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THE GATHERING OF THE GLANS.

DOUBLE-LENGTH
TALE OF
TOM MERRY

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



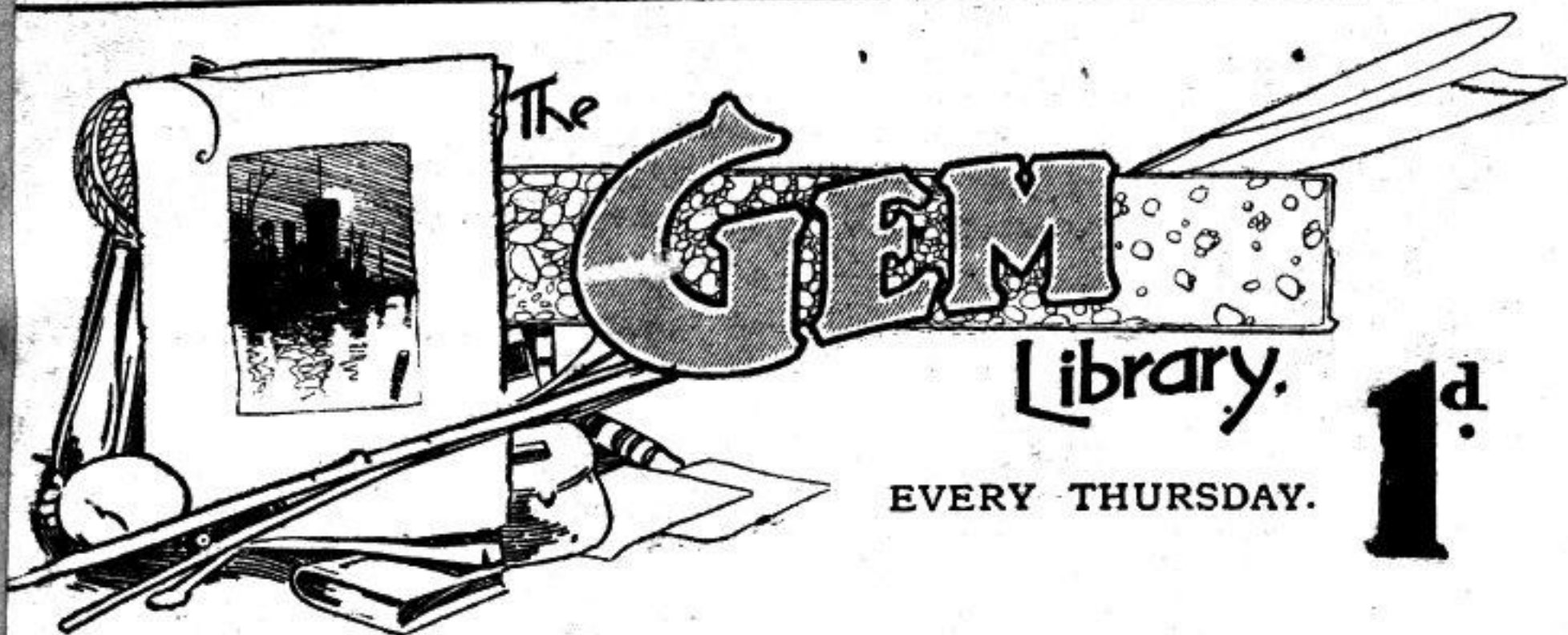
NO. 1.

D'ARGY'S

VOL. 1.

BATH!

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A Complete Story for Everyone, and Every Story a Gem!



A Double-Length Complete Tale of Tom Merry's Schooldays. By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1.

Tom Merry Makes Up His Mind.

TOM MERRY sat on the corner of the table in his study in the School House at St. Jim's, and ran his fingers through his curly hair.

Night had fallen upon St. Jim's, and the gas was lighted in the study, and a ruddy fire glowed in the grate, and very cheerful and cosy the room looked.

The chums of the Shell—known all over St. Jim's as the Terrible Three—were all there. Manners was roasting chestnuts at the fire. Monty Lowther, with a pen in his right hand, his head resting on his left, and an expression of terrific determination upon his face, was driving at express speed through a Latin imposition. Tom Merry, as we have said, sat on a corner of the table, and the way he ran his fingers through his hair showed that he was thinking something out.

"It won't do!" exclaimed Tom Merry suddenly, bringing down his fist upon the table—"It won't do—"

Monty Lowther gave a yell. The thump on the table had caused the ink to spurt from his pen, and in a moment there was a specimen of almost every size in blots scattering over his paper.

"It won't do—" repeated Tom Merry.

"I should think it won't!" yelled Lowther. "What do you think Mr. Railton will say when I show him this?"

Tom Merry glanced at the blotted sheet.

"I don't think I should show him that, Lowther. He would probably say that you're to do it over again."

"You—you ass! And I had nearly finished it!"

"Well, you've quite finished it now, and no mistake. But don't worry over a trifle, Monty, old chap—"

"Thirty lines of Virgil! Do you call that a trifle?"

"—as, certainly, compared with the important matter I've

ANOTHER LONG, COMPLETE TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

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been thinking about," said Tom Merry. "I say it won't do—"

"What won't do?"

"I've been thinking—"

"Well, you shouldn't if it has that effect upon you!" growled Lowther, as he crumpled up the spoiled sheet, and threw it into the grate.

There was a howl from Manners.

"Hallo, Manners, what's the matter with you?"

"You duffer! You've knocked half a dozen of my chestnuts into the fire!"

"Sorry! It's all Tom Merry's fault. He's been thinking, and something was bound to happen—"

"It won't do!" said Tom Merry, thumping the table again, more emphatically than before. "I said it won't do, and I mean it won't do!"

His chums looked at him.

"If you'd kindly explain what you're talking about," said Lowther thoughtfully, "we might be able, with the aid of a microscope, to see some meaning in your remarks—that is, of course, if there is any."

"I've been thinking," said Tom severely, "about the state things have fallen into at St. Jim's. This school is going to the dogs. And what is the reason?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Lowther. "Is that a conundrum? If it is, I give it up."

"The reason," pursued Tom Merry, unheeding—"the reason is, that there is a want of a proper sense of discipline among the juniors."

Manners and Lowther simply stared

"Off your rocker?" inquired Lowther pleasantly.

"Must be," said Manners. "I've heard the prefects talking in that way, but I never expected to hear a fellow in our Form say—"

"You don't understand me," said Tom Merry. "I—"

"No, blessed if we do! Still, don't trouble to explain. I've got to get my impot done, and I don't want you to interrupt—"

"Don't be an ass, Lowther. This is an important matter. When I say that a proper sense of discipline is lacking in the juniors at St. Jim's, I don't mean that there is anything wrong with the Shell. We are all right."

"Oh, I see! Then what do you mean?"

"I am speaking of the Fourth Form. You are aware," went on Tom Merry, growing animated, "that there is a deadly rivalry between the two houses at this school, which existed before we came here—in fact, the origin of which is lost in the mists of antiquity—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Lowther. "It's only a hundred years since the New House was built."

"Well, never mind the mists of antiquity," said Tom Merry. "Anyway, the rivalry between the School House and the New House has lasted a jolly long time, and when we three entered the School House at St. Jim's we at once came to the determination to make this house the cock house at the school."

"And we've done it!" said Lowther

"Well, yes, in a measure we have," assented Tom Merry. "We have done our best, under difficulties. Before we arrived, the leaders of the juniors in this house were Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy, of Study No. 6, and, I believe, from what I've heard, that they kept up their end pretty well against the New House—"

"Passably, I dare say."

"But when we came, we recognised at once that our natural sphere was the leadership; but Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy could not see it—"

"Ha, ha! They can't see it yet!"

"Exactly. And that's what I'm coming to. We've got to make them see it!" said Tom Merry, with a determined frown.

"A jolly good idea, if it can be done!"

"You see," went on the hero of the Shell, who had evidently been giving the matter a great deal of thought, "so long as there are two parties disputing for the leadership of the School House, how are we to make the New House fellows toe the line?"

"Quite so."

"While if Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy were content to follow our lead, as they should do, we could soon put Figgins & Co., of the New House, in their place."

"Very likely."

"And then," said Tom Merry—"then we could, when required, present a united front to outside enemies."

"Bravo!"

"You know that we shall never really get the best of Rylcombe Grammar School till that's done. We've licked

them, I know, and made them own up that they're licked. But they're such obstinate bounders. They're like the chap who was dead, but wouldn't lie down. After they're licked they come up smiling for another licking. And—not to put too fine a point on it—they've licked us at times."

"So they have," grinned Lowther.

"They're not going to lick us again!"

"Certainly not!"

"And so, as I said when you blotted your impot, it won't do!"

"What won't do?"

"This insubordination among the juniors. We've got to go on the war-path in earnest. We've got to conquer Study No. 6—"

"Hurrah!"

"And then wipe out Figgins & Co., of the New House—"

"Hip, pip!"

"And then give the Grammar School the everlasting kybosh—"

"Bravo!"

"And so," said Tom Merry, slipping off the table, "we may as well get to business at once, kids. Study No. 6 is going to be sat upon heavily."

"Are you going to get on the roof, then?"

"Rats! Where's the screwdriver?"

"In the drawer of the table."

"And the screws?"

"They're in the locker."

"Then, come along!" said Tom Merry, when he had found the screws and the driver. "Let's get along to No. 6!"

"What's the wheeze?" asked Manners, getting up from the fender.

"Study No. 6 are going to entertain Figgins & Co. at tea to-night. Figgy, Kerr, and Wynn will be along pretty soon. I thought it would be only a kind little attention to screw up the door of No. 6—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"With the door screwed up, and Blake inside and Figgins outside, I don't think that tea-party will be a howling success," said Tom Merry, with a smile of satisfaction. "We'll drop on Figgins & Co. when they come, and give them a ducking in the bath-room, and then chuck them out on their necks—"

"Good wheeze!"

"That will do for a start," went on Tom Merry. "We have got to make ourselves respected, and there's only one way of dealing with these youngsters."

Tom Merry was about two months older than Jack Blake, of Study No. 6, but he might have been two decades older by the way he spoke.

"Quite right!" grinned Lowther. "Those youngsters ought to respect hoary patriarchs like us, and show a proper reverence of our grey beards—"

"If you're going to make bad jokes about the matter, Lowther—"

"I'm not. Mine are all good ones. But get along with your screwing while I write out my beastly imposition!"

"And I'll finish my chestnuts," said Manners.

"No, you won't!" said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I shall want you both! Come along!"

"But my imposition—"

"But my chestnuts—"

"Hang your imposition! Blow your chestnuts! Come along."

"Oh, it's no good arguing with the obstinate bounder!" said Manners, sweeping his chestnuts back from the fire. "Come along, Monty, old chap!"

"Right-ho! I'm coming!"

And the Terrible Three left the study and made their way cautiously down the corridor, and turned into the passage upon which the Fourth Form studies opened.

The passage was dimly lighted, and in the dusk the three chums of the Shell were soon outside the door of No. 6, without having made a sound to alarm the occupants.

The light that gleamed under the door showed that the room was occupied, and the chums could hear the murmur of Blake's voice within, sounding a good deal as if he were reading out a letter.

"It's all right!" whispered Tom Merry. "Hold the handle, in case of accidents, and I'll soon have the screws—Hallo, my hat!"

He gave a jump, and dropped the screwdriver, as a sudden shout rang from within the Fourth Form study.

"Hurrah!"

"Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!"

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The Grammarians put on a spurt, Marmaduke heard them close behind, and his comrades drawing further and further away in front.

CHAPTER 2.

The Terrible Three Catch a Tartar.

"**H**URRAH!" Within the study the tea-table was laid, and the light gleamed cheerily on white cloth and shining crockery, and many a tempting dainty from the tuck-shop in hospitable array. Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy were there, waiting for Figgins & Co. to come to tea; but at the present moment, in the excitement of the letter Blake was reading out, they had forgotten Figgins & Co., and the tea as well.

The chums of the Fourth Form were looking in very fine feather that February evening. Herries, big and burly and good-natured, Jack Blake, athletic, good-looking, intelligent, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—the one and only. Arthur Augustus, the swell of the School House, was standing in an elegant attitude before the fire, his eyeglass screwed into his eye, and his waistcoat gleaming in the gaslight with all the hues of the rainbow. Never had an Eton jacket been so beautifully fitted; never had a pair of trousers been so charmingly creased.

"Hurrah!"

Blake and Herries shouted with a force of lungs that Stentor himself might have envied, and Arthur Augustus added a hearty "Bwavo!"

"This is jolly good news!" exclaimed Blake.

"Ripping!" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as weally the best news we have had for a vevy long time."

"When I saw Dig's fist on the envelope," went on Blake, "I thought he might be coming to pay us another visit, and—"

"And he's coming to stay instead?"

"That's it."

"Huwwah! Bwavo!"

The chums of No. 6 looked at each other with great satisfaction.

Digby had been their chum in that study, but his people had taken him away from St. Jim's, to be sent to a school nearer their own place in Devonshire. Digby had never been happy away from his old chums, and they, for their part, had always wanted him back. There wasn't any too much room in the study for three fellows, and it could not be denied that four was a crowd. But if the room had only been half its size, they would have welcomed back Digby with open arms.

"Good old Dig!" said Herries. "It will be jolly to see his old chivvy again! I'm jolly glad he's persuaded his people to let him come back."

"Yes, and I think the way we put it to Sir Robert Digby when he was on a visit here had something to do with it," Blake remarked thoughtfully.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus, with a nod. "I weally think that the way I explained things to the noble bawonet had somethin' to do with the mattah. I weally put it to him as one gentleman to anothah."

"Read it out again, Blake," said Herries.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Hewwies," said D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon Herries.

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"Go on," said Herries; "read it out again, Blake."

"Pway allow me—"

Blake resumed reading the letter.

"I've persuaded my governor to let me come back to St. Jim's at last," went on the letter from Digby. "He's going abroad for a time, so that made it easier for me to persuade him. I'm coming back at once, without waiting for the half-term. You can expect me any day, but I'll wire my train."

"Hurrah!" shouted Herries.

"Bwavo!"

"It's ripping!" said Blake. "You know, I've missed Dig a lot, especially since Tom Merry came to St. Jim's. We held our own a great deal better when we were four instead of three, and Dig had some good ideas sometimes."

"Yaas, wathah. I wegard Digby as an intelligent person, though he sometimes failed in tweatin' me with pwopah respect."

"Ha, ha! I say, this will be good news for Figgins. We'll put Figgins & Co. in their place again when we've got old Dig to back us up again. We— Great pip, what's that?"

It was a crash outside the study, and a bump on the door. Then a voice was heard shouting:

"Blake! Herries! Help here!"

"It's Figgins!" exclaimed Blake, and he dashed to the door and tore at the handle. But the door did not budge. Blake tore at it again, but it would not come open, and still the sound of scuffling and struggling continued outside.

"Lend a hand here!" gasped Blake.

Herries was at his side in a moment, but Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was more leisurely in his movements. He stopped to adjust his monocle, and to smooth out a slight crease in his gorgeous waistcoat.

Blake grasped the handle of the door with both hands, and Herries grasped Blake round the waist. Then they both tugged away for all they were worth.

There was a tearing sound, and the door flew suddenly open, a half-driven screw sticking out of its edge.

Back went Blake and Herries as the door flew open, and Herries sat down violently, and Blake sat upon him.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, surveying them through his eyeglass. "Bai Jove, deah boys, how extwemely clumsy!"

Blake jumped to his feet in a moment. Herries, who had had a harder bump on the floor, was not quite so quick.

Blake stared out into the dusky corridor. At first all he could see was a maze of arms and legs and heads.

A desperate combat was being waged, but it was not easy at first to distinguish the combatants. But Blake soon made out Tom Merry, engaged in a deadly grapple with a long-legged, powerfully-built junior, who had just pinned him against the wall.

"Hallo, Figgins!" exclaimed Blake.

Figgins of the New House gave a gasp.

"Lend a hand, Blake; the rotter is too strong for me."

"Right-ho!"

Blake sprang to the rescue. His grip was on Tom Merry in a moment, and the hero of the Shell was yanked into the study between the two.

He was still struggling violently, with a very red and excited face, and his collar torn out, but Herries came into action, and Tom Merry was plumped down upon the floor, and Herries plumped upon his chest.

"You're a giddy prisoner!" said Blake, wagging a warning finger at him, while Figgins gasped to recover his wind.

"Sit tight, Herries!"

"Right-ho!" said Herries. "I've got him."

"We were coming in to tea," gasped Figgins, "and we found those bounders kneeling out there, screwing up your door—"

"My hat! That's why it wouldn't open!"

"So we dropped on them," grinned Figgins; and he dashed into the passage again to lend a helping hand to the "Co.," who were still struggling with Manners and Lowther.

The latter two were soon dragged into the study and secured. The odds against them were too great. Then the "Co." came in. Fatty Wynn and Kerr, the famous "Co.," were dusty and dishevelled, and gasping for breath.

"Done, 'em!" gasped Kerr. "It was a tussle, though."

"Yaas, wathah! You look quite dirty and disweputable," said D'Arcy, looking upon Figgins & Co. with a far from favourable eye.

"So would you be if you'd been in an up-and-downer like that," growled Fatty Wynn. "I say, kids, is tea ready? Fighting always makes me hungry; and as we were coming out to tea, I thought I'd bring a good big hunger with me, and so I haven't had anything since dinner except a cake and a pound of biscuits and some oranges and a pork-pie and a fig-pudding and a dozen tarts."

"My word, you must be hungry, then!" exclaimed Blake sympathetically. "Well, it's all ready. Shove the kettle down on the coal, D'Arcy."

"Certainly, deah boy!"

The kettle was already singing. Blake nursed his chin thoughtfully as he gazed down upon the Terrible Three. The chums of the Shell Form were helpless prisoners. Herries was sitting upon Tom Merry, pinning him down by sheer weight; Figgins was kneeling on Monty Lowther, and Kerr had plumped himself down upon Manners. The Terrible Three wriggled in vain.

