I mention zat to Bolsover, and not add ze rest. I zink he vill do."

And Napoleon trotted away to find Bolsover, who was in his usual place loafing by the fire.

"Mon ami, he is all right!" announced Dupont.

"What's all right?"

"Drake say he is sorry."

Bolsover started.

"My only hat! Do you mean to say he wants to get out of it, after all?" he exclaimed.

"I tell him you zat ze apologise is enuff, and he say he is sorry," said Napoleon diplomatically. "He say some more, but zat is enough. Now you vill not smash zat pauvre garcon."

Bolsover snorted with scorn.

"If he wants to crawl out, let him," he answered. "I'd be knocked into little bits before I'd send a fellow an apology."

"But now he say he is sorry, you say zat you are sorry, and zen it will be all right—vat you call top-hole," said the peacemaker.

"I'm sorry he's a sneaking coward, as it's a disgrace to the Remove," grunted Bolsover major. "You can tell him that if you like."

"Verree good! And zere be no fight?"

"Not if the cad's afraid."

"Zat all right zen."

Napoleon trotted off once more, and found Drake and Rodney in the quadrangle. He came up with a beaming face.

"Zere will be no fight!" he said.

"Hallo! How's that?" asked Drake.

"Bolsover say he is sorry."

"Great Scott!"

"Is that a message from Bolsover?" asked Dick Rodney, in great astonishment.

"Mais oui, and he say zere be no fight."

Drake whistled.

"Blessed if I should have suspected Bolsover of cold feet!" he said. "He's a beastly bully, but I shouldn't have taken him for a funk."

"It is all right—yes?" said Dupont.

"Oh, certainly; it's all off!"

"Verree good!"

Napoleon retired in great glee. The fight was off, and he had succeeded in establishing peace.

He congratulated himself upon the success of his diplomacy.

When the Remove came into the School House for afternoon lessons, Drake and Bolsover major exchanged a glance.

Bolsover's glance expressed the most heart-felt scorn, which perplexed Drake a little. There was no mistaking the import of Bolsover's look; but scorn from a fellow who had "cried off" was rather puzzling. As Drake felt considerably scornful himself—from the same reason—he curled his lip contemptuously in reply to Bolsover's look.

Then they went into the Form-room.

"What time are you scrapping with Bolsover, Drake?" Bob Cherry inquired, as Drake dropped into his place on the form.

"It's off!" explained Drake.

"Oh, good!" said Bob.

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter. "Who's a funk?"

Drake looked at him.

"What does that mean, Bunter?" he asked, picking up a ruler.

"Oh, nothing!" said Bunter hurriedly.

"Nothing at all! I—I don't think you're a funk, Drake. I don't really! In fact—"

Mr. Quelch entered the Form-room just then, much to Billy Bunter's relief.

That afternoon Napoleon Dupont wore an unusually beaming smile. He was more than usually pleased with himself. It was said of old that the peacemakers were blessed; and although Napoleon's methods had been rather extraordinary, he felt that the end justified the means. But the end, as it happened, was not yet.

PEACE OR WAR?

"WHAT the thump—" ejaculated Drake. The Remove had been dismissed, and in the corridor Bolsover major passed Jack Drake and Rodney, who were talking to

the Famous Five in a little group. As he passed Bolsover major elevated his rather thick nose in a sneer that was most expressive.

He passed by with curling lip, and his nose in the air.

Drake stared after him.

"Did you fellows see that?" he asked.

"Ahem!" murmured Harry Wharton.

"But what's the matter with him?" asked Drake, in wonder. "I suppose it isn't St. Vitus?"

"Ha, ha!"

Jack Drake stared after Bolsover, greatly inclined to follow him and demand an explanation. But Rodney drew him away. The chums went to Study No. 3 to tea, where Ogilvy and Russell soon joined them. Both the latter looked at Jack Drake rather curiously.

"So your fight's not coming off?" said Ogilvy.

"No."

"Rather up against this study," remarked Russell.

"I don't see that," answered Drake.

"Of course, Bolsover's too much for you," agreed Russell. "But you ought really to have thought of that before you fixed up the scrap. Backing out of it afterwards is rather rotten, you know."

"I've not backed out of it, fathead!" exclaimed Drake angrily. "Bolsover said he was sorry, and that's an end to it."

"Bolsover did?" exclaimed Russell, with wide-open eyes.