"So you were going to screw up our door, were you?" said Blake.

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry undauntedly; "and if that long-legged specimen hadn't come along for another few minutes, we—"

"But I did come along," grinned Figgins, "and now the tables are turned. What are you going to do with that rubbish, Blake?"

"Bettah give them a feahful thwashin'," said D'Arcy. "I wegard it as wank impertinence for them to scwew up the door of our study."

"We have some treacle here," said Herries; "we could anoint them with treacle."

"And mix some soot in it," said Fatty Wynn. "They've delayed tea, and a fellow who delays a meal ought to be made an example of."

"And rub it well into their necks," observed Kerr, the Scottish member of the Co. "These School House kids are too cheeky by half."

"Hallo, what's that?" exclaimed Blake.

"I mean these kids in the Shell," amended Kerr, remembering that he was on a visit to the School House, and that House rows were "off."

"And then frog's-march them down the corridor, and bung them into their study and lock them in," said Figgins.

But Blake made no motion to carry out any of those valuable suggestions, and his brow remained very thoughtful. Something was evidently working in his mind.

"Well, what are you going to do?" asked Kerr. "I'm not particular, but I don't find Manners' chest the most comfortable seat in the world."

"Considering all the circumstances—" began Blake.

"Cut the cackle!"

"I say, considering all the circumstances," repeated Blake, with emphasis, "I think we may imitate the example of King—King—King—somebody or other—it was some beastly king, but I forget his name—who pardoned all the criminals on an occasion of great joyfulness."

"Where's the great joyfulness on this occasion?" asked Figgins. "Do you mean our coming to tea with you?"

"No, I don't," said Blake, with a withering look.

"What do you mean, then?"

"We've had ripping good news."

"Somebody died and left you ninepence?"

"No. Digby is coming back to St. Jim's!"

"For good?"

"For good."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Figgins & Co. heartily. "Jolly glad to hear it."

"Bravo!" gasped Tom Merry. "I'd cheer if Herries would kindly get off my chest."

"Rats!" said Herries. "I'll cheer for you. Hip, pip, hurrah!"

"So, on this great and joyful occasion, we are going to pardon the criminals—I mean, these kids in the Shell," said Blake magnanimously.

"Right you are," said Figgins. "Kick 'em out."

"Pway wait a moment," said D'Arcy, "I—"

"Kick 'em out!"

"You are intewwuptin' me, Figgins."

"Shove 'em out on their necks!"

"Pway listen to me!"

"Pile 'em in a heap outside, and let 'em sort themselves out."

"Pway—"

"My hat, there's Gussy still talking! That chap is like the little brook—he goes on for ever. Shove those rotters outside!"

"I insist upon some wegard bein' paid to my wemarks!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "Pway listen to me! If you were not a guest in this study, Figgins, I should immediately pwoceed to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Thank goodness I am a guest!" gasped Figgins, apparently in a state of great alarm. "I—I am so frightened!"

"Pway do not wot—"

"Kick them out!" said Kerr. "Out they go!"

"Pway stop! I was about to say—"

"You're too long about it! Kick—"

"I was about to say that, on this gweat and glowious

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occasion, when our esteemed friend Digby is about to return to St. Jim's, we might signalise the occasion—"

"So we have, by pardoning the criminals."

"Yaas; but instead of kickin' them out—"

"Out they go!" shouted Herries.

"I say; instead of kickin' them out—"

"One, two, three, and—"

"Instead of kickin' them out—"

"Oh, cut the cackle, and lend a hand here!"

"Instead of kickin' them out, invite them to tea."

Blake stopped suddenly in his efforts to jerk Lowther to the door.

"Well, that's a good idea," he exclaimed; "I never thought of that!"

"Of course you did not, deah boy," said D'Arcy; "to think of these things wequires a bwain!"

"It's a go!" exclaimed Blake. "I say, you bounders, will you stay to tea?"

The Terrible Three had been considerably ruffled and rumped, but they never bore malice. Tom Merry grinned through the dust on his features.

"With all my heart!" he replied at once.

"Rather!" said Manners. "I'd rather stay to tea than be kicked out, any day!"

"Certainly," said Lowther. "It's a bit below our dignity to take tea with fellows in a lower Form—"

"Oh, cheese it! How much higher is the Shell than the Fourth, I'd like to know?"

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard your wemark as widiculous, Lowthah!"

"It's higher in some respects," said Figgins. "The time we ducked Lowther in that mouldy old ditch, for instance, he was high for a long time—higher than anything else at St. Jim's!"

"Ha, ha! It's settled, then, you stay to tea, kids?"

"Certainly," said three voices in unison.

"Then it's pax!"

And the Terrible Three were released. And while they dusted themselves down, and set their personal attire a little to rights, Herries made a rapid journey down to the school shop for further supplies, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made the tea.

CHAPTER 3.

A Study "Feed."

TEA in Blake's study was a jolly meal that evening. The chums of Study No. 6 were in funds, as it happened, and so the spread was a particularly good one. They were in very high spirits, too, owing to the good news from Digby.

In spite of the triangular rivalry which reigned between the Terrible Three, Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co., there was a deep and real regard at the bottom of it all, and all the juniors had missed Digby from his accustomed place.

All were pleased to hear that he was returning to the old school, and over that merry tea in No. 6 they discussed the reception which should be given him.

"We must make him welcome," said Blake. "When we hear that he's positively coming, I suggest that we all make it pax for that day, and stop rows, and join together to give old Dig. a really ripping time."

"Good!" said Tom Merry and Figgins, at once.

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "That, of course, is the pwopah thing. We must have some celebawtion, too. What pwice a twiumpah arch in the quadwangle?"

"A twiumpah arch!" said Blake. "A ripping idea; only it won't work!"

"I weally do not see why it should not work. You boundahs often say that my ideas won't work, and they turn out all wight aftah all," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "I weally think that a twiumpah arch would be the pwopah capah."

"My dear ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! I considah it an oppwobious expwession, and I wegard you as a boundah!"

"But you see, duffer—"

"I object to being chawactewised as a duffah!"

"Look here; your idea of a twiumpah arch is merely piffle!"

"I wefuse to hear my ideas chawactewised as piffle; the term is disrespectfule!"

"Ass! Do you think the Head would give permission for a twiumpah arch to be erected in the quadwangle?" howled Blake.

"We do not always wait for the permission of the Head when we want to cawwy out a good ideah."

"That's true enough," laughed Tom Merry; "but the Head would have to know about this. You'd have to have a lot of workmen on the job."

"Yaas; and it would be a jolly good thing, as it would help the unemployed in this beastly cold weathah!"

"Yes, that's all very well," said Figgins.

"I hope no one here would wefuse to help the unemployed," said D'Arcy, looking round through his eyeglass. "I wegard them as a most deservin' class. Work is such a wotten, howwid thing, you know; and considah the feelin's of a man who actually has to go and look for it—to go and hunt for a thing he would wathah be without! If we ewect a twiumpah arch, it will pwovide gwub for the hungwy!"

"You utter ass! How could we have workmen in the quad without the Head's permission? You're off your rocker!"

"I'm not off my wockah, Blake; and if we could not contwive to ewect a twiumpah arch without the Head's permission, I think we had bettah get the Head's permission for that most deservin' object."

"He wouldn't give it, fathead!"

"We could twy, at all events."

"Oh, try if you like!" said Blake resignedly. "Go to the Head, and go to the housemaster, and—and go to Jericho!"

"I wefuse to go to Jewicho!"

"Barring a twiumpah arch," said Tom Merry, "there are a good many things we can do to make Dig welcome."

"A feed, for instance," suggested Fatty Wynn. "A jolly good big feed, with Digby the guest of the evening, and—"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Monty Lowther. "That chap starts thinking about another feed before he's half through this one!"

"Well, how can you make a fellow feel more comfy, and at home than by giving him a feed?" exclaimed Fatty Wynn indignantly. "I know that if I had to be welcomed anywhere, I'd rather have the ceremony take the form of a big spread!"

"I've no doubt you would."

"Digby will take it as a mark of attention. We'll have a whip round, and make it a record feed," said Fatty Wynn. "It's an idea that beats a twiumpah arch hollow!"

"Wats, Fatty Wynn! My twiumpah arch—"

"What's the good of a twiumpah arch? You can't eat it!"

"Yaas, but—"

"That settles it," grinned Figgins. "If you can't eat it, it's no good to Fatty. Still, the feed's a good idea, and I think it ought to form part of the ceremony. As Shakespeare says, 'Words are but wind, but a good feed is a good feed!'"

"Was that Shakespeare?" exclaimed Kerr, who was the leading light of the New House Amateur Dramatic Society, and had taken the bard of Avon under his own wing. "I don't remember—"

"Well, it was either Shakespeare or Dan Leno, I can't quite remember which," said Figgins. "Pass the sardines, Gussy!"

"Certainly, deah boy."

"About Digby's reception," went on Tom Merry. "We shall all go down to the station and meet him—"

"With musical honours," said Herries quickly. "I shall take my cornet."

"That you won't!" exclaimed Blake, more quickly still. "We must draw the line somewhere, Herries, old man! Now—"

"I shall take my cornet!"

"My dear chap, it can't be did."

"Wathah not!" said Arthur Augustus. "Don't be bwutal, Hewwies!"

"Brutal! What do you mean, you ass?"

"I mean what I say; don't be bwutal! It would be cwuelty to play that wotten cornet to Digby on the vevy day of his awwival!"

"If you're looking for a thick ear, D'Arcy—"

"Wats!" said D'Arcy. "I appeal to all the gentlemen pwesent. Digby will have to stand the cornet latah on, but I say that it's simply cwuelty to spwing it on him the very first day!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted all the gentlemen present.

"Cornets are barred," said Lowther. "I say, why is a cornet like a football boot?"

"Pass the marmalade," said Kerr.

"We'll go down to the station in a body, and meet Digby," said Tom Merry. "You remember how the Grammarians collared Marmaduke, and sent him here tied up on a donkey, once? We must see that they don't treat Dig. like that!"

"What ho!" said Blake. "But speaking of Marmaduke, Figgy, have you heard anything of him lately, since he was here last?"

"Yes, I've had a letter. He says he's trying to persuade his pater to send him back to St. Jim's, but he's not sure about it at present."

"By Jove, it would be ripping if Marmaduke came back too!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "It would be a regular

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gathering of the clans, and no mistake! We should be in form to tackle the Grammar School then, and give them the kybosh!"

"Good!" said Figgins. "And when we have the Co. up to the full number again, we'll give you School House bounders blue beans!"

"Rats! You couldn't do it if you were forty, instead of four!"

"I'll jolly soon——"

"Peace!" exclaimed Tom Merry, waving his hand. "House rows are off!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Blake, I am surprised at you!"

"My fault," said Figgins; "I started it. I take back all I said till to-morrow. Pass the jam puffs, Wynn. Why, my word, if the horrid greedy bounder hasn't scoffed them all! Never mind, shove the rolls over this way."

"Another cup of tea?" said Herries, taking up the teapot.

"Certainly," said five or six voices.

"Who says jam tarts?"

"Jam tarts!"

"I say, this is really ripping!" said Figgins. "I'll say this much for you bounders, you do know how to give a feed!"

"Yaas, wathah! Since I have been an occupant of this study, I have given Blake and Hewwies a gweat deal of instwuction."

"Oh, draw it mild, D'Arcy!"

"I wefuse to dwaw it mild! I wepeat that since I have been an occupant of this study, I have given you a gweat deal of——"

"Gas!" said Blake. "So you have. Pass the jam tarts along to Fatty, Gus. I'm surprised at you neglecting your guests."

"I weally beg your pardon, Wynn!"

"Oh, that's all right!"

"Yaas; but weally I owe you an apology!"

"Let's have the jam tarts first."

"I am extwemely sowwy that I should have shown even a moment's neglect," said D'Arcy, keeping the plate of jam tarts in his hand while he addressed Fatty Wynn across the table. "My attention was taken up by Blake!"

"Yes; but let's have——"

"That is the weason why I was appawntly neglectful for a moment; but I apologise fwom the bottom of my heart."

"Are you going to pass those jam-tarts?" shouted Blake, as very visible signs of impatience showed in the plump countenance of Fatty Wynn.

D'Arcy turned towards Blake.

"Don't intewwupt me, Blake. I am apologisin' to Fatty Wynn."

"Pass the tarts!" said Fatty Wynn fiercely.

"Yaas, certainly; but you understand that my appawnt neglect was caused wholly by my attention bein' dwawn to Blake."

"You ass!"

"Pway——"

Herries jerked the plate out of D'Arcy's hand, and handed it across the table, and Fatty Wynn, with a withering glance at the swell of St. Jim's, started on the tarts. Arthur Augustus did not see his look, however, as he had turned his monocle upon Herries.

"Hewwies, I wegard you as a wude boundah!"

"Oh, rats!" said Herries. "Fill my cup, please, Blake."

"Here you are."

"I wegard——"

"Another jam-roll, Tom Merry?"

"No, thanks."

"A strawberry puff?"

"Thanks, no. I'm done."

"So am I," said Figgins, "and a ripping good spread it was, too! I'm afraid it's about time we got back to our own House."

"I suppose so," said Wynn. "Isn't it a rotten thing that everything comes to an end. Now, if a feed could be arranged to last, say, twenty-four hours——"

"We shouldn't get you into the doorway of the New House at the end of it," said Figgins. "Come along, kids." And Figgins & Co. rose from the hospitable board.

"About time for us to be moving, too, I think," said Tom Merry. "There's prep to do, and the masters are so unreasonable in the morning if you haven't done it."

"Yaas, wathah. I wegard——"

"We'll all see you to the New House, Figgy," said Blake. "Come along, kids."

And the "kids" came along. The party escorted Figgins & Co. across the quadrangle in the raw February evening, to the doorway of the New House. There, the rivals of St. Jim's parted, and the School House boys returned to their own quarters.

The Terrible Three had to pass No. 6 to get to their own quarters. Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy stopped at their door.

"Well, so long!" said Blake. "By the way, what were you trying to screw up our door for when Figgins & Co. came along?"

Tom Merry grinned.

"It was the first step in a new campaign."

"Eh? What's the game?"

"We think it's about time that the question of the leadership of the House was finally decided."

"It is decided. We are the leaders."

"Oh, that's all rot, you know! We're going to give you the kybosh, and we've started by——"

"By geting a licking," said Blake, laughing. "Well, you can keep on in the same way if you like. Travel!"

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

"I don't see what you're cackling about, Monty." Tom Merry remarked, as they walked away to Study X.

"None so blind as those who won't see," grinned Lowther.

"I agree with Blake. If the new campaign is going on as it's started, I'd rather be left out of it. I'm still feeling rumped."

"Oh, that's nothing! Better luck next time."

"That's all very well," said Manners; "but——"

"Of course it is. Now let's get to the prep."

And the argument ceased, and the Terrible Three were soon deep in their work.

CHAPTER 4.

D'Arcy Interviews the Head.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY stood in the ancient gateway of St. Jim's, looking about him with his eyeglass screwed into his right eye.

It was the morning after the good news had been received from Digby in Study No. 6 in the School House.

Morning school was over, and the quad. was pretty lively; but the swell of St. Jim's had left the madding crowd to stroll down to the gates.

He backed away from the gateway, across the road, surveying the big stone structure through his eyeglass with a critical expression.

"Yaas, wathah!" he murmured to himself.

The gateway at St. Jim's was a relic of the ancient building, mostly destroyed in the Parliamentary wars of the seventeenth century. It was of great interest to antiquaries from all parts of the country; but D'Arcy had never shown a very keen interest in architecture before. Yet now his interest in that gate was decidedly keen, and he seemed to be surveying it and taking in its dimensions for some particular purpose that was working in his mind.

Three youths came down the lane and saw D'Arcy standing there, staring at the gate. The three would have been known at once by their caps as inmates of the Rylcombe Grammar School, a scholastic establishment very near St. Jim's, and on terms of great rivalry with the college.

The three were well known to D'Arcy, if he had looked at them, for they were Frank Monk, the son of the Grammar School Principal, and his chums Carboy and Lane. The three were the leaders of the Grammar School in their rows with the Saints. Frank Monk immediately stopped as he caught sight of D'Arcy.

"Hallo, that's the one and only Gus!" he murmured.

"Look out!"

"What's the row?"

"We don't want to run into a hornet's nest, and where he is, the rest usually aren't very far off," said Monk sagely.

"We've got to pass the gates to get home——"

"He doesn't see us," said Carboy. "He's staring up at the gates! What the dickens is the fellow at, anyhow?"

Monk shook his head with a puzzled look.

"Blessed if I know!"

"He's surveying the giddy gate," said Lane. "Trying to take a mental photograph of it, I suppose. But, anyway, he doesn't see us. Let's get on."

The Grammar School trio, walking quietly on the belt of grass that bordered Rylcombe Lane, advanced without the preoccupied swol of St. Jim's being in the least aware of their approach.

"Yaas, it's a wippin' ideah," exclaimed D'Arcy suddenly — "weally wippin'! I don't care a wap what Tom Mewwy and Blake say about it. It's a wippin'—— 'Ow!"

He broke off as a hand fell upon the back of his collar, and he was twisted round, to find himself face to face with Monk, Lane, and Carboy.

"Pway welease me," said D'Arcy, with dignity. "You are wufflin' my collah, Fwank Monk."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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The Grammar School trio, walking quietly on the belt of grass that bordered Rylcombe Lane, advanced without the preoccupied swell of St. Jim's being in the least aware of their approach.

"I have no time now to thwash you. I am thinkin' out a big ideah."

Frank Monk let go the collar of the School House swell.

"If you're thinking," he said gravely, "far be it from me to interrupt the unaccustomed process. Get on with the thinking."

"Weally, Fwank Monk—"

"But what's the idea?" asked Carboy curiously. "What were you standing there staring up at that gate for like a giddy lunatic?"

"I wefuse to be compared with a giddy lunatic."

"But what were you trying to think out, Gussy?" asked Monk. "Some little joke up against us, I suppose?"

"Certainly not. I was not occupying my mind with such twifes," said D'Arcy. "The fact is, an old fwiend is coming back to the school."

"That bounder Marmaduke Smythe?"

"No; our old fwiend Digby, and we are goin' to give him a wippin' welcome," said D'Arcy. "My ideah is to have a triumphal arch."

"Jolly good wheeze."

"It could be ewected in the gateway vevy well, as the gateway is so extwemely large," said D'Arcy. "Tom Mewwy and Blake say that it is imposs.; but I—"

"You think it quite poss.?" asked Frank, with a grin.

"Exactly, deah boy."

"And when is Digby coming back?" asked Monk, with a wink to his chums.

"I am not certain," said D'Arcy unsuspectiously. "He is goin' to wire and let us know. Would you fellows like to join in the weception?"

"Yes, rather! We should certainly like to be there."

"We're all goin' to meet Digby," said Arthur Augustus. "We're goin' to escort him to the school like a guard of honah, you know. I think—"

"Hallo, here's a wire for somebody!"

A messenger-boy was coming down the lane from the direction of the village, and he had a familiar-looking, buff-coloured envelope in his hand.

He stopped at the gate, and D'Arcy made him a sign to approach. The three Grammarians looked on with great interest.

"Is that telegwam for me, young person?" asked D'Arcy.

The boy held it out for inspection. It was addressed to "Study No. 6, School House, St. James's."

"That's wight," said D'Arcy. "It's for all of us, you see. There's a tannah for you, my lad. Thanks."

The "lad," who was a couple of years older than D'Arcy, grinned as he pocketed the sixpence, and went his way. D'Arcy opened the envelope.

"Bai Jove!" he exclaimed.

"Good news?" asked Frank Monk sympathetically.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Is it from Digby?"

"Yaas. He's coming down by the four-thirty to-morrow aftahnoon. He's chosen to-morrow, because Wednesday is a half-holiday here."

"So it is at the Grammar School," murmured Frank Monk. "We'll be on hand."

"Did you speak to me, Monk?"

"Eh? Oh, I was only remarking what beautiful weather we're having, considering how bad it is. Good-bye, Gussy, and be good!"

"That injunction is quite unnecessawy."

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"And tell Tom Merry not to get his feet wet. Ta-ta!"

"Weally, Fwank Monk—"

But the Grammar School trio were gone. Three distinct chuckles were heard as they tramped on down the lane.

"Four-thirty to-morrow afternoon," giggled Carboy.

"An escort of the whole gang of them!" grinned Lane.

"We're on this," said Monk sententiously.

And his chums replied, with one voice, "Rather!"

Arthur Augustus, unconscious of the fact that the information he had given might be made use of by the enemy, sauntered into the quadrangle with the telegram in his hand.

"What have you got there, Gussy?" asked Figgins, meeting him under the elms.

"Wire from Dig. He's comin' to-morrow aftahnoon."

"Good."

"I have been lookin' at the gateway, Figgins, and I am convinced that a twiumpfal arch will weally work out well, and so—"

"Oh, rats!" said Figgins. "I—"

"Pway do not be wude, Figgins. I shall be obliged if you will take this telegwam to Blake. I have to go and see the Head."

"What are you going to see the Head for?" demanded the chief of the New House juniors, in amazement.

"To ask his permish. to ewect a twiumpfal arch in honah of Dig's weturn to the coll."

Figgins chuckled.

"Right-ho! I'll take this to Blake," he said. "I don't envy you your interview with Dr. Holmes, though, Gussy."

"I suppose he will weceive me as one gentleman should weceive anotheh," said D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha! Yes, of course! Off you go!"

And Arthur Augustus immediately proceeded to the Head's study.

"Come in!" said the deep voice of the Principal of St. Jim's, as Arthur Augustus tapped at the door.

D'Arcy entered the study; an apartment generally regarded with great misgiving and aversion by the juniors of St. Jim's. The youngsters seldom enjoyed their visits to the Principal's sanctum; but D'Arcy, full of his new ideas, was quite himself.

The doctor raised his eyes, and looked at his visitor over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"Well, D'Arcy, what can I do for you?" he asked.

"I wish to ask a favah of you, sir."

"Go on!"

"Our esteemed fwiend Digby is about to weturn to St. Jim's—"

"Ah, yes! I have been in communication with his father on that subject."

"We have just had a telegwam fwom him, sir, and he's coming by the four-thirty to-morrow aftahnoon."

"Very good!"

And the Head took up his pen again, apparently under the impression that D'Arcy's business was at an end.

"If you please, sir—"

"Have you anything else to say to me, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, wathah—I mean, certainly, sir!"

"Then I must ask you to make haste, as I have something to finish before my lunch," said the doctor, glancing at his watch. "What is it, D'Arcy?"

"We are thinkin' of givin' a little celebwtation in honah of Dig's comin' back, sir—"

"Very good!"

"And I had the meah of—of—"

"Well, D'Arcy?"

"Of ewectin' a twiumpfal arch in the gateway, sir," said D'Arcy. "Tom Mewwy and Blake think it is a wotten ideah, but I think it is first-wate. There is plenty of woom in the gateway for a twiumpfal arch—"

"Nonsense, D'Arcy!"

"Pway listen to me, sir! I have just had a fivah fwom my governah, and I am willin' to blue it—I mean, to spend it—to the last shillin' to celebwtate Dig's weturn. Besides, the ewection of a twiumpfal arch will pwovide work for the unempoyed—"

"My dear D'Arcy—"

"Pway do not wefuse in a huvwyy, sir! There are lots of vewy deservin' fellows out of work, and I would employ them to ewect the twiumpfal arch, and—"

"You must find some other way of helping the unempoyed, I think, D'Arcy," said the Head drily. "I cannot give my permission for any such foolish proceedin'."

D'Arcy coloured.

"I cannot see anythin' foolish in the ideah, sir," he said.

"Perhaps not; but I can. I forbid anything of the kind. You understand?"

"Certainly, sir!"

"I have no objection whatever to a little harmless celebration of your friend's return to the school," said the Head,

kindly enough. "But a twiumpfal arch is a little too—a little too much, you see. Now, you may go!"

"But weally, sir—"

"You may go, D'Arcy."

"Considah the unempoyed—"

"Are you going?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir," said D'Arcy hastily, as the Head half rose from his seat; and he left the study in a rather hurried manner.

The doctor smiled when he was left alone again. Arthur Augustus's face was disconsolate as he walked down the passage. He was roused from his meditations by a sounding slap on the shoulder, that made him jump.

"Weally, Blake, I wish you would not be so wuff—"

"Rats! Dig's coming back, old kid! Have you been to see the Head? Figgins told me you were going to his study."

"I have seen him."

"Ha, ha! And what did he say to the idea of a twiumpfal arch?"

"He wefused to give his permish. I weally wegard Dr. Holmes as a somewhat obstinate and unweasonable old gentleman," said D'Arcy.

Blake laughed.

"Ha, ha! Never mind the twiumpfal arch, Gussy. An escort from the station, and a big feed in the study, will do us justice. Come along to dinner!"

CHAPTER 5.

A Great Occasion.

"ANYTHING wrong, Tom?"

Manners asked the question, as he noticed a rather worried look upon the countenance of Tom Merry.

The hero of the Shell shook his head.

"No, not exactly," he replied.

"What are you scowling about, then?" asked Monty Lowther.

"I wasn't aware that I was scowling, Monty," said Tom Merry mildly.

"Well, you were—a regular Bluebeard scowl!" said Lowther. "What trouble is preyin' on your poor little mind?"

"Get it off your chest, if it's there," said Manners.

"Ass!" said Lowther. "If it's on his mind, how can he get it off his chest?"

"Oh, dry up, you two," said Tom; "it's nothing! Only I was thinking that under the circs., as D'Arcy would say, our new plan of putting Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co. in their place would be rather out of order, just now. As Dig's coming back to-day, we can't have any rowing, can we?"

"I suppose not."

"So we shall have to let the matter of putting down those juniors stand over for a bit."

"Well, if you're going to put them down in the way you started doing it—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"The next time they yank us into No. 6 on our necks, it may not end in an invitation to join a tea-party."

"Dry up!"

"And so I really think it wouldn't be a bad idea to let the campaign stand over for a time," said Monty Lowther, mercilessly.

Tom Merry blushed.

As a matter of fact, the beginning of the new campaign had been distinctly disastrous for the Terrible Three, and the hero of the Shell could not deny it.

Blake and Figgins had scored all along the line, and the fact that they had used their victory generously did not alter the fact that the chums of the Shell had had a reverse.

"So the next time you start thinking, you'd better put your beef into it," Monty Lowther went on. "It was simply a muck-up this time, and no mistake!"

"Oh, do get off that subject!"

"Certainly! To-day's Wednesday, and this afternoon we're all going down to the station to meet the four-thirty at Rylcombe, and bring Digby home in triumph. Rows are barred—until to-morrow, at least. To-day the wings of the angel of peace shall shed an unaccustomed balminess upon the scene—"

"Rats! There's always plenty of balminess when you're about," said Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!" giggled Tom Merry. "Here, come along, it's time for school!"

And the chums of the Shell left their study.

It was Wednesday morning, and a hard, cold, February

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day. That afternoon—a half-holiday for the school—Digby was to return to his old haunts, and his old friends and foes were naturally elated about it. Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy thought of nothing else, excepting that D'Arcy was still giving a great deal of thought to his impossible idea of a triumphal arch.

The swell of the School House was still convinced that it was a great idea, and would be very gratifying to the returning Digby, and he was regretting now that he had gone to the Head for permission.

"You see, deah boys," D'Arcy remarked, in the classroom, "if I hadn't asked for permish. I could have cawwied out the ideah on my own; but now that he has expwessly forbidden it, it would be bad form to do it."

"To say nothing of the licking that would follow," Blake remarked.

Arthur Augustus gave a contemptuous sniff.

"Weally, Blake, I am surprised at you!"

"Hallo! What's the matter now?"

"I weally think you should know me bettah than to imagine that a lickin' would have the effect of detewwin' me fwom any pwoject I appwoved of! No, deah boy, it is bad form to disobey the ordahs of those in authowity, and that's my weason for givin' up the bwiliant ideah of a twiumpal arch."

"Well, if you've given it up, that's one comfort!" said Blake.

"I haven't given it up for good," said D'Arcy. "The Head has forbidden the eweetion of a twiumpal arch on the occasion of Dig's weturn to St. Jim's. He hasn't mentioned any othah occasion. An occasion may awise on which it will be pwopah to ewect a twiumpal arch, and then I shall considah myself fwee to act, without consultin' the Head."

"You obstinate mule!"

"I object to bein' called a mule——"

"You are talkin' D'Arcy!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom, the little, short-sighted master of the Fourth Form, suddenly awakening to the fact that a conversation was being carried on under his nose. "You will take fifty lines!"

"Oh, weally, Mr. Lathom——"

"A hundred lines, D'Arcy."

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy, under his breath, so that the little Form master should not hear. He didn't want the imposition to become two hundred lines.

Blake noticed that Figgins was looking very cheerful in class that morning, an expression that was shared by the Co. As the juniors poured out after morning school, the great Figgins imparted the reason.

"I've had a letter from Marmaduke this morning," he said.

"Any news?"

"Yes, he thinks he's coming back here; he has been persuading his governor to persuade his mother to let him come——"

"Ha, ha! What a lot of persuading! I shall be glad to see his old chivvy here again, though he was a fearful bounder when he first came to St. Jim's."

"Yaas, wathah! I have met a good many boundahs in my time," said D'Arcy, "especially in the New House at this school, but nevah such a feahful out-and-outah as Marmaduke Smythe was the day he came to St. Jim's."

"Oh, don't rake that all up again!" said Figgins, reddening.

"Certainly not, deah boy! I have no desire at all to wake up anythin' unpleasant; but, as I was sayin', Marmaduke was an awful outsidah when he first came, and it took a lot of lickin' to knock him into shape——"

"So did you, Gussy!" said Figgins.

"I wegard that wemark as fwivolous and iwwelevant," said D'Arcy. "And I must add that it is vevy far fwom the twuth. But about Marmaduke——"

"Oh, let Marmaduke alone!"

"With pleasuah, deah boy! As a wule I would not touch any of you New House wottahs with a pokah; but, as I was sayin', he was such a shockin' boundah when he first came, and we cured him——"

"I'll cure you!"

"Thanks, Figgins, but I do not wequire anythin' of the kind! What I was goin' to say is, that when Marmaduke went home he had a welapse——"

"He had a what?"

"A welapse."

"He means a relapse!" grinned Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! He had a welapse, and he came back here on that visit a wegulah boundah again. You wemembah, Figgins?"

"Oh, rats to you!" said Figgins, walking away.

D'Arcy adjusted his monocle and stared after Figgins. Then he looked at Blake.

"I say, Figgins seemed offended about somethin'," said D'Arcy. "Have you been quawwellin' with him, Blake?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"Well, he certainly seems offended. But, as I was sayin' about Marmaduke, he came back to St. Jim's a wegulah boundah, and pewwaps he will do so again."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Blake. "That's Figgy's business."

"Yaas, wathah! But I was thinking, although Marmaduke was such a shockin' boundah at one time, he's not a bad sort, and we might ewect that twiumpal arch in honah of him. Where are you goin', Blake?"

But Blake was gone.

"Extwemely wude!" murmured D'Arcy. "If Blake does not impwove his mannahs, I shall have to sewiously considah whethah to continue to wegard him as a fwiend."

After dinner the juniors took advantage of the fine cold weather to put in some football practice, but at four o'clock they were all preparing for the walk down to Rylcombe to meet Digby's train.

Just as the school clock chimed out the hour of four, Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy came along the passage, and knocked at Tom Merry's door.

"Ready?" queried Blake, kicking it open and looking in.

"Quite ready!" said Tom Merry, who was buttoning his overcoat. "I see Gussy has done himself down well in honour of the occasion."

D'Arcy was indeed looking in very fine feather.

His fur-lined overcoat was open to show the gorgeous colours of his waistcoat, his trousers were beautifully creased, his gloves spotless, his collar the highest and whitest at St. Jim's, and his inevitable eyeglass dangled at the end of its cord.

"It only shows a pwopah wespect to Digby to dwess decently when meetin' him at the station, Tom Mewwy!" said D'Arcy, flicking a minute speck of dust from the silk-hat he held in his hand. "I hope you fellows don't intend to come out like a cwoud of wagamuffins!"

"We'll try not to disgrace you, Gussy," said Lowther, with a grin. "But, of course, we can't come up to your style."

"I suppose not," said D'Arcy. "I should not expect that, deah boy. But do your best, and no fellow can do more than that."

"It's time we started," said Herries. "Four's gone."

"Well, we're ready," said Tom Merry. "Where's Figgins?"

"We're going to call at the New House for him."

"Right you are! Come on, then!"

The School House six left the house, and found Figgins & Co. waiting outside the New House for them. The nine juniors walked down to the gates together.

"I say, deah boys——" began D'Arcy, whose brow had been wrinkled with thought for some minutes past.

"It will be jolly to see old Dig. again!" said Blake gleefully.

"I say, deah boys——"

"Seems an age since we parted," said Herries; "but it's only a few weeks."

"I say, deah boys——"

"We'll see about the things for the feed while we're in the village," Tom Merry remarked. "There are enough of us to carry them."

"I say, deah boys——"

"Better step out!" said Figgins. "We want to be in good time for the train."

"I say, deah boys——"

"Hallo! Here's Gussy talking again! What's the trouble, Gussy?"

"I say, deah boys, it's quite poss. that we shall meet some of the Gwammah cads in the village, as it's a half-holiday with those boundahs."

"Very likely!"

"And so, in case of a hostile encountah, we ought to appoint one of our numbah as leadah before we meet the foe," said the swell of the School House.

"Good biz.!" said Blake. "Of course, as we're going to meet a fellow belonging to our study, I naturally take the lead."

"You naturally don't!" said Tom Merry. "As a representative of a higher Form, I naturally take the lead."

"Rats!" said Figgins, with emphasis. "As the representative of the cock-house at St. Jim's, I naturally take the lead."

"Weally, deah boys——"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy; we're talking!"

"I insist upon speakin'! You will nevah agwee, and so you may as well make up your minds at once that I shall be leadah."

"Yes; that's very likely!" remarked Lowther.

"You wequire a fellah of bwains and judgment and——"

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"Go and eat coke, Gussy!"
"I wefuse to go and eat coke!"
"Oh, get along, kids!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "While we're bothering about who shall be leader, the train will come in, and we shall miss Dig."

"Buck up, then!" said Blake.
And the juniors left the dispute where it was, unsettled, and resumed their way at an accelerated speed. The village clock chimed out the quarter-past, as they came in sight of Rylcombe, and they arrived at the station with five minutes to spare.

They had seen nothing of the Grammar School boys, though they had kept a sharp look-out. The Grammarians were not in the streets of Rylcombe, nor in the village tuck-shop. If the Saints had reflected upon it a little, this circumstance would have seemed to them rather suspicious in itself.

Where were the Grammarians, and why were they away from their usual haunts? But the St. Jim's juniors were thinking more of Digby than of Frank Monk and his followers, and, satisfied that the Grammarians were not in sight, they dismissed them from their minds.

"Well, here we are!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he entered the little local station. "I say, porter, when does the four-thirty come in?"

"Half-past four, sir!" said the porter, with an immovable visage.

"We're all going on the platform!"
"Not allowed, sir! Thank you, sir! I think you may go on!"

A shilling had made the difference. The juniors of St. Jim's trooped upon the long plank platform, with the green bank rising at the back of it, dotted with flower-beds.