"Yes."

"Draw it mild."

Drake's eyes gleamed.

"If you mean that you don't take my word, Russell—" he began.

"Oh, don't get on the high-horse!" said Russell. "I've heard another account of it, that's all. I've heard that you told Bolsover that you were sorry."

"Well, that's not true," snapped Drake.

"Hem! I heard it from Kippes—"

"Kippes is a silly ass, then!"

"I understood that Bolsover told him."

"That's rot!"

"Oh, all right!" said Russell. "I take your word, of course."

"I heard from Bunter—" murmured Ogilvy.

"Bother what you heard from Bunter!" exclaimed Drake irritably. "I'm fed-up with the subject."

"Keep your wool on, old top!" said Ogilvy soothingly. "If you've got an apology out of Bolsover major, you're the first fellow that's ever done it, and I don't catch on. That's all."

Drake grunted, and said no more. But there was rather an uncomfortable atmosphere in Study No. 3 during tea. After tea, the juniors went down to the Common-room, and near the door of that apartment, Billy Bunter rolled up to Drake, with an air of mysterious warning.

"You're not going in there, are you, Drake?" he asked.

"Yes, ass! Why not?"

"Bolsover's there!"

"What difference does that make?" asked Drake impatiently.

"Aren't you afraid?" inquired Bunter.

Jack Drake breathed hard.

"You born idiot!" he said, in measured tones.

"What is there to be afraid of?"

"Eh? Bolsover, of course. He says—"

"Hang what he says!"

"He says he's let you off once, but you'd better

not come near him, or he'll pull your ear," said Bunter.

"What!" roared Drake furiously.

"That's what he says—"

"My hat! I'll—"

Drake was striding savagely towards the Common-room doorway, when Rodney caught his arm.

"Hold on, old fellow! Don't take any notice of Bunter's tattle! You know what Bunter is!"

"Oh, really, Rodney—" exclaimed the Owl of the Remove warmly.

Drake calmed a little.

"That's so," he said. "Still—well, come on. I'm not going to look for trouble on that fat idiot's word, of course."

The chums entered the Common-room, followed by Ogilvy and Russell and Bunter. Drake had resolved not to let Bunter's remarks precipitate trouble; but his look was not amiable, and he was far from being in a peaceable mood. The beaming smile he received across the room from Napoleon Dupont did not help much to placate him.

Dupont was playing draughts with Bolsover major—and the latter looked up at once when Drake entered, and his nose turned up.

Drake caught his look, and drew a deep breath. He was not in the humour for any more of Bolsover major's scornful glances. He strode across to the draughts-table.

"Cut off!" said Bolsover. "I've promised to pull your ear if you come near me, you rotter!"

"Mon ami—" murmured Dupont.

Drake's eyes blazed.

"So you did say so?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly I did, and I'll do it, too, if you come in reach!" retorted the bully of the Remove. "I won't fight you, if you're afraid—"

"Afraid!" yelled Drake.

"Well, sending a chap a message that you're sorry, instead of standing up to him, looks a trifle afraid, doesn't it?" sneered Bolsover.

"Why, I—I—I—" stuttered Drake.

Napoleon Dupont looked the picture of distress. His unhappy diplomacy was already tumbling down about his ears.

"Mes amis!" he ejaculated imploringly. "Say no more! Zat is enoff—he is more zan enoff! Je vous prie—"

"It's a lie, Bolsover!" said Jack Drake, between his teeth. "I never sent you any message of the sort! You sent me a message that you were sorry—"

"What?" bawled Bolsover major.

"And I think you're a funk!" shouted Drake.

Bolsover leaped to his feet.

They faced each other across the draughts-table with gleaming eyes and flushed cheeks. There was a rush of the Remove to gather round. Napoleon Dupont was on his feet, too, vainly interposing.

"It's a lie!" bawled Bolsover major. "You cried off because you were in a blue funk—"

"You cried off because you were in a funk!" shouted Drake. "Dupont gave me your message, and—"

"Dupont gave me your message!" yelled Bolsover.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's Dupont that got it mixed!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Calm yourselves, my infants! Lots of time to hammer one another's bokoes yet, if you want to!"

"Let Dupont speak!" exclaimed Drake. "Dupont, didn't you tell me that Bolsover said he was sorry, and the fight was off?"

"Mais oui—"

"What?" howled Bolsover major. "You told me Drake said he was sorry, and the fight was off!"