A couple of minutes later a figure, in a Grammar School cap, peered cautiously round the station entrance.

"Can you see 'em, Frank?" came a whisper from behind him.

Frank Monk chuckled.
"No; they're gone on to the platform, as I expected."

"Good! The train will be in in a few minutes, and—"
"Stand ready, all of you—a double row—and have your ammunition ready!"

"Rather!"
"But not a sound till they come out of the station. My word, I think this is going to be a champion surprise for Tom Merry & Co.! And we're much obliged to D'Arcy for the information he gave us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 6.

Digby Arrives—An Attack in Force.

"HERE she comes!"
A whistle screamed up the line, and a blot of vapour dimmed the sky. The train was coming in!

In a moment all was excitement among the juniors of St. Jim's.

"Here she comes!"
"Yaas, wathah! Stand weady, you fellows, to give old Dig a cheer, you know!"

"Three times three!" said Tom Merry.

The train came in and snorted to a standstill. Doors opened, and faces looked out. The passengers were mostly country-folk from Wayland. But Tom Merry quickly spotted a ruddy, good-looking, well-known face at the first door that swung open.

"There's Dig!"
The juniors made a rush.

Before the train had fairly stopped Blake was clinging to the handle of the open door, and Herries was reaching up to shake hands with Digby.

Digby beamed upon them from the carriage.
"This is jolly of you!" he exclaimed. "The whole family, I see!"

"Yes; we're all here!" said Tom Merry. "How do you do, old fellow?"

"Ripping! Here, don't twist my fist off, Herries!"

Digby bundled out of the carriage. They all shook hands with him, and slapped him on the back till he was breathless. Digby was brimming over with excitement and delight.

"My word, it's good to be here again!" he exclaimed. "How jolly to see your queer old chivvies again! They're not much to look at, I know; but I'm glad to see 'em! And here's D'Arcy, as big an ass as ever!"

"Oh, weally, Digby—"

"Give us your fin, old son! Never mind your gloves; you can get a new pair out of the next fivah from your governah!"

And Digby seized D'Arcy by both hands, and wrung his hands in an iron grip. And as Digby had been filling up the time in the train by eating toffee, and had left a considerable amount of it upon his fingers, the light lavender gloves of the swell of St. Jim's were not improved by that hearty greeting. As the mischievous Dig. knew well enough.

"Oh, weally, Dig," gasped D'Arcy, "I am awfully, feahfully glad to see you again, deah boy; but, pway, don't bweak my beastly fingahs, you know!"

"There you are!" said Digby, releasing him. "Hallo! What's wrong now?"

D'Arcy was gazing in blank dismay at his soiled and crumpled gloves.

"Oh, nothin'," said D'Arcy, with an effort to speak cheerfully—"nothin' at all! I am vevy glad to see you again, Digby! I see that you have not altered."

"Not a bit!" said Digby, giving him a hearty slap on the back. "You'll find me the same old Dig."

"Oh, weally!" gasped D'Arcy.

"You'll see me shoving rats into your hat-box, and pouring treacle over your best waistcoat, just as I used to do!" said Digby.

"Oh, weally!"

"And sitting on your silk-hat, and sewing up your Sunday trucks, Gussy! Oh, we shall have ripping times now!"

"If that's what you wegard as wippin', I can only say—"

"That's all right, Gussy; I know how happy you will be! I say, it's awfully decent of you fellows to come and meet me like this. It seems so homelike to see your homely old mugs round me again!"

"Same old Dig!" grinned Blake. "Here, come along! We're going to escort you to the school, in case the Grammar cads get hold of you, as they did of Marmaduke when he came down to see us."

"Very thoughtful of you. Shall we stop at the tuck-shop? I'm peckish after a long journey. I want to see Mother Murphy again, too."

"My dear chap, we've got to stop at the tuck-shop to do some shopping," said Blake. "We may as well be getting along!"

Blake took one of Digby's arms, and Herries took the other. In a crowd the juniors marched off the platform in the gayest of humours.

They crowded out of the station into the village street. Then there was a sudden shout from Tom Merry.

"Look-out!"

But the warning came too late.

The juniors of St. Jim's caught a glimpse of two rows of Grammar School boys, drawn up in order outside the station like a guard of honour.

But before they had time to realise what it meant, the attack came.

The Grammarians were there in force. There were, at least, two score of them, and everyone had come well supplied with ammunition.

"Fire!" shouted Frank Monk.

And in an instant there was a shower of missiles pouring upon the juniors of St. Jim's from both sides.

Many and varied were the missiles. Eggs, bought up cheap in their old age, cabbage-stumps and potatoes, lumps of turf and clay, anything and everything that would serve as a missile without really hurting the recipient.

"The Grammar cads!" cried Blake. "Oh—ow—ooch!"

An egg caught him in the mouth, and stopped his utterance. It was a highly-flavoured egg, and he did not enjoy it.

Crash—biff—squelch!

"Go for 'em!" yelled Tom Merry, leading a desperate rush.

But the Grammarians closed their ranks, and the odds were too great. The St. Jim's juniors were hurled back as from a stone wall. There was nothing for it but retreat, as Tom Merry soon realised.

"Keep together!" sang out the hero of the Shell. "Make for the tuck-shop!"

It was the only resource. The juniors kept together, and started down the street, and their rapid walk soon broke into a run.

There was no help for it, for the enemy were in crowds, and the juniors had to run the gauntlet, and the missiles came in volleys. Some of the Grammarians were laughing so much that they could hardly throw straight.

But Tom Merry & Co. did not feel much like laughing. The comical aspect of the case, however, struck the villagers of Rylcombe very forcibly. They gathered in giggling crowds. Many of the villagers had found trouble at the hands of the Saints, and they all enjoyed the Grammarian joke immensely.

The juniors were running at top speed at last. They

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headed for Mother Murphy's tuck-shop, as the only possible refuge at the moment. Fast on their track came the Grammar crowd, hooting and pelting. A cabbage-stump caught D'Arcy's silk hat, and sent it spinning from his head.

"Bwutes!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's; and he made a rush to save his beloved topper.

But the Grammarians were already treading over it, and they would have trod over D'Arcy, too, had not Tom Merry rushed to the rescue and dragged him away. But Arthur Augustus wasn't at all grateful for his rescue. He struggled in the grip of the hero of the Shell.

"Welease me!" he shouted. "My hat—"

"It's gone."

"I must wecovah it!"

"Nonsense! Come on; they'll capture you."

"I do not care if I am capohahed, if I wecovah my hat."

"Well, I do," said Tom Merry; and he jerked D'Arcy into the tuck-shop, which the fugitives had now reached.

In a dusty, dishevelled, bespattered crowd, the juniors of St. Jim's were at last able to draw breath.

"Let's have 'em out!" shouted Carboy, rushing on.

Tom Merry caught up an egg from a box near the counter, and hurled it with unerring aim, and it broke on Carboy's chin.

The Grammarian gave a yell, and halted, and the others followed suit. They collected in the road in a hooting crowd.

"My word!" gasped Digby. "This is lively!"

"A nice reception for you, Dig!" said Blake.

But Digby only chuckled.

"I wouldn't have missed it for worlds," he said, wiping the yolk of an egg off his cheek. "It's like old times."

"Yaas, wathah! These Gwammah oads are feahful wuffians. I have lost my hat. It is Tom Mewwy's fault that I have lost my hat—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to wing off. I have lost my toppah!"

"I say, what the dickens are we going to do?" exclaimed Figgins. "They're three or four to one, and we can't get back to the school through that crowd."

"And they don't show any signs of clearing off, either," said Tom Merry, looking out from the door. "They won't attack us here, so long as Mother Murphy's supply of new-laid eggs holds out."

"Oh, Master Merry!" exclaimed the dame, who had come out from her little parlour behind the shop, and was looking at the dishevelled juniors in blank amazement.

Tom Merry laughed.

"We'll pay for all we use, mother," he said. "By the way, we've got some shopping to do. You've got the list, Fatty."

Fatty Wynn produced a pencilled list from his waistcoat-pocket.

"Here it is, Merry. But we shall never get the things through that crowd if we buy them now," he said anxiously. "It would break my heart to have a good feed lifted by that lot of rotters."

"We can't get ourselves through that crowd, kid, without help. We've got to stay here till we're rescued."

"I will go for help," said D'Arcy. "I will wun like anythin' to St. Jim's, and bwing the fellows to the wescue."

"And how are you going to get out without being stopped by the Grammar cads?" asked Figgins.

"Weally, I did not think of that."

Tom Merry looked out of the doorway. A yell and a couple of eggs cracking on the door-post showed that the Grammarians saw him. He drew his head inside again quickly.

"They mean to stick it out," he said quietly. "They're going to wait for us. If we go out while they're there they'll snatch us baldheaded. How on earth did Frank Monk get to know that we were going to meet Dig., or that Dig. was coming at all, for that matter? This is a planned thing. He's got nearly all the Grammar juniors with him, and they're well supplied."

"I suppose the boundah was thinkin' of this when I told him about Dig. the othah day," D'Arcy remarked thoughtfully.

There was a general yell.

"You told him, you ass!"

"Yaas, wathah! I just mentioned it, and asked him if he would like to take part in the weception we were goin' to give Dig—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Digby. "And he's done that, and no mistake."

"You—you ass!" growled Blake, fixing a withering look on D'Arcy. "I've a good mind to ram your silly head into the box of eggs!"

"I wefuse to be chawactewised as a silly ass! I uttahly wefuse to have my head wammed into a box of eggs!"

"Well, he does want killing!" said Figgins thoughtfully.

"If we had that object in our house, Blake, we'd—"

"I wefuse to be alluded to as an object."

"We'd bury it under the floor," said Kerr. "But the harm's done now. What are we going to do? I think Gussy ought to be made to get us out of this fix, as he's got us into it."

"Yaas, wathah! In a time of emergency the fellow with most bwains natuwally comes to the top, and I am quite willin'—"

"Well, go and get help!" said Figgins cruelly. "A fellow of your brains will find some way of dodging the Grammarians."

"Yaas, wathah! Au revoir, deah boy!"

And D'Arcy strode to the door.

"Come back!" cried Tom Merry.

"Here, come back!" shouted Figgins. "I was only joking, ass! Come back, I tell you!"

But Arthur Augustus was gone.

CHAPTER 7.

Besieged.

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS, hatless, and with his beautiful clothes spattered with mud and broken eggs, strode from the tuck-shop, with an expression upon his face of one who was resolved to do or die.

A yell from the Grammarians greeted his appearance in the street. They did not quite understand what it meant at first, but when the swell of St. Jim's started towards the school with a haughty stride, they understood. Frank Monk gave a gasp of amazement.

"Well, of all the nerve!" he exclaimed.

"He's going for help," grinned Carboy, "and he thinks we're going to let him go. I say, collar the ass!"

Lane was already darting towards the swell of St. Jim's. He was followed by a dozen other Grammarians. It went sorely against the grain with D'Arcy to run, for he felt that such a proceeding was undignified, but there was no help for it in the present instance.

He broke into a wild run, and the Grammarians were after him like hounds after a hare. He was run down a few doors from the tuck-shop, and cornered against the horse-trough outside the Golden Pig inn.

Lane gripped him by the shoulder, Carboy by the back of the neck. He struggled in vain in the hands of his enemies.

"Welease me!" he exclaimed. "You wotten, wude boundahs, welease me immediately!"

"Ha, ha! Duck him in the trough!"

"Good! In with him!"

"Welease me! I wefuse to be ducked in the twough! Don't be such uttah wuffians! I will thwash you! Ow—ow!"

Splash! Right into the trough went the swell of St. Jim's, with a mighty splash that spattered most of the Grammarians with the water; but little they cared for that.

"Oh, you howwid beasts!" exclaimed D'Arcy, sitting up in the trough. "You weally wotten, howwid beasts! Help! Wescue!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue! Wescue, St. Jim's!"

But the juniors, craning their necks round the door of the tuck-shop, had already seen his plight. Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"Come on, kids! We've got to help him."

The Saints rushed from the shop; but a shower of missiles greeted them, and then the Grammarians rushed forward. The St. Jim's juniors were hurled back by sheer force of numbers. Just outside the door they stood shoulder to shoulder and faced the foe, but they were quite unable to go to the aid of Arthur Augustus.

D'Arcy scrambled out of the trough, dripping from head to foot. He dodged the Grammar juniors, and ran back to the shop. Tom Merry saw him, and grasped him by the collar to drag him in to shelter, and at the same moment Frank Monk seized him.

"Come in, D'Arcy!"

"I—I c-c-can't! That howwid boundah—"

"Lend a hand!" shouted Frank Monk. "We'll take this thing to the Grammar School, and have it stuffed!"

There was a yell of laughter from the Grammarians. A dozen hands laid hold of Arthur Augustus, and the other Saints came to Tom Merry's aid. The struggle for the body of the Grecian hero in the famed siege of Troy was really not in it with the tussle for the unfortunate swell of St. Jim's in the doorway of Mother Murphy's tuck-shop in Rylcombe High Street.

Tom Merry won. With a final heave he dragged D'Arcy out of the grasp of the Grammar lads, and the swell of the School House was yanked into the shop. Figgins and Lowther were pelting the Grammarians with eggs from behind the combatants, and the enemy fell back at last.

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D'Arcy sprawled on the floor of the tuck-shop, a really fearful-looking object. He sat up slowly, adjusted a very muddy eyeglass into his eye, and stared around him. Tom Merry & Co. had been roughly handled, and they were feeling the results of it; but the sight of D'Arcy was too much for them. They burst into a roar.

"My word!" said Digby. "Did you ever?"

"No, I never!" said Figgins solemnly.

"Well, hardly ever!" said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy surveyed his comrades with indignant scorn.

"Tom Mewwy," he exclaimed, "Blake, Figgins, Hewwies, and the west of you, pway understand that fwom this moment—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I no longah wegard you as—"

"He, he, he!"

"As fwiends. I wegard you—"

"Oh, don't, Gussy! You'll give me a pain in the ribs!" gasped Digby.

"I wegard you," said the swell of St. Jim's emphatically, glaring through his muddy monocle—"I wegard you as a set of wude boundahs, and wotten outsiders—"

"Ring off, old lad—"

"I wefuse to wing off! I despise you feahfully! I have wun a feahful wisk in ordah to bwing wescue, and now you stand laughin' like a lot of howwid hyenas. My clothes are spoiled, and I feel in a howwidly dirty and wumpled condition, and you choose this tewwible moment for your unseemly mewwiment—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come out!"

It was a roar from the Grammarians. They were getting impatient, but the presence of the egg-boxes prevented them from making any attempt at rushing the tuck-shop. Mother Murphy had gone back to her knitting in her little parlour. She knew Tom Merry well enough to know that he would pay for any damage that was done to her stock. Fatty Wynn was improving the shining hour by demolishing a pile of raspberry-tarts. It was really wonderful to see how the pile diminished under his steady attack.

"Come out! Yah, yah! Funks!"

Tom Merry turned red.

"They're calling us funks!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, if we had a couple of dozen fellows from St. Jim's here, we'd soon show 'em whether we were funks or not!"

"They want to get us out," said Blake. "Then they'd collar us and frog's-march us back to St. Jim's, or something like that. I think we'll stay here."

"Rather!" said Kerr. "But how's it going to end?"

"We must get help," said Tom Merry determinedly.

"But Gussy has tried. Of course, Gussy is an ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass—"

"But I don't see how anybody else could do better," went on Figgins, looking from the door. "We could never get through that lot. Frank Monk and his rotters seem to be determined to make a day of it."

"We might get out by the lane at the back," Tom Merry remarked, with a thoughtful frown.

Figgins shook his head.

"Do you think Monk hasn't sent half a dozen of his fellows to watch the lane?" he exclaimed. "That's no good!"

"You're right, Figgy. But, hang it, we can't stay here for ever!"

"Pway listen to me, deah boys—"

"Now, don't you begin to bother us at a moment like this, Gussy—"

"I have a weally wippin' suggestion to make."

"Yes, we know your suggestions—"

"Pway listen, and do not intewwupt me so wudely. I will go out—"

"You've tried it once, fathead!"

"Pway do not use those oppwobwious expwessions!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I will disguise myself as a—a bwicklayah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or a carpentah, or somethin', and pass through them."

"And where will you get the disguise from?" demanded Kerr.

"Oh, that is merely a twifin' detail!"

"Yes, but where will you get it from?"

"Well, I hadn't weally thought about that? But what do you think of the ideah, deah boys?" asked D'Arcy, looking round.

"Rotten, like most of your ideas!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"But I say," struck in Digby; "Gussy is an ass, of course, but you know words of wisdom come out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. Gussy would make a hash of it, but Kerr is the chap to do it!"

The Scottish partner in the Co. blushed modestly.

"If we could get hold of some disguise," said Digby, "Kerr could go out, and get through those Grammar rotters, if anybody could."

"By Jove," said Figgins, "Digby's right!"

Kerr nodded assent. Kerr was the great amateur dramatist of the New House juniors, and his impersonations had often amused his schoolfellows, and his skill in disguise had many a time enabled him to play tricks on the rival house.

"But what disguise could be got?" asked Tom Merry.

"I know!" exclaimed Digby. "Borrow a skirt and a shawl of Mother Murphy, and one of her funny old bonnets, and there you are!"

Kerr looked a little uneasy. He had played many parts in his time as an amateur actor, but to brave broad daylight in the streets in the costume of an old village body was rather a tall order. But Figgins slapped Digby heartily on the back.

"Right-ho!" he exclaimed. "Kerr's the fellow to do it!"

"What does Kerr say?" asked Tom Merry, looking at the Scottish partner of the New House Co.

"Oh, I'm agreeable!" said Kerr. "I dare say it can be worked; and it's pretty plain that something's got to be done. The Grammarians mean to keep us here till calling-over, when we shall have to go out and chance it."

"Then the next thing is to get the disguise," said Tom Merry. "I say, Mrs. Murphy! Come here a minute, will you?"

The portly dame came out of her little parlour. She listened in amazement to Tom Merry's request for the articles of wearing apparel, and at first gave a point-blank refusal. But when Tom pointed out that unless they received help, the juniors would have to remain in the shop all the evening, and that it might be wrecked in a final struggle, and when he, moreover, offered to pay for the articles required, the good dame relented.

A blue-coloured skirt and a red shawl of ample dimensions, effectually disguised Kerr; and when the bonnet was on his head, and the shawl muffled up about his ears, and he bent a little forward, he looked exactly like the old dame.

Very little of his face showed, and, as he had no grease-paint with him, Tom Merry suggested daubing it with jam, to bring it to the ruddy hue of Mother Murphy's complexion—an expedient which Kerr after some hesitation assented to.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, wiping his eyeglass and surveying Kerr. "It looks weally wippin'; and I must say that, exceptin' myself, Kerr is the best man here for the job, deah boys."

"Thank you, Adolphus!" said Kerr, with a bow.

"Simply the twuth, deah boy!"

"Well, I'm off!" said Kerr, hobbling to the door. "Au revoir!"

"Good luck!"

And the New House junior hobbled out of the shop, with so exact an imitation of the movements of Mother Murphy, that the Saints themselves would have been deceived if they had not known the secret.

CHAPTER 8.

The Rescue—Not Beaten Yet.

FRANK MONK glanced quickly towards the tuck-shop as he saw the figure appear in the doorway, but seeing that only an old woman emerged, he took no further notice.

The disguised Kerr did not go down the street towards Rylcombe Lane direct for the school. He was too cunning for that. He went up into the village with a slow and hobbling step, intending to change his course for St. Jim's when he was out of sight of the Grammarians.

The latter were entirely without suspicion. But, unfortunately, the row at the tuck-shop had brought many villagers upon the scene, and many of the natives of Rylcombe were disposed to condole with Mother Murphy upon the disturbance on her premises. Several village dames spoke to the disguised junior as he hobbled on, and Kerr replied only in monosyllables, anxious to escape.

But a dozen yards from the tuck-shop Gaffer Jones planted himself in the young Scotsman's path. Gaffer Jones had an interest in the tuck-shop, and sometimes took charge of it when Mother Murphy was a victim to what she called the "rheumatiz." The Gaffer was not a pleasant man, and he was entirely devoid of a sense of humour. At the present moment he was boiling with indignation. He never liked either the Saints or the Grammarians, excepting as customers, and the present disturbance seemed to him to be beyond all bounds. He stopped the supposed Mother Murphy as she came along.

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"I was just coomin' oop, hearin' about the row!" he exclaimed. "Be you goin' to fetch the police, mother?"

"No!" snapped Mother Murphy, trying to pass the troublesome Gaffer.

"But these young scoondrels will have to be turned out—"

"Mind your own business, Gaffer!"

The Gaffer stared with astonishment. Mother Murphy had never addressed him in that manner before.

"Be thee daft?" he exclaimed indignantly. "Thee been drinking—"

Mother Murphy shoved him aside and hobbled on. The talk was beginning to attract attention, and some of the Grammarians were gathering round in hopes of seeing a row between the two old characters.

Gaffer Jones staggered as he was pushed away, and stared after the hobbling dame in amazement, and a laugh went up on all sides.

"Good for you, mother!" cackled Lane. "Give him beans!"

Gaffer Jones caught the old lady by the shoulder. Kerr tore himself away, and the shawl was dragged aside. Lane gave a yell.

"It's not Mother Murphy!"

"It's one of those bounders!"

"Collar him!"

Kerr dashed up the street at full pelt, and whisked down the first turning. After him went half a dozen Grammarians in full cry.

But the Scottish partner in the famous Co. had a good start. He knew the old lanes of Rylcombe well, and he left the shouting pursuers behind. In ten minutes more he had successfully dodged them and escaped into Rylcombe Lane, and, leaving his disguise in a ditch, he tore off at top speed towards St. Jim's.

He had got clear! Kerr ran then as he had seldom run before, in the gathering dusk of the February evening. There was a sudden shout as he tore at top speed round a corner of the lane.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

For a moment Kerr thought he had run into an ambush of Grammarians, and hit out desperately. Two fellows rolled over in the lane, and then he was pinned fast. But the faces round him were familiar, if not exactly friendly at that moment. He had run into a party of fellows belonging to St. Jim's.

"What does this mean?" demanded Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, as he gripped Kerr and held him at arm's length and looked at him. "Who is it—and what have you been doing to your face, you young monkey?"

"I'm Kerr!" gasped the junior. "I'm going for help!"

"What's the trouble, Kerr?" asked Monteith, the head prefect of the New House. "And what have you got that thing on your head for?"

Kerr had forgotten the bonnet. He blushed as he clawed it off.

"Tom Merry and the rest are besieged in the tuck-shop in Rylcombe!" he gasped. "I'm coming for help!"

The captain of St. Jim's laughed.

"We may as well look into it, Monteith," he remarked. "It's not a long walk to the village."

"Right-ho!" laughed the New House prefect.

There were half a dozen seniors with Kildare and Monteith. Two of them had been knocked over by Kerr's sudden attack. They looked rather grimly at Kerr as they rose to their feet. But Kildare's suggestion was adopted, and the whole party strode on to the village.

Frank Monk and his companions were looking out for squalls now. They knew that Kerr had got clear, and that he would return with help.

They had not expected his return to be quite so speedy, however. The sight of eight or nine big, athletic fellows of the Fifth and Sixth Forms at St. Jim's bearing down upon them, smote the Grammarians with dismay.

Frank Monk blew his whistle, the signal for retreat. The Grammarians fell back from the tuck-shop. Kildare strode up to the door.

"Hallo, Kildare!" said Tom Merry, with perfect coolness. "Fancy meeting you!"

"You're as welcome as the flowers in May, old son!" said Digby.

Kildare looked over the spattered group with a grim smile.

"Well, you're a lively-looking lot!" he remarked. "You'd better get to St. Jim's and get yourselves cleaned, I should say."

"Yaas, wathah! Do you know, Kildare, I nevah felt such an extwemely dirty boundah in all my life before," said D'Arcy.

"Well, you look all that!"

"It's very good of you to come up to the scratch like this, Kildare," said Digby.

The captain of St. Jim's glanced at him.

"Oh, you're back again, are you, young Digby?"

"Yes," said Digby cheerfully. "I'm back again. This is a little reception the Grammarians have got up for my benefit. Nice of them, isn't it?"

"Very!" said Kildare drily. "But I really think this affair has gone quite far enough, and I will clear off the Grammar School fellows yonder."

"Yaas, wathah! Weally, Kildare—"

Fatty Wynn rapped on the counter. Mother Murphy came out.

"Let's have these things," said Fatty, producing his list. "We shall get them to St. Jim's all right, Tom Merry. I'm feeling fearfully hungry after all that rowing. Anything of this kind always makes me hungry."

"I believe anything of any kind does," said Blake.

Mother Murphy was soon busy supplying the wants of the juniors. Full payment was made for her losses in eggs, used as missiles against the Grammarians. Meanwhile, the seniors of St. Jim's had cleared off the small fry of the Grammar School simply by their appearance. Frank Monk and his followers had disappeared.

"They're gone!" said Tom Merry, looking out of the shop. "And there go Kildare and the rest of the fellows, too. We'd better get a move on, or Frank Monk and his rotters may show up again."

"Yaas, wathah!"

The St. Jim's juniors left the tuck-shop, and followed on the track of Kildare and his friends towards the school. The seniors were going on with big strides, and the younger party, fatigued by the afternoon's encounter, fell behind. But the Grammarians seemed to have totally disappeared. The juniors marched on, carrying the purchases for the great feed in parcels between them.

"Well, here we are, all right now!" exclaimed Blake, as the great gateway of St. Jim's came in sight, towering in the dusk.

"Do you know, deah boys, I shall feel safah when I am fairly inside the beastly school; you know?" said D'Arcy. "Kildare and the west have gone in, you see, and s'posst Fwank Monk should—"

"Oh, blow Frank Monk!" said Blake.

"But weally, Blake, Fwank Monk might—"

"I think you've got Frank Monk on the brain."

"I have not got Fwank Monk on the bwain, but I weally think it is quite poss. that Fwank Monk and—"

"Look out!" yelled Tom Merry.

There was a sudden rush of dim forms from the dusky hedge. D'Arcy was right. The complete disappearance of the Grammarians had been only a blind. They had lain in ambush opposite the very gates of St. Jim's, had allowed Kildare and his companions to pass in without showing themselves, and had not given a hint of their presence till the juniors were fairly abreast of them.

Then they were fairly all over the St. Jim's fellows in a twinkling.

"I told you so, Blake!" exclaimed D'Arcy triumphantly.

"I weally— Ow!"

D'Arcy went down before the rush, and so did most of the others. Tom Merry and Figgins hit out fiercely, and some of the Grammarians went down, too. But the odds were great. The Saints were soon sprawling on the ground, with the Grammarians scrambling and swarming over them.

"Collar the grub!"

It was Frank Monk's voice that rang out, and the order was obeyed. The attack did not last many minutes. Almost as quickly as they had come, the Grammarians went, and vanished with shouts of laughter into the dusk.

The Saints staggered to their feet; but alas! for the great feed that was to celebrate the return of Digby to St. Jim's. It was gone! One parcel, gripped in the arms of Fatty Wynn, which he would have perished rather than parted with, remained. The rest was gone, carried off by the Grammar School juniors.

Tom Merry gave a look round. From the thickening dusk a triumphant shout floated back. Digby giggled.

"I say, kids, what price that feed?"

"It's off," grunted Blake; "distinctly off! What have you got there, Fatty Wynn?"

"I've got the sausages," said Fatty, with a grin. "I fell on the parcel and hugged it and saved it! Is the rest gone?"

"Every bit!"

"Every giddy morsel!"

"Then it's lucky I saved the sausages."

"Right!" said Tom Merry. "We shall have to do the best we can at the school shop, and get some sort of a feed. The worst of it is that we've blued most of the cash at the other place, and so the supply has run short."

"Weally, deah boys—"
 "Hallo, Gussy, are you still alive?"
 "Yaas, wathah! But I have been twodden on in a vewy wuff way by those wotten boundahs. But, as I was sayin', our gweetin' to our esteemed fwiend Digby—"
 "Hear, hear!" said Digby.
 "Our gweetin'," went on D'Arcy, "has gone off in smoke; the feed is spoiled, and the whole thing is a wotten fwost! It is all Tom Mewwy's fault."
 "How do you make that out, fathead?"
 "Yaas, wathah! If you had adopted my gwand ideah of a twiumpfal arch, instead of a common and vulgah feed—"
 "Oh, scissors! He's starting on his twiumpfal arch again!" groaned Blake. "I thought we had heard the last of that."
 "If you had ewected a twiumpfal arch instead of havin' a feed—"
 "Oh, I'm off!"
 "It would have been a gweat success instead of a ghastly fwost, as well as pwovidin' work for the beastly un-employed," said D'Arcy.
 But the juniors had had enough of the twiumpfal arch. They marched in at the gates, leaving D'Arcy to continue his remarks to the desert air, if he felt so inclined. The swell of St. Jim's sniffed disdainfully and followed.

CHAPTER 9.
D'Arcy Apologises.

TOM MERRY & Co. separated on entering St. Jim's again, going to their own quarters to clean up and change their things after their rough experience at the hands of the Grammarians. The story of their defeat was soon over the school, and when they appeared in the passages they were greeted with all sorts of sarcastic allusions to it. Gore of the Shell, and Mellish of the Fourth, the cads of the School House, were especially keen on the topic. The chums bore it patiently.
 "You see," said Tom Merry, as he tied his necktie in the study, "we have had a really thorough and ghastly licking, and so what the rotters are saying is quite true, though Gore might refrain from rubbing it in so very much."
 "By Jove, yes!" said Lowther. "He doesn't make much of a show against the Grammarians himself, and if he says anything more to me I shall punch his nose!"
 "Blow his nose!" said Manners. "The—"
 "I'm not going to do anything of the kind!"
 "Oh, rats! The question is, what are we going to do for a feed? We must give Dig. a regular blow-out, if only for the sake of the rows we've had with him in the old days."
 "And we're all stony," said Tom Merry.
 "Broke to the weary wide!" said Lowther. "I had a bob or two left, but it all rolled out of my pockets in that scramble."
 "We had better go and consult Blake about it. The feed is to come off in Study No. 6, and we shall have to raise supplies somehow."
 The Terrible Three went along to Blake's quarters. They found the chums of Study No. 6 in a rather cleaner state than when they had parted. D'Arcy had changed down to his skin, including his socks and necktie, and was as neat as a new pin.
 "Hallo!" said Blake. "You look a bit cleaner now, Merry, and you could do with it. You have come about the feed, of course."
 "Exactly!" said Tom Merry, glancing round the study. "I don't see any signs of it. And where's Digby?"
 "Oh, he's gone to speak to some of the New House fellows! They're all glad to see him back. As for the feed—"
 "Yes, that's the important question, and it ought to be

settled before Digby comes in," Tom Merry remarked.
 "There's a delicacy in these matters, you know."
 "Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard that as a vewy pwopah wemark, Tom Mewwy."
 "Thank you, Gussy!" said Tom Merry demurely. "But about the feed? I'm sorry to say that we're all broke."
 "And I'm sorry to say that we're the same," said Blake. "Herries had a half-crown left, but he lost it in the row outside the gates."
 "What about the one and only?" asked Lowther, turning to D'Arcy.
 "Oh, he's out of it!" said Blake.
 "Out of it?" echoed the Terrible Three. "What do you mean?"
 "We've had a fearful quarrel—"
 "Yaas, wathah! I no longah wegard Blake and Hewwies as fwiends," said D'Arcy. "I have been extwemely patient with them, and have put up with a gweat deal of wudeness and wuffness, but it is not poss. for me to wholly forget my dig."
 "Go hon! Who's been digging at your dig. now?"
 "I have been tweated with wascally diswespect! Aftah wunnin' a feahful wisk for the sake of wesquin' you all fwom pewil, I weceived, instead of the sympathy I had a wight to expect, simply chaff and laughtah. Added to that is the circ. that if my ideah of a twiumpfal arch had been adopted—"
 "Oh dear! He's on that again!"
 "If my ideah of a twiumpfal arch had been adopted, the whole thing would have been a howlin' success. I wegard you as a set of unappweciative boundahs! I no longah wegard you as fwiends."
 "Oh, Gussy, Gussy, unsay those cruel words!"
 "Don't wot, Tom Mewwy! I have sewiously considahed this mattah, and I have twiced to forgive these boundahs, but it is imposs. My clothes have been wuined, and my only weward is wibald laughtah. I wefuse to wegard Blake as a fwiend any longah."
 "Well, my word!" said Tom Merry. "I never thought this of you, Gussy—to refuse to regard Blake as a friend, because he wants to borrow—"
 "Eh, what?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You are quite w'ong. It has nothin' to do with bowwowin'."
 Tom Merry shook his head solemnly.
 "I say it has nothin' to do with it!" exclaimed D'Arcy excitedly. "I have four pounds left out of my fivah, and they are quite at the disposal of any gentleman pwesent."
 "Oh, I see! You are willing to hand over the cash, even if you no longer regard us as friends?" said Tom Merry.
 "Certainly! I hope you do not wegard me as a mean wottah," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity. "The question of money does not entah into the mattah at all, only Blake wefuses to bowwow—"
 "You see, I'm not going to take any of his rotten money unless he comes down off his perch," said Blake, with a wink at Tom Merry. "Are we going to borrow of a chap who no longah wegards us as fwiends? Nevah!"
 "No; I'm afraid it's impossible!" said Tom Merry, with a grave shake of his head. "You are an outsider, D'Arcy."
 "I object to that expwession—"
 "I suppose he'll be changing his study now?" said Tom Merry, looking at Blake. "If he is no longah your fwiend, he won't stay here."
 "I shall distinctly wefuse to change my study—"
 "Oh, he'll have to!" said Blake. "Of course, I'm willing to overlook the whole matter if D'Arcy apologises."
 "If I apologise!" exclaimed the swell of the School House, in amazement. "You must weally be off your wockah, Blake! The apology is due to me fwom you boundahs, and if I weceive it, I'm willin' to overlook the past!"
 Blake shook his head obstinately.
 "You can apologise or not, as you choose," he replied.
 "But if you don't, I wen't borrow any of your cash, and we sha'n't be able to give Digby a feed."

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"I hope you fellows don't intend to come out like a crowd of waqamuffins!" said D'Arcy, giving a final polish to the silk-hat he held in his hand.

"I appeal to Tom Mewwy."

"I agree with Blake," said the hero of the Shell. "I think D'Arcy ought to apologise. As a gentleman, I call upon him to do so."

"But the beastly apology is due to me!" howled the bewildered swell of St. Jim's. "Why should I apologise when I have received the injury?"

"It's no good asking me conundrums," said Tom Merry; "I never was good at them. If you don't apologise, I uphold Blake in his decision not to borrow any of your fiver."

"But you are all bwoke!"

"I know we are; but—"

"Digby must have his tea!"

"Perish his tea!"

"But weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"It's no good falking," said Blake decidedly; "I've made up my mind. Either D'Arcy will have to apologise, or I won't borrow any of his tin. There!"

"Well, undah the circs.," said D'Arcy, "I suppose I must

apologise, and westore our fwiendship to its old footin'. But I cannot see—"

"That's all right!" said Blake. "Your apology is accepted. And now hand over the cash."

"I was goin' to say—"

"Never mind what you were going to say. You can say it while I'm gone to the shop, if you like. Hand over a sovereign!"