"Mais oui!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Cherry. "Nap has been doing the giddy peacemaker stunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mes amis—my cher friends!" exclaimed Napoleon. "I say some of ze message on bofe sides, but not all of him, so zat zere is peace!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Vy for you vill scrap?" continued Napoleon.

"Shake you ze hand instead of ze punch nose!"

"You silly chump!" roared Bolsover major.

"You made out that I was funky!"

"Non, non! I—"

"You shrieking idiot!" said Drake. "You let that silly, bullying hooligan think I was funky!"

"Mon ami—"

"You—you—you ass!" roared Bolsover major; and he seized the hapless peacemaker by his slim shoulders and shook him forcibly. "If you weren't my chum I'd jolly well hammer you, you ass!"

"Yaroo! Mon Dieu! Leave off to shake!" shrieked Dupont, as his teeth rattled together. "Oh, I am keel! Leave me off to shake! Yah! Help! A moi! A moi! Au secours!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors

Bolsover major impatiently hurled his hapless chum away, and he crashed into Drake.

It was rather unfortunate for him, for that other victim of the diplomatic peacemaker was equally exasperated.

He grasped Napoleon by the shoulders in his turn, and proceeded to shake him with vigour and wrath.

"You howling ass!"

"Ah! Mon Dieu! I am fearfully shake! Au secours!" wailed Napoleon. "Vill you leave off to shake? Yaroo! Helps!"

"Sit down, you ass!"

Napoleon sat down—on the floor—with a heavy bump. He sat there and gasped for breath.

"Oh dear! Oh, ze crumbs! Mon Dieu! I am shake to all pieces viz myself! I suffair! Oh! Ah! Ow!"

"Now, you rotter!" exclaimed Drake, turning on Bolsover major.

"Now, you cheeky cad!" retorted Bolsover major. "Come on!"

"I'm ready!"

Harry Wharton rushed between just in time.

"Not here, you duffers! You'll have Quelchy on your necks in a brace of shakes! Come along to the Rag. Some of you fellows get the gloves ready!"

Nearly all the Remove and a crowd of the Fourth adjourned to the Rag, and on the heels of the crowd limped poor Napoleon Dupont, still gasping for breath and looking woeful and distressed. Such was the outcome of his effort at peacemaking—the outcome that he really might have expected. And as he gasped and spluttered, Napoleon made up his much-shaken mind that he would never play the role of peacemaker any more.

FIGHT TO A FINISH!

"LOCK the door!" said Bob Cherry.

That was a necessary preliminary. Interruptions were not wanted in the Rag on an occasion like the present.

There was a crowd in the Rag, where there was plenty of room for them. The ring was formed at one end of the big room. Basins of water, sponges, and towels had been smuggled in, as well as the boxing gloves. All was ready for the scrap.

There was keen interest in that scrap on the part of all the juniors. Jack Drake had given some signs of quality as a fighting-man already, and Bolsover major's powers were well known. That the new junior would succeed in licking the bully of the Remove was not to be expected; but certainly he had the best wishes of nearly all the Remove.

Napoleon Dupont performed the duties of a second for Bolsover major, though with a reproachful look on his face. He had not quite recovered from the shaking yet.

Bolsover, in his shirt-sleeves, and with the gloves on, strode into the ring with his usual swaggering air. Harry Wharton had his watch in his hand.

"Seconds out of the ring!" he said. "Now, two-minute rounds, and one-minute rests! Ready?"

"Yes!" growled Bolsover. "I reckon one round will be enough for that cheeky cad, though!"

"Ready!" said Jack Drake.

"Time!"

Dick Rodney watched his chum anxiously as the fight started. Bolsover major had every advantage of height, weight, and reach; he was a great deal bigger than Drake, as well as older. But Bolsover was accustomed to depending chiefly on brute strength, and his skill was not of the first order by any means; while Jack Drake had been the best junior boxer on board the school-ship Benbow. It was skill against strength, though

Drake was sturdy and strong enough if it came to that.

Bolsover major's object was to get close to his adversary and hammer him; and had he been allowed to have his way, possibly one round would have been sufficient to finish the combat, as Bolsover averred.

But Drake was too careful for that, and he stalled off his bulky adversary quite successfully, giving ground, and escaping by a light side-spring when Bolsover got too near.