"Weally, Blake, your extweme wudeness—"

"If you don't hand over that sov. at once I won't take it."

D'Arcy handed over the sovereign immediately. Blake turned to the door, the grinning chums of the Shell making way for him.

"But, weally," exclaimed D'Arcy, "I should like—"

"Good-bye!" said Blake. And he was gone.

D'Arcy turned an injured look upon the Terrible Three. Herries chuckled as he poked the fire and jammed the kettle down upon it.

"I am afwaid that Blake gwows wudah and wudah," said Arthur Augustus. "I find him vevy twyin' at times. I find

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Hewwies vey twyin', too. I find most of you boundahs extremely twyin', as a mattah of fact."

"Too bad," said Tom Merry. "Still, I'm glad you've done the right thing, and apologised. It's what I should have expected of our one and only Augustus."

"Pway do not allude to me in that widiculous mannah!"

"Hallo," said Digby, coming into Study No. 6 with Figgins & Co., "what price that tea? I don't see any signs of it!"

"You see, deah boy—"

"No. I don't see; that's the trouble. Are you going to celebrate my arrival by going without any tea?" asked Digby humorously.

"Blake's gone for the tommy," said Tom Merry. "We're getting a second supply at the school shop. Those Grammar bounders collared the lot."

"All except the sausages," said Fatty Wynn, producing a package from under his arm. "And here they are. I've cooked them."

"Good for you, Fatty!"

"They will only require warming up," said Fatty Wynn. "If you can lend me a frying-pan, I'll have them ready and nicely browned by the time Blake gets in."

And there was soon a fragrant odour of warming sausages in the study. Blake came in, laden with provisions of all sorts, having nobly expended D'Arcy's sovereign to the last penny. And the tea in celebration of Digby's return commenced in great style.

CHAPTER 10.

Arthur Augustus is Too Obliging.

THREE times three!" shouted Figgins, capering in the hall of the New House the following morning with an open letter in his hand.

"What's the giddy matter?" exclaimed Kerr.

"Off your silly onion?" inquired Fatty Wynn, stopping reluctantly. He was just coming in from the frosty quad. to breakfast, and he was sharp set.

"Hurrah!" shouted Figgins.

"What's the row? Who's the letter from?"

"Marmaduke!"

The Co. were keenly interested at once. If Marmaduke came back to the New House, the Co. would be complete again, and they looked forward to it keenly.

"Well, what's the news?" demanded Kerr. "Is he coming back again?"

"Yes, yes! Hurrah!"

"It's settled, then?"

"Yes; he has persuaded his pater, and his pater has persuaded his mater, and he's coming back to stay!" exclaimed Figgins jubilantly. "Isn't it ripping?"

"Rather! Hurrah!"

"What's that confounded noise about?" exclaimed Monteith, coming along the passage. "What are you three young lunatics capering about for?"

"Oh, it's all right!" said Figgins, moderating his transports. "We're only cheering, you know, because we've had good news. Marmaduke's coming back!"

"Oh, is he?" said Monteith, apparently not much impressed.

"Yes, he is!" said Figgins warmly—"yes, he is! Marmaduke's one of the best! He—"

"Well, make a little less row about it," said the prefect, passing on into the dining-room.

"We must tell Blake and Tom Merry," said Figgins thoughtfully, as the three juniors followed Monteith. "That little celebration on Digby's account was rather a fizzle—"

"It was rather a decent feed last night in Blake's study," said Fatty Wynn, with a reminiscent smack of the lips.

"Yes; but nothing like it should have been. And you can't deny that ten kids of our size in a Fourth Form study is a bit of a squeeze. If we give a feed in honour of Marmaduke, we must show them that we manage these things better in the New House."

"That's all right," said Kerr. "But I suppose it's no good asking the Head to let us have the lecture-hall?"

"Now, don't be funny, Kerr; be satisfied with looking funny," implored Figgins.

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Not till you get a new face," said Figgins. "But as I was saying, there will be eleven in the whole gang when Marmaduke is back, and though eleven is a good number for a football-match, it's a squeeze in a junior study. We'll give our little party in the empty box-room in the New House."

"Good!" exclaimed Kerr. "That's a really good idea, Figgy! And we'll take care this time to get the grub in beforehand, so that nothing can go wrong, even if those Grammarian bounders should get on the scent."

"But when is Marmaduke coming?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"To-morrow," said Figgins. "Pity he couldn't fix it for a half-holiday, as Digby did; but I suppose he couldn't. He's coming down by the train that gets into Rylcombe at half-past six. We'll miss our tea, and just have a little snack, and go and meet the train."

"Oh, I say, Figgins," exclaimed Fatty Wynn, "I—"

"What's the matter with you, Fatty?"

"No good missing our tea. You see—"

"Well, you are a pig, Fatty, and no mistake! An old chum coming back again, and you start talking about your grub!"

"I don't mean that!"

"I'm ashamed of you, Fatty!"

"So am I," said Kerr. "As Gussy says, I regard you as a wottah! Fatty, you had better shut up."

"But what I mean to say is—"

"Never mind what you mean to say, kid. You've said too much already. Not a word more on that subject, or I may knock your head against the wall. Fancy not wanting to miss his tea for once, with an old partner in the Co. coming back! Scat!"

"Rotten!" said Kerr. "But it's just like Fatty! He—"

"But, I say, listen to me!" persisted Fatty. "What I was going to say is, why not have tea a little earlier than usual instead of missing it?"

"Oh," exclaimed Figgins, "is that it? Well, it's not a bad idea! But why couldn't you say so at first?"

"You didn't give me a chance!"

"We'll have tea early to-morrow," said Figgins, as if it were quite his own plan, and not Fatty Wynn's at all. "And we'll go down to meet Marmaduke's train. I don't like the idea of that escort business, so I think we'll go it on our lonesome. The escort got into a pretty pickle yesterday!"

"Oh, yes; we can run it better without any of those School House bounders in the show!" said Kerr sagely.

And Figgins & Co. went in to breakfast in a cheery mood. Blake and his chums noticed their cheerful looks in class, and inquired the cause, and were soon apprised of Marmaduke's pending return.

"Good!" said Blake. "Of course, there'll be a celebration?"

"Certainly!" said Figgins. "And it will go off better than the one you School House fellows fixed up for Digby. No offence, you know; but we know how to manage these things in the New House."

Blake gave a sniff.

"I expect you'll have a bigger frost than we did," he replied. "It was all D'Arcy's fault for giving away the show to Frank Monk—"

"Oh, weally, Blake—"

"That's true enough," said Figgins. "Marmaduke is coming down by the six-thirty to-morrow. We three are going to meet him, so as not to make too much display about it. We don't want to signalise Marmaduke's return by a scrap with a crowd of Grammarians, and getting besieged in a tuck-shop!"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake. "I expect you'll make a muck of it somehow, in the usual New House style. But about the feed!"

"There will be a feed, of course, and if you bounders are going to subscribe—"

"Of course, we are! We're all in this! And Tom Merry will want to be, too. The feed will have to be given in the School House!"

"Not at all! Marmaduke belongs to our house, and the feed will have to be given there. We're going to dust out the unused box-room, and sneak some chairs and a table into it, and get a fire lighted, and—and there you are!"

"Well, that's not a bad idea," said Blake, rather grudgingly. "I expect you'll be pouaced upon and stopped by some of your rotten New House prefects."

"Blake, I think you are talking!" called out Mr. Lathom, the long-suffering Form master. "I shall punish you if you speak again in class!"

"Thank you, sir!"

And there was silence for a few minutes.

"I say, Figgins," said D'Arcy, after a pause.

The chief of the Co. looked up from his desk.

"I've been thinkin', Figgins. You wemembah what a shockin' boundah Marmaduke was when he first came to St. Jim's— Ow!"

D'Arcy gave a sudden yelp as Figgins pinched his leg. Mr. Lathom was on the spot at once, blinking through his spectacles.

"D'Arcy, what do you mean by making that curious and disrespectful noise in class?" demanded the little Form master.

"I—I—if you please, sir, I felt a sudden pain in my beastly leg, sir!" stammered the swell of the School House.

"Indeed! I think I can guess what caused the pain, and

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you will take twenty lines, D'Arcy, for having a pain in your leg in class."

"But weally, Mr. Lathom—"

"Silence!"

And the Form master marched back to his desk, and the lesson proceeded. Figgins grinned at the speechless indignation in D'Arcy's countenance. It was not till the lesson was over, and the class dismissed, that the swell of the School House gave audible expression to his feelings.

"I want to speak to you, Figgins," he said, in the passage. "I wegard your action in class as distinctly caddish. I was speakin' with the ideah of doin' you a favah—"

"It didn't sound like it," said Figgins blandly. "My mistake, I suppose."

"Oh, if it was a mistake, I withdwaw my words!" said D'Arcy, beaming. "And I will say what I was goin' to say in class, when you gave me that fearful pinch. You wemembah my wemarkin to you befoah what a shockin' boundah Marmaduke was when he first came to St. Jim's, don't you?"

"Yes, I remember," said Figgins, with a dangerous glimmer in his eyes.

"Well, I wemarked to you that it was quite poss. that Marmaduke would have had a welapse duwin' his long absence."

"Yes, I believe you said something to that effect."

"Well, I have been thinkin' about it, Figgins, and if you like, I'm willin' to take Marmaduke in hand a little when he weturns to the school, and bwing him up in the way he should go, so to speak."

"Are you really, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!" beamed D'Arcy. "You know, Marmaduke was a shockin' outsiders, and you fellows are not much bettah; but I'm always willin' to impwove people—"

"You hear him, Kerr?" said Figgins. "You hear him, Wynn? He's always willing to impwove people, and he's going to start on us."

"Yaas, wathah."

"We're awfully grateful," said Figgins, with humility. "When you are generous like this, D'Arcy, you are overpowering. Doesn't it give you a pain anywhere?"

"If you are going to wot, Figgins—"

"Not at all. We're grateful. We're going to show you how grateful we are."

Figgins made a rapid sign to the Co., and in a twinkling D'Arcy was seized by the three New House juniors, and frog's-marched along the passage. Before he quite knew what was happening, he was dropped, dusty and rumped, on the mat, and Figgins & Co. walked away laughing.

Arthur Augustus sat up and rubbed the dust out of his eyes.

"You feahful, ungwateful wottahs!" he shouted. "You howwid boundahs! I will give you a feahful thwashin'! I—I—"

He glared round as he jumped up, but his words were wasted on the desert air; Figgins & Co. were gone. The Terrible Three were coming along, and they stopped to stare at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Hallo, Gussy, what's the game?" asked Tom Merry.

"Have you been using yourself to dust the doormat with?"

"I have been fwog's-marched by those New House boundahs, Tom Mewwy. They took me quite by surprwise. I was makin' them a fwiendly offah, to take Marmaduke in hand and impwove him a little when he weturned, and they—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is no laughing matter, Tom Mewwy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy gave the Terrible Three a glance of indignation, and marched off without another word. He had said that it was no laughing matter; but the chums of the Shell appeared to think otherwise. They laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks.



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CHAPTER 11:

D'Arcy Gives Up an Idea.

"F IGGINS is managing this thing on his own," Tom Merry remarked, in his study that evening. "He doesn't want any help from the School House."

"Like his cheek!" said Monty Lowther.

"Exactly. He has the nerve to say that if the whole gang, as he elegantly puts it, go to meet Marmaduke, it will end in a row with the Grammarians, and we shall be done again."

"Well, as a matter of fact—"

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"No chipping, Monty. Life's too short for all the funny things you want to say. I was going to remark that Figgins & Co. are showing alarming symptoms of swelled head, and it would serve them right if something went wrong when they go to meet Marmaduke's train at the station tomorrow."

"We can't very well send word to the Grammarians," grinned Lowther.

"No, hardly, though as a matter of fact, I expect some of Frank Monk's crowd will be in the village, and they will probably chip in of their own accord."

"Very likely. But about ourselves—"

Tom Merry's brow was very thoughtful.

"We could work off a little surprise on Figgins & Co.," he remarked. "But on the joyful occasion of the gathering of the clans, it would be bad form to have a House row."

"Quite so; besides, we've made it pax."

"Yes, it's pax till after the happy reunion and the feed in the New House box-room," said Tom Merry, with a nod. "That bars a row with Figgins & Co., or we could give them a lesson to reduce the swelling in their heads a little. But there's another tack we can follow—rather out of our line, I admit."

"I'd rather follow a tack than sit on it, any day," said Monty Lowther.

"Rotten!" said Tom Merry. "My idea is to heap coals of fire on Figgy's head."

"My hat!" gasped Manners. "Why, Tom—"

"Ass!" said Tom Merry. "I am speaking metaphorically, of course."

"Oh, I see! Metaphorical coals of fire won't hurt old Figgy's cocoonut, I suppose. But what's the idea?"

"I think it's very likely that Figgins & Co. will get into a row with the Grammar School crowd. We will be on hand, and if they do, we'll go to the rescue, and haul them out of it. That will be heaping coals of fire on their heads, you see, and incidentally it will show them that they can't do without help from the School House."

"Good!" said Manners and Lowther. "We'll be on hand."

"Pway excuse me."

It was the voice of Arthur Augustus. An eyeglass was glimmering in the open doorway of the study. The swell of St. Jim's nodded agreeably as the Terrible Three looked round.

"Pway excuse me," he repeated. "I have come to pwopose to you fellows to cawwy out the wippin' ideah I suggested the othah day."

"Which one?" asked Tom Merry. "You're so full of ripping ideas, you know, Gussy, each of them more ripping than the rest. What's the present one—some new discovery in the fancy waistcoat line?"

"Pway do not be fwivolous, Tom Mewwy. You know that the gweetin' we designed for Digby was wathah a fwost?"

"Yes, rather. But it's frosty weather, you know."

"Pway be sewious. I think that ideah of a feed in the New House box-woom is all wight in its way, but there ought to be somethin' more impwessive as well. I was not able to cawwy out my ideah of a twiumpfal arch on the occasion of Digby's weturn—"

The chums of the Shell groaned in chorus.

"So I think it would be wippin' to have it ewected to celebrwate the home-comin' of Marmaduke Smythe," said D'Arcy. "I know that Marmaduke is wathah a boundah, but we ought to give him a welcome. A twiumpfal arch—"

The Terrible Three rose and came to Arthur Augustus, and seized hold of him. Gently but firmly they marched him out into the corridor. D'Arcy submitted with an expression of amazement upon his face.

"Wh-wh-what do you mean, Tom Mewwy?" he gasped at last.

"We mean that we're fed up with that twiumpfal arch," said Tom Merry solemnly. "Go in peace, D'Arcy; but if you come back here talking of a twiumpfal arch again, you'll go in pieces. Understand? Scat!"

"But weally, Tom Mewwy—" "Bunk!" shouted the Terrible Three. And D'Arcy gently assisted by three feet, moved rather hurriedly along the passage. But he was not beaten yet. He turned and adjusted his monocle, and gave the chums of the Shell a withering glance.

"I wegard you—" he began. "Get out!" "I wegard you as feahful wottahs—" The Terrible Three made a rush, and D'Arcy skipped away and ran. He did not stop till he was safe at the door of Study No. 6. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther returned to their study, laughing heartily. D'Arcy, rather flustered and indignant, went into Study No. 6.

"Well, what's the verdict?" asked Jack Blake, with a grin. "Are Tom Merry and the rest going to help you with the triumphal arch?"

"They weceived me vewy wudely," said D'Arcy. "It is weally vewy hard for a gentleman to live at this school, suwounded by boundahs—"

Digby giggled. "Go over and ask Figgins & Co. to help you with the triumphal arch," he suggested, "and give us a rest, Gussy."

"I wefuse to go over and ask Figgins & Co. I feel certain that they would tweek me with diswespect."

"I rather think they would." "I shall give up the ideah of a twiumpal arch now," said D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity. "It is a simply bwiliant ideah, but it is wasted on you commonplace wottahs. You don't deserve to have a fellow of my bwains livin' in this study."

"No, that we don't," said Blake feelingly. "We haven't done anything dreadful enough to deserve that, for a fact."

D'Arcy sniffed, and sat down to his preparation. The projected triumphal arch had faded from his mental vision like a beautiful dream. He felt himself to be a misunderstood genius.

Fatty Wynn looked into the study a little later. The plump face of the Welsh partner in the Co. was beaming.

"I've come for your contribution," he announced. "Eh?" said Blake. "Are you running a paper?"

"I mean your contribution to the feed," said Fatty Wynn. "I say, it will be a gorgeous spread. I've done a lot of shopping, and it's prime. You can trust me! Now, where's your little lot?"

Blake took a basket out of the cupboard, and handed it to Fatty Wynn. Fatty weighed it in his hand, and peeped inside, and his expression showed that he was satisfied.

"Right you are!" he said. "The time for the feed tomorrow is fixed at seven, for the present. Good-night!"

"Good-night, Fatty!" And Fatty Wynn disappeared with the basket.

"I expect those New House bounders will get into a row with the Grammar cads, and there will be a muck-up, as usual," Blake remarked. "But the feed is quite safe, so I don't care, for one. The feed will come off all right in any case."

"Yaas, wathah."

CHAPTER 12.

Frank Monk Smells a Rat.

"It gets dark beastly early," growled Figgins, as he came out of the New House at tea-time on Friday evening.

It was dusk in the quadrangle, as the three juniors crossed towards the gates. It was tea-time, but following Fatty Wynn's suggestion, the New House trio had had their tea early, and were fortified with a good meal for the walk down to Rylcombe.

"Cold, too," said Kerr, pulling up the collar of his coat. "We shall be hungry when we get back," said Fatty Wynn. "I suppose that's all the better, as we have a good feed ready, but we might stop for just a little snack at Mother Murphy's. It's dangerous to go hungry in this weather."

Figgins snorted. "You'll make me hungry if you don't stop talking about grub," he exclaimed.

"It's an important subject, Figgy, especially in the cold weather," said Fatty Wynn, "but you can suit yourself about calling in at the tuck-shop. I have put a couple of pork-pies in my pockets, in case I should get famished, so—"

"Hallo, Figgy, so you're off?"

It was Tom Merry's voice from the gloom. The Terrible Three came into sight out of the dusk, and Figgins & Co. stopped.

"Yes, we're off," said Figgins.

"Off your onions, I suppose?" remarked Monty Lowther. "Well, you look it. Sure you wouldn't like us to come along and see that you don't get into mischief."

"Quite sure," said Figgins. "We know how you School House bounders manage things. We've had some. Come along, kids."

And Figgins & Co. marched on, with their noses in the air. The chums of the Shell gazed after them and chuckled.

"They don't suspect that we're going to keep them in sight," grinned Tom Merry. "My idea is that they're pretty certain to want our help. The Grammarians don't like Marmaduke Smythe; they've had ructions with him before. As Figgy puts it, they've had some. If they get on to it that Marmy is coming, they'll be round the station like flies round a treacle-pot. They don't love the heir of millions."

"That's so," said Manners. "I suppose Figgins & Co. will get into trouble, and we shall have to fish them out. Come along!"

Quite unconscious of the design of the Terrible Three, Figgins & Co. left the gateway, and tramped on down to Rylcombe.

The evening dusk was thick, and it was probable that the gates would be locked before they got back to the school; but as Figgins had secured a pass for the three from Monteith, that did not trouble him.

They entered the High Street of Rylcombe, and Fatty Wynn cast a longing glance towards the lighted window of the tuck-shop.

"I say, Figgy."

"What is it?" asked Figgins. "Those veal-and-ham pies of Mother Murphy's are ripping, and she always has them hot at this time."

"You horrid glutton! You've just eaten enough for six, and you have your pockets stuffed with pork-pies."

"No, I haven't, Figgy," protested Fatty Wynn. "I had a couple of pork-pies in my pocket, I know."

"Well, eat them, and dry up."

"I've eaten them already. A feeling of faintness came over me as we came up the lane, and I had to eat them. Now—"

"Great Scott, you can't be hungry again already!"

"N-no, not exactly; but we've got to go to the station, you see, and then that long walk home to the school, and I'm afraid we shall be famished, and—"

"We sha'n't get any peace unless you bolt a dozen veal-and-ham pies, I know that," growled Figgins, stopping outside the tuck-shop. "Come to think of it," he went on, more good-humouredly, "this frosty weather does give you an appetite. We may as well have a few of Mother Murphy's pies. We've time. Come in."

"Right-ho!" said Kerr. "It's Fatty's treat."

The New House trio entered the tuck-shop. The next moment Figgins uttered an exclamation of chagrin. He would gladly have beaten a retreat, he could have done so unseen; but it was too late. For at the counter of the tuck-shop were three well-known figures—those of Frank Monk, Carboy, and Lane. They evidently knew also that Mrs. Murphy's pies were hot at that hour.

The Grammarians caught sight of the St. Jim's fellows at a moment, and drew quickly together. Figgins & Co. walked up to the counter, affecting to take no notice of them.

Some of the famous veal-and-ham pies were before the Grammarian trio, and they were doing them full justice. Mother Murphy, with a beaming smile, served Figgins & Co.

"Cold weather, ain't it, Figgins?" said Frank Monk. Figgins did not deign to reply.

"Good weather for running," remarked Carboy. "We gave you a nice little run the other day, didn't we?"

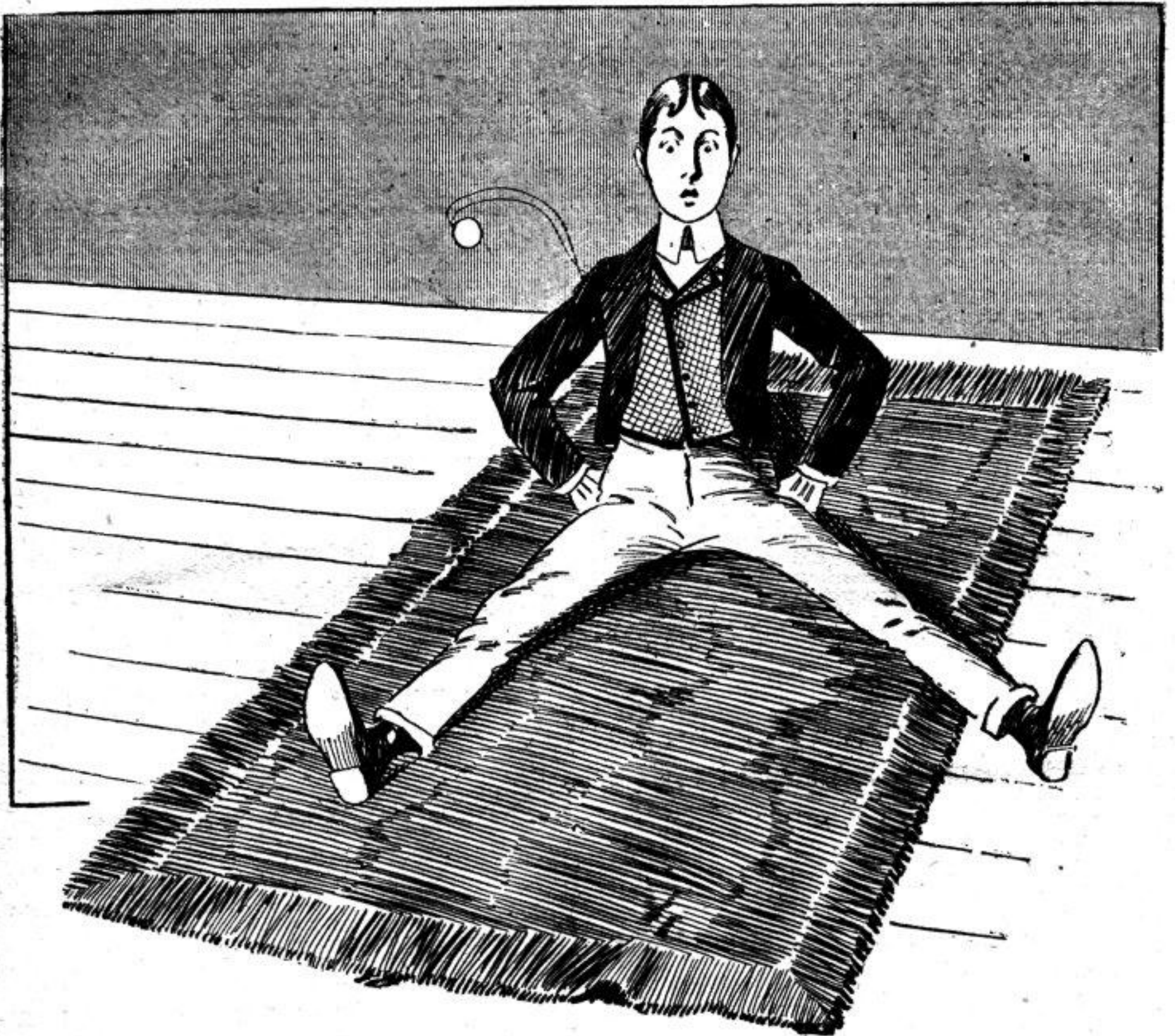
"Oh, don't mention it!" said Lane. "Figgins feels hurt; at all events, he felt hurt at the time. I caught him on the left ear with a cabbage-stump."

"Ha, ha! I suppose that would hurt his feelings. But I felt really sorry for Wynn that time," said Frank Monk gravely. "It was rough on him to have to run, with all that plumpness to carry about. I say, Wynn, how many tons do you weigh?"

Fatty Wynn coloured with indignation, and was about to reply, when Figgins made him an imperative sign. The Grammarians were evidently seeking a row, but it was no time for a dispute, with Marmaduke's train almost due. Figgins showed an exemplary and most unusual patience under the chipping of the Grammarians.

"Look at him welfing those pies!" said Carboy. "Don't they give you any grub at St. Jim's, Wynn? I knew it was a mouldy old school, but I thought they fed you."

"You rotters—" began the exasperated Fatty Wynn. Figgins tapped him on the arm, and he broke off. Frank Monk saw it, and his eyes gleamed for a moment.



"Those feahful, ungwateful wottahs!" muttered D'Arcy. "Those howwid boundahs! I will give them a feahful thwashin'!"

"Time we were getting back," he exclaimed, looking at his watch. "Can't waste any more time talking to these outsiders. Bye-bye, Figgins—or is it Higgins?"

Figgins turned red, but he kept his eyes fixed upon his plate with a stony stare. He was not to be drawn into a row, even by a disrespectful variation upon his name.

"Higgins, I think," said Carboy; "I never can recollect the fellow's name. He calls it a name, I suppose? It's either Higgins or Wiggins—"

"Stiggins, I think," said Lane.

"Well, good-night, Figgins, Higgins, Wiggins, or Stiggins, whichever and whatever you are," said Frank Monk.

Figgins remained stonily silent. The three Grammarians chuckled and left the tuck-shop. Carboy and Lane were looking curiously at their leader.

"What's the game?" exclaimed Carboy abruptly, when they were outside. "I thought we were going to have a row with those bounders, Frank?"

The Grammarian leader chuckled.

"My dear kid, you never look any further than the end of your nose," he said. "I was going to make it a row, only I used my eyes."

"Well, and what did you see when you used your eyes?" growled Carboy.

"I saw that there was something on," said Monk serenely. "Have you ever known those merchants to be so beautifully patient before? What do you think they are understudying Job for this evening? As a rule, they're only too ready for a scrap."

"That's true enough."

"There's something on—some reason why they want to keep out of a row," said Frank Monk sagely. "We'll hang round and watch them when they come out, and see what the game is, and see if there isn't room for three fellows like us to take a hand in it."

"Good!"—chuckled Carboy and Lane, catching on to the idea at once.

"Let's cross over and keep in the shadow," said Monk. "We can watch them come out of the tuck-shop across the street."

The three Grammarians crossed the street, and halted in the shadow of an unlighted house. They had not long to wait. A few minutes only had elapsed when Figgins & Co. came out of the tuck-shop, Fatty Wynn with the remnant of a pie in his hand.

Figgins glanced up and down the street, and then started towards the station with the Co. Monk gave a quiet chuckle.

"You see that!" he whispered. "Figgins wanted to make sure we were gone. He hasn't spotted us here. They're going to the station."

"What the dickens are they going there for, I wonder?"

"To meet a train, of course. The six-thirty is nearly due. They've got some friend coming by the train—some kid belonging to St. Jim's, in all probability. My hat," Monk broke off suddenly, "I shouldn't wonder if it was Marmaduke!"

"Marmaduke Smythe?"

"Yes. I've heard from some of them that Marmaduke

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is expected back at the school, and you know he used to chum up with Figgins & Co."

"He's a bit of a rotter, I believe," Carboy remarked. "Yes, I really wonder how Figgins & Co. can stand him. You know we've had our rubs with him, and we don't like him much. What?"

"It would be a howling joke to get hold of him." "Yes, you remember how we did once before," grinned Monk, "when we decorated him and sent him into St. Jim's tied to a donkey. We'll collar the whole Co. this time. I say, Lane, cut off and get some of the fellows. There are a dozen or more in the village. Get them together and follow us to the station."

"Right-ho!" said Lane; and he darted off. Monk and Carboy followed on the track of Figgins & Co. Lane ran off at top speed, and did not notice three figures draw back into the shadow of a tree as he passed them. But the three saw him, and saw his comrades, too.

"Thought we should be needed," said Tom Merry. "There they are! Monk and Carboy are following Figgins, and there's going to be a row."

"Let's get on to the station," said Monty Lowther. And the Terrible Three hurried on.

CHAPTER 13.

Marmaduke Once More.

FIGGINS & CO. entered the station at Rylcombe. The half-hour had chimed out as they reached it, and the train was already in the station. A well-known voice could be heard as they came towards the platform.

"Porter! Porter, I say! Are you deaf?" Figgins grinned.

"That's old Marmy!" he exclaimed. "I'd know his bark and his pleasant manners anywhere! My word, I hope he hasn't got the millions into his head again!"

"If he has," said Kerr, "we'll soon have 'em out."

"Yes, that's so, but— Here he is!" The well-known figure of Marmaduke appeared in sight. Marmaduke was dressed well, as well as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, though, perhaps, with not quite so exquisite a finish. He wore a silk hat at a rakish angle, and his hair parted in the middle.

"Hallo, old kid!"

"Hallo!" said Marmaduke. "Glad to see you. I thought you'd come and meet the train. How do you do, kids? Wait a minute while I yell at that porter. He's bumping my boxes about as if he thought they were filled with brickbats. Porter!"

"Yessir."

"Take care of those boxes."

"Yessir."

"Bump, bump, bump!"

"I told you to take care of those boxes!"

"Yessir."

"Bump, bump, bump!"

"Make it a bob," said Figgins, with a grin.

"I object to tipping people to do their duty," said Marmaduke, with a frown. "However, here is half-a-crown for you, porter. Kindly handle those boxes a little more gently."

"Yes, sir."

The terrific bumping ceased, and the boxes disappeared on a trolley. Then Marmaduke shook hands all round with Figgins & Co.

"We're glad to see your old mug again, Marmaduke," said Figgins. "You hadn't forgotten St. Jim's in the gorgeous mansion in Park Lane, then?"

"Not at all," said Marmaduke, with just the slightest tincture of superiority; "I am glad to be back again. St. Jim's is jollier than having a private tutor, though I expect I shall miss many of my little comforts."

"I expect you will," said Figgins drily. "But, in compensation for that, you'll get all the nonsense knocked out of you, Marmy, which will be a great advantage."

Marmaduke coloured a little.

"I hope I haven't given any nonsense about me, Figgy," he said. "To be quite frank with you, a millionaire's house isn't exactly the place for a chap to live in if he wants to be healthy. That's one reason why my pater is willing to let me come back, I believe. One gets into a way of putting on side, without thinking, when one has a lot of sycophant rotters hanging about. That's the honest truth."

Figgins smiled at once.

"Right you are, old lad!" he said, patting Marmaduke affectionately on the shoulder. "That's all right; we understand perfectly! And I promise you that if we see any rot about you, we'll jump on you at once."

Marmaduke did not seem absolutely overcome by this

generous offer. But he made no reply, and the four comrades walked out of the station.

The boxes were being put upon the back. Marmaduke stepped towards the ancient vehicle to enter it. Figgins tapped him on the shoulder.

"Better walk," he said.

"But the lane is probably muddy."

"Not much doubt upon that point, old kid!" said Figgins cheerfully. "But we shall get there in half the time of the hack, as we can take the short cut through Rylcombe Wood and across the lake—it's frozen."

"But it is cold."

"Warm enough walking; and not so cold as sitting in that draughty old boneshaker, anyway," said Figgins.

"Hang it, you've been sitting down for sixty miles! Besides, we can't be late in, as there's a celebration on account of your arrival."

"Very well, Figgins, we will walk."

And the four juniors started down the street, instructions having been given for the luggage to be sent on by the hack. Marmaduke uttered an exclamation.

"There, do you see those fellows— They're from the Grammar School, and, by Jove, they're the fellows who tied me to a donkey last time I came down!"

Figgins looked round quickly, and caught sight of Monk and Carboy. Lane was not with them. Monk took off his cap, and made Marmaduke a polite bow.

"Glad to see you again!" he exclaimed. "How are the millions getting on, and the old folks at home in Petticoat Lane?"

Marmaduke gave the humorous Grammarian a freezing stare.

"My father's mansion is in Park Lane," he said coldly.

"Is it?" said the unabashed Monk. "My mistake! I thought it was Petticoat Lane; you have the charming manners of a native of that salubrious locality, you know."

"I desire to have nothing to say to you," said Marmaduke haughtily.

"Ha, ha! Take that thing home and bury it, Figgins!"

"Oh, clear off!" said Figgins irritably; and the St. Jim's juniors walked on. Monk and Carboy followed, keeping a dozen paces away. Thus they proceeded almost to the end of the village street, where Figgins turned round with a very sad face.

"Are you going to clear off?" he shouted. "If you follow us any further, we'll come back and wipe up the ground with you!"

Frank Monk gave him a look of injured surprise.

"My dear Figgins, have you joined the road-hog brigade?"

he asked. "Surely nice, peaceable fellows like us have a right to walk down a high road if we want to?"

Figgins growled, and resumed his way. The Grammarians were acting quite within their rights, as a matter of fact. But Figgins was uneasy. He wondered where Lane was, and he scented mischief.

"What's the bother?" asked Marmaduke. "It is impertinent of those fellows, of course; but I don't see that it matters about their following us, Figgins."

"Perhaps you don't," said Figgins. "You weren't here on Wednesday, when they cornered us all in the tuck-shop when we came to meet Digby at the station. We had a high old time of it, I can tell you. I almost wish we had brought Tom Merry and the rest along now."

Kerr was looking round anxiously into the gloom.

"I can't see any more of the rotters," he said. "I suppose Lane has gone to fetch them. But come on; let's step out for St. Jim's!"

"Don't feel like hurrying—" began Marmaduke.

"Do you feel like being frog-marched?" asked Figgins.

"Figgins, do you think—are you afraid those Grammar cads will interfere with us?" asked the heir to Samuel Smythe's millions.

"No, I'm not afraid!" snorted Figgins. "But I'm pretty sure they will, if they have half a chance. Step out!"

The four juniors had reached the end of the lighted High Street of Rylcombe, and the shadowy lane leading up to the school lay before them. The rim of the moon was showing over the dark Castle Wood, but the lane was deep in shadow.

Figgins looked back again. Monk and Carboy were keeping their distance, but they seemed to be chuckling over some joke. Figgins was uneasy, but there was no help for it, and he led the way into the gloom of the country lane with his long strides.