Bolsover's powerful drives found nothing to stop them; sometimes they were knocked up, and sometimes they were wasted to empty air. He paused close on the end of the round, and gasped and glared.

"Call this fighting?" he snorted. "Yah! You— Yarooooooh!"

Drake rushed in, and his right landed on Bolsover's nose and interrupted his remarks. The bully of the Remove staggered back, and Drake's left came crashing on his chin and stretched him on the floor on his back. The crash of his fall resounded through the Rag.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bolsover's down!" roared Bob Cherry, in great surprise.

"Time!" rapped out Harry Wharton.

"Ow!" murmured Bolsover, feeling his nose and chin. "Oh, my hat!"

"Mon pauvre ami!"

"Oh, chuck that!"

"You vas careless, mon ami," said Dupont.

"You talk instead of to fight! Zat is silly! You talk too much, mon ami!"

"Ass! Dry up!"

"Next time you keep ze mouth shut, isn't it?"

"I'll shut your mouth for you if you don't cheese it!" growled Bolsover major.

His second wisely "cheesed" it.

"Time!"

Bolsover major came up to time with a savage gleam in his eyes.

But Drake had the best of the second round, and Bolsover experienced some severe punishment without getting home on his adversary.

But in the third round Bolsover major's chance came, and he was able to get home with heavy hammering. Bolsover's blows, when they came home, were terrific, and the juniors looked on in breathless silence as they heard them ring. Only the call of "Time!" saved Jack Drake from the knock-out.

But the call came, and Rodney led him to the corner of the ring.

Drake gasped for breath.

He smiled faintly as he read his chum's look.

"All serene!" panted Drake. "That was a bad turn, but— Oh, my nose!"

Rodney sponged his blazing face. The call of "Time!" came all too soon, but Drake stepped up willingly enough.

Hammer-and-tongs went the fourth round. There was heavy punishment on both sides now.

"This finishes it," said Skinner.

"I guess it does let that galoot out, some!" remarked Fisher T. Fish.

But Skinner and Fishy were quite mistaken. The fifth round followed, and then the sixth. And in the sixth Bolsover very evidently had "bellows to mend," while Drake still seemed fresh, and quite sound in wind, at least.

"Seventh round!" said Johnny Bull, as Wharton called "Time!" again. "That new kid is game, anyhow."



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(Continued on page 36.)



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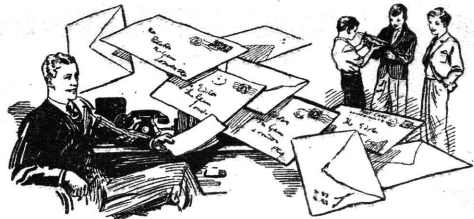
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THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Let the Editor be your pal. Drop him a line to-day, addressing your letter: The Editor, The GEM, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

HALLO, CHUMS! An enthusiastic letter reached me the other day from an old GEM reader. "All through the last war," he writes, "the GEM and 'Magnet' helped to make life worth living for us all. I doubt if there are any other boys' papers in existence with such a record. I am writing to say that we all sincerely trust that the GEM and 'Magnet' will carry on through the present conflict. For either of the two grand old-timers to cease publication would be a catastrophe, and a victory in a sense for Hitler."

I wish to thank this reader for his loyalty to the companion papers, and I can assure him and all other readers that every effort will be made to ensure that the GEM and 'Magnet' will keep their flags flying and help to confound Hitler! But there is one important thing that every reader must do at once—that is, place a standing order for the companion papers with his newsagent. If each reader does this he will not only make sure of getting the GEM and the "Magnet"

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George Payne, president of the International Friendship Correspondence Club, regrets to announce that owing to military reasons the club will have to close down. Applicants and members who have not received replies to letters will, the President hopes, understand the position. He wishes to thank officials and members of the club for their loyal support.

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"TOM MERRY HITS BACK!"

As the title of next Wednesday's St. Jim's story suggests, Tom Merry now takes the law into his own hands in dealing with his treacherous enemy, the new master of the Fourth. Tom and his chums "call the tune," and it's a tune that gets Silverson on the raw! A succession of amazing and daring rags make the new master hop, and he finds himself utterly helpless to "nail" the culprits. The "Worm" is at his wits' end, and he has hardly a wriggle left in him when the raggers have done with him. Readers will simply revel in this exciting yarn.

"BIGGLES' SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!"

In next week's thrilling chapters of this great serial Biggles & Co. get down to the task of pearl-diving, and it proves a life-or-death experience for one member of the party—Sandy. How he gets trapped below water in the tentacles of a devil fish, and how Biggles & Co. above water make a desperate fight for his life, are the highlights of the next instalment of Captain Johns' serial.

Last, but not least, on the programme is another tip-top Greyfriars tale by Frank Richards. The title is: "Jack Drake's Hat-trick!"

Since Jack has been in the Remove he has formed the opinion that Wharton is swollen-headed, and he sets out to take him down a peg—a dangerous occupation with a chap of Wharton's hot temperament and fighting ability! Don't miss the excitement.

Remember, chums—place a definite order for the old paper to-day. Chin, chin!

THE EDITOR,
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FOES OF THE REMOVE!

(Continued from page 34.)

"Blessed if I don't begin to think so!" said Bob Cherry.

"Time!"

Seven rounds were over, and undoubtedly both the combatants looked groggy as they rested in their corners. But neither of them was feeling like surrender, and Wharton called "Time!" for the eighth round. Both of them came up rather slowly to the scratch, but they came up.

Bolsover major's heavy plunges were wilder and clumsier than ever now, and his lighter adversary almost danced round him. Blow after blow crashed home on Bolsover's flushed, crimson face, and his clumsy drives in return beat nothing but the air.

The bully of the Remove gritted his teeth and rushed in. He was almost rushing Drake down when the latter sprang nimbly aside, and, as Bolsover turned clumsily upon him, he met the bully of the Remove with a terrific right-hander on the point of the jaw. Bolsover spun over as if he had been shot and crashed on the floor.

Bolsover lay gasping. The blow he had received would have felled a Sixth Former easily enough, and it had told terribly on Bolsover, powerful as he was. He felt his jaw feebly with his gloved hands as he lay.

Harry Wharton counted.

At "Nine!" Bolsover made a feeble effort to rise. But his head was spinning, and he lurched over and fell on his side.

UP FOR THE SACK!

(Continued from page 22.)

"HUWWAY!"

"Good old Tommy!"

"Shoulder high, you men!"

"Good man!"

"Bravo!"

James Silverson looked from his study window. The quadrangle was swarming with St. Jim's fellows—crowded round Tom Merry.

All the school knew the news that Monsieur Morny had brought back from the air camp at Abbotsford—Mossoo was trilling it far and wide. And all the school wanted to make it clear what they thought of Tom Merry.

Fellows of all Forms swarmed round him.

Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth hoisted him

"Out!"

"Drake wins!"

"Bravo, Drake!"

Jack Drake stood a little unsteadily on his pins. He could have gone on, but he was glad from the bottom of his heart that the terrific combat was over.

Napoleon rushed to the side of his fallen chum.

"Mon pauvre ami!" he moaned.

Bolsover major sat up unsteadily.

"Think I can't take a licking?" snorted Bolsover. "Yah! Help me to get up, and don't play the goat!"

Jack Drake had peeled off the gloves, and was sponging his face. Bolsover major lurched towards him and eyed him grimly.

"You've licked me!" he grunted.

"Not much of a licking," said Drake cheerily. "I'm on my last lap, anyhow."

Bolsover seemed a little mollified by that remark.

"You're a good man with your hands!" he said. "I thought you were a funky cad. You aren't! I don't bear any malice for a stand-up fight! There's my fist on it!"

"Good man!" said Drake.

And he shook hands with Bolsover major cheerily enough.

"Bon, bon, bon!" exclaimed Napoleon Dupont, in delight. "Now zat zere is peace, you are ze good friend! You embrace and kees, yes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead!" grunted Bolsover major.

Next Week: "JACK DRAKE'S HAT-TRICK!"

shoulder-high, amid cheers. In the midst of a yelling, cheering crowd, he was chaired in the quad. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy waved his eyeglass in wild excitement, and roared till his noble voice almost cracked. Manners and Lowther almost danced with glee. A hundred fellows roared together:

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Tommy!"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Oh, chuck it!" gasped Tom, his face crimson.

"Look here—"

"Huwway! Thwee cheeahs, and thwee more!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Tommy!"

James Silverson watched. His expression did not indicate that he was enjoying the enthusiastic scene in the quad!

Next Week: "TOM MERRY HITS BACK!"



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