"I say, Figgins, we're walking too fast!" said Marmaduke plaintively. "I need not to this vigorous exertion—"

"Time you got used to it, then!" granted Figgins.

"Really, Figgins—"

"Look out!" yelled Kerr.

There was a pattering of feet in the dusky hedge. Five or six figures leaped out and rushed upon Figgins & Co. At

the same moment Monk and Carboy quickened their pace, and came dashing on.

"Shoulder to shoulder!" sang out Figgins. But there were seven or eight Grammarians. In a moment more Figgins & Co. would have been rolling in the mud; but a cheer rang through the darkness of the lane:

"Rescue, St. Jim's!"
 "Tom Merry!" gasped Figgins.
 And from the gloom on the other side of the lane the Terrible Three rushed to the rescue.

CHAPTER 14.

A Hot Chase, and a Cold Plunge.

TOM MERRY came as a complete surprise to the Grammarians. The odds were still on the Grammar side, but the surprise was too much for them.

Monk and Carboy went reeling into the ditch from sledge-hammer blows, delivered straight from the shoulder by Tom Merry and Lowther, and Lane rolled in the dust with Manners's arms wound affectionately about his neck.

Thus reinforced, and relieved of their most formidable adversaries, Figgins & Co. "bucked up" in splendid style.

"Sock it to 'em!" yelled Figgins.
 And the Co. "socked it to 'em," as Figgins put it, with a will.

They hit out right and left, and the Grammarians scattered in all directions. Lane twisted himself loose from Manners, and tore off, leaving his cap and necktie as trophies of victory to the St. Jim's juniors. Monk and Carboy scrambled out of the ditch into the field, and cut off across the latter.

The whole thing passed in a minute or less.

"I suppose I can express an opinion, if I like," said Marmaduke, rather tartly.

"No, I don't suppose you can, if it's that sort of an opinion," said Tom Merry immediately. "Figgins is not going to coddle you—"

"Not much!" said Figgins. "I say, let's get moving, or those rotters may come back in force, and wipe up the ground with us."

"Too late!" said Tom Merry, coolly, as a shout was heard in the darkness of the lane. "They're here already!"

The Grammarians were returning to the attack. The lane at this spot ran close to the Grammar School, and Monk had easily obtained reinforcements. It had also dawned upon him that the Saints were very probably not in strong force. The Grammarians, burning to avenge their defeat, were coming back in force. Figgy's suggestion came rather late in the day.

"Rush them!" rang a voice through the gloom.
 "Monk, again!" said Tom Merry. "Some of those young bouncers will get into a row for being out of gates, now, I fancy—so shall we, as a matter of fact. Never mind that; let us get a move on. We shall have to run for it."

"I feel hardly up to running," said Marmaduke.

"Right-ho! Stay and talk to Monk and company, while we run," said Tom Merry. "Come on, kids! We shall have to take the short cut through the woods and over the lake. Lucky it's frozen!"

"Are you sure the ice is safe?"
 "No; you will very likely get drowned. Not much loss, if you do. I'm off!"

"Look here, Merry, I'm not going to stand—"

"Sit down, then! Are you fellows coming!"
 And Tom Merry started off at a run. It was high time, for the Grammarians were coming on fast. The seven

IT IS ON THE OTHER SIDE!

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry, as he slapped the delighted Figgins on the shoulder. "Hear us smile! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly glad to hear you smile!" gasped Figgins. "Your cackle isn't much in the musical line as a rule, but I'm glad to hear it now."

"Rather!" said Kerr. "You came along in the nick of time, Tom Merry, and it was lucky you did. They had us at a disadvantage."

"Came along!" snorted the hero of the Shell. "Do you think we happened to come along by chance, then, you New House wasters?"

"Not much!" chimed in Monty Lowther. "We came out to look for you, as we knew you would get into some sort of mischief."

"Oh, you did, did you?" said Figgins, not very gratefully.
 "Yes, we did, Figgy," said Tom Merry placidly. "You thought you could manage this thing without us, but we knew better. Didn't we, chaps?"

"Rather!" said Manners and Lowther.

"We came out after you," went on Tom Merry. "We saw you go to the station, and saw Monk and Carboy follow you. Then we spotted Lane gathering his forces, and laying this little ambush, and we came along quietly to lay another. I rather think the Grammarians were surprised, and they wouldn't have run so fast if they had known that there were so few of us, either."

"Probably not," said Marmaduke, rising to his feet. He was the only one of the Co. that had been knocked down, and he was feeling annoyed. "They are rough brutes—"

"Eh, what?" said the Terrible Three together.

"They are rough brutes—"

"Scat! They're all right! If you want to live in a handbox, wrapped up in cotton wool, it's no good your coming back to St. Jim's, Marmy!"

juniors of St. Jim's were hopelessly outnumbered, and it was useless to think of a fight against such odds. They ran on in a body, jumped over the stile into the footpath through the wood, and dashed along the footpath.

The moon was coming out over the wood, and silver light filtered through the branches, and glimmered on the spring green, turning it to ghostly white. But where the shadows of the trees fell, the path was in dense darkness, and the juniors made many a stumble over fallen boughs and trailing roots as they ran on.

Marmaduke was soon puffing and blowing. The heir of millions was evidently not in very good condition. Life in the great mansion in Park Lane was not conducive to keeping oneself fit. He had bellows to mend, and his breathing grew more heavy and laboured, his pace slackened and slower. The others, of course, had to slow down for him, and the pursuing footsteps of the Grammarians came closer and closer.

"Here, this won't do!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Take one of his arms, Figgy, and I'll take the other, and we'll get him along faster!"

"Right-ho!" said Figgins.
 "I—I—I don't want—" gasped Marmaduke. "I don't want you to—to—to—"

"Can't be helped," said Tom Merry—"I mean, you must be helped. Those wasters will make an example of us if they collar us now, after the licking we gave them. Come on!"

"I—I don't—"
 "Must's the word! Buck up!"

With Tom Merry and Figgins grasping an arm each, Marmaduke was borne along at a speed which hardly allowed his feet time to touch the ground. His head began to swim, but he was too breathless to make further objection. The

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other juniors were running well, even Fatty Wynn putting a good foot forward, in spite of his plumpness.

"Ah, there's the lake!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

They came out of the shadowy footpath into a dazzling glimmer of moonlight. Before them lay the mere, impassable in the summer-time, when the waters bubbled and sang amid the green rushes, but now frozen in a great sheet of white.

"Slide it!" said Tom Merry. "Don't stop!"
There were many traces on the ice where skating and sliding had been done, both by the village lads and the fellows from St. Jim's. In one or two places the surface had been broken, showing that the icy crust was not very secure; but there was no nervousness about the juniors of St. Jim's.

"L-let me go!" gasped Marmaduke. "I c-c-can't slide with you holding me. I can go all right alone."

"Right-ho!" said Figgins. "Don't lag behind, kid, or the Grammarians will give you a taste of what they gave you before, when you came down to St. Jim's."

Marmaduke did not reply. He had very little breath to reply with. Tom Merry led the way upon the frozen lake, and went on with the speed and certainty of an experienced slider. He seemed to whiz across the expanse of frozen white like a stone from a catapult; and even if the crust had been weak beneath him, he passed over it too swiftly for danger to arise.

After him went Monty Lowther and Manners, equally swift and reckless. They shot away in the moonlight, and Kerr and Figgins followed on the same track. Fatty Wynn leaning a hand on Figgins' arm for aid. Marmaduke stood gasping on the bank, trying to get back his wind, and the Grammarians came out of the wood with a rush, and yelled as they saw him.

It was no time to linger. Marmaduke slid out on the ice,

of yards of thin and creaking ice; and under him and round him came the ominous sounds. A chill ran through Marmaduke's veins.

He began to return, but at every movement the creak and groan of the ice grew more ominous, and he stopped again. Frank Monk had turned deadly pale.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "He'll be through, as sure as a gun; and the water is thirty feet deep there if it's an inch. My only hat!"

Tom Merry and his companions had reached the shore, and were looking round for Marmaduke. When they saw him standing in the midst of the thin ice, far from their aid, their feelings may be better imagined than described.

Tom Merry ran to the ice again. The other juniors followed fast; but Marmaduke's peril was immediate and terrible.

Another creak came from the ice beneath him. He shuddered at the sound, and moved forward again. A loud, rending crack, and the ice parted.

Splash!
Marmaduke was battling with the chilling water the next moment; and one moment more, and Frank Monk had darted forward, and was in the water beside him, supporting him with a firm grip on his collar.

CHAPTER 15.

Unexpected Guests.

TOM MERRY was not long behind Monk. He was speeding towards the gap in the ice as fast as the Grammarian leader, but Monk was nearer, and so reached it first. But for Monk's prompt aid, it was probable that the exhausted Marmaduke would have gone to

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and dashed along after his comrades; but he dropped behind fast. He was not in good condition, and he was out of practice for any athletic exercise.

"We shall have him!" muttered Frank Monk gleefully. "Faster, kids! If we collar him, the others will come back to rescue him, and—"

"And we shall bag the lot!" grinned Carboy.

"Exactly. And then we'll tie 'em two and two, and march 'em up to St. Jim's, like the animals going into the Ark!" chuckled Monk.

"Hs, hs, ha!"

The Grammarians put on a spurt. Marmaduke heard them close behind, and his comrades drawing further and further away in front. He would have shouted to Figgins, but he had no breath for a shout; and the juniors ahead did not look back. The ice was rough, and they needed all their eyes to avoid coming to grief on it.

Marmaduke laboured on. There was a swift breath behind him, and an outstretched hand narrowly missed his coat. He changed his direction, and shot off to the left, and Frank Monk and Carboy went shooting on past him.

Marmaduke had expected; but he had reason to repent it the next moment. It struck him for the first time that Tom Merry had a reason for choosing the route he had taken across the mere.

The ice under Marmaduke's feet was cracking ominously. Tom Merry had followed the path of safety from knowledge of the place, and Marmaduke had blindly run into danger by leaving the track.

Crack—crack—crack! There was a yell from the Grammarians.

"Come back—come back!"

Marmaduke would gladly have gone back; but he could not stop himself for the moment. When he came to a halt at last, he was separated from the Grammarians by a score

of yards in a few moments. He hung almost helplessly upon the gallant lad, as Frank grasped him with one hand and struck out with the other.

Tom Merry was coming on like an arrow, but as he saw Monk's action he slackened down, and stopped near the verge of the gap. He waved his hand to the others.

"Come on, kids! Form a line, and take hands."

The juniors understood, and did not need telling twice. They joined hands to make a long line, and Kerr, and the lightest, crept cautiously along the ice, and gave one hand to Tom Merry.

The St. Jim's juniors and the Grammarians joined indiscriminately in making up the line, all thought of the late row being, of course, banished at such a moment. The only thought in any mind now was to save Marmaduke.

Tom Merry knelt on the ice. It creaked, but held firm as yet. He stretched out his right hand and gripped hold of Monk.

"Got him!"
Frank Monk, still holding Marmaduke, was drawn to the edge of the gap. There came a loud crack of the ice, and Tom Merry gave a shout.

"Hold tight!"

The juniors held tight, and it was needed. The ice broke under Tom Merry and Kerr, and they splashed in the water. But the rest of the line was firm, and the juniors held on fast.

Next to Kerr came Figgins, and he never slackened his grip on the hand of his Scottish partner. Under Figgins the ice was thicker, and it held firm.

"Out you come!" said Figgins.

He drew Kerr to the ice. Kerr, with Figg's help, scrambled out, still holding Tom Merry. Then Figgins gripped Tom Merry at the edge of the gap, and Kerr crept away, shivering, to safety.

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One parcel of sausages, gripped in the arms of Paddy Wynn, which he would have perished rather than parted with, remained. The rest was gone, carried off by the Grammar School juniors.

"Come on!" said Figgins cheerily.

He helped Tom Merry on the ice. Then the two of them aided Frank Monk and Marmaduke, and got them clear of the water. The ice still held, though it cracked in an ominous way.

"Buck up!" gasped Tom Merry.

The juniors slid away towards the firmer ice. Five minutes had not passed since the first plunge of Marmaduke into the frozen mere, but in that short space of time a tragedy had been very narrowly averted by coolness and British pluck. Tom Merry grasped Frank Monk's hand.

"You're a jolly good sort!" he said. "By Jove, I never saw anything quite so plucky! My only hat, though, isn't it cold!"

"Yes, rather," said Monk through his chattering teeth. "We'd better get off as quick as we can. Running is the thing."

"Right-ho! We shall have to let you chaps go, under the circumstances."

"Let us go!" exclaimed Carboy indignantly. "You mean that we shall have to let you go, under the circumstances!"

"Oh, we won't quarrel over a word," said Tom Merry airily. "But I'll tell you what, you kids, you've saved Marmaduke's life, and, without saying that it was a very valuable one, we're obliged to you."

"Ha, ha! Thanks!"

"We're giving a ripping feed at St. Jim's, in honour of Marmy's return," went on Tom Merry. "Not a common or garden feed, you understand, but a real, first-class, gilt-edged, non-skidding feed, with about everything that money can buy on the table."

"Right-ho!" chimed in Figgins. "And if you'll come

"All three of you!"

"Monk, Lane, and Carboy!"

"It will show that we're grateful, and can appreciate pluck even in an enemy," said Tom Merry gracefully. "It

will also give us the unaccustomed pleasure of entertaining three gentlemen for whom we entertain a great respect."

"Ha, ha! We'll come. We're not going to miss a feed like that. What time is it?" said Monk. "We shall have to break bounds, but that's nothing."

"We had fixed it for seven, but—"

"Make it half-past, and we'll be there."

"Right-ho! Now you'd better cut along, or you'll catch your death of cold, and get the toothache, and—"

"Au revoir, then!"

The Grammarians cut back the way they had come, and the St. Jim's juniors dashed on towards the school at full speed. Tom Merry, Kerr, and Marmaduke were wet to the skin, and their clothes were already freezing.

Rapid motion, however, soon restored the circulation in their chilled limbs, and they arrived at the gates of St. Jim's in a glow of warmth.

Taggles, the porter, greeted as he came down to the gates. He knew that Figgins & Co. had a pass, and he opened the gates, and as soon as they were open Figgins and Co. marched in with Marmaduke, the Terrible Three keeping back in the shadows.

"Wot 'ave you been a-join' hof?" demanded Taggles, noticing Marmaduke's wet condition. "Nice goin's hon, I must say! Why—what—what—was that?"

"That" was three juniors whisking past him in the gloom, so quickly that before he could turn his lantern upon them they were gone.

"There was others with you, Master Figgins!" exclaimed Taggles wrathfully. "They has been out without a permit. What was their names?"

"Guess," said Figgins coolly; and he marched on with the Co., leaving the annoyed porter to close the gate with unnecessary violence.

"Done him that time!" chuckled Figgins, joining Tom Merry in the dimness of the quad. "He doesn't know you from Adam. Get your things off as quick as you can, and then come over to the New House."

And Figgins & Co. entered their own quarters, the

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Terrible Three going on to the School House. Four stars greeted them in the passage, proceeding from the four denizens of Study No. 6.

"Hallo! You look as if you've been keeping it up," said Blake. "Been taking a bath with your clothes on, Merry?"

"Yes, something like it," said Tom Merry. "So-long!" And he hurried on to change his wet garments.

"But, I say, what's the matter, anyway?" asked Digby curiously; and Manners and Lowther condescended to stop and explain.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, when he had heard the thrilling recital. "Bai Jove, deah boys, that chap Fwank Monk is a weal hewo, you know. Of course, any of us would have done it—or, wathah, of course I should. I don't know about you fellows. Still, it was vewy brwawe of Monk."

"Right-ho!" said Herries. "I'm glad he's coming to the feed."

"Yaas, wathah! Such cowwage deserves recognition, and if you fellows would back me up, we might wig up a twumphant arch in the box-room—"

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed Manners and Lowther, and they fled along the passage.

"Mannah! Lowthah! Pway—" But Tom Merry's chums were gone. D'Arcy turned with an air of great dignity to the grinning Fourth-Formers: "I say, you fellows, if you will back me up in this undertakin', I will overlook the wudeness with which you tweated the brilliant ideah in the first place. The box-room in the New House is a wathah large one, and a twumphant arch—"

"Shut up!" howled three voices.

"I wufuse to shut up! A twumphant arch—"

"Throw some ink over his waistcoat if he says another word, Dig."

The threat was sufficient. D'Arcy, with a glance of withering scorn at his unappreciative comrades, relapsed into indignant silence.

"I'm glad Monk is coming to the feed," said Blake, as he rose from the table presently, and put his books away. "He's a decent sort, though he hasn't learned yet to keep his proper place, and can't understand that St. Jim's is the top school. It must be pretty nearly time for the feed now."

"Quite time," said Tom Merry, looking into the study. "Come along, youngsters!"

"Who are you calling youngsters?"

"You little fellows, of course!"

"I'll little fellows you!"

"Peace, my children," said Digby, waving his hand between the two. "Will you mar this festive and joyous occasion by ragging one another? Shut up!"

"Yaas, wathah. This is no time for waggin', Blake. Tom Mewwy, I am surprised at you!"

"Go hon!" said Tom Merry. "Are you kids coming—I mean cads—that is to say, respected and esteemed school-fellows?"

"Yes, we're coming," grinned Blake. "Take your face away, please, and we'll follow."

The Terrible Three and Study No. 6 walked out of the School House into the misty quad. It was the time usually supposed to be devoted to preparation; but, as Tom Merry said, a feed like that did not come often, and prep. was always with them. Prep. could stand over for him.

"Kerr was waiting for them outside the New House. "Please, we've come," said Blake.

"I see you have," said Kerr. "I'm waiting for you. Figgins has gone out to meet Monk and show him the way in, and we're to go and help them over the wall."

"Marmaduke all right?"

"Yes, all well, considering; but we've left him in the room before the fire. He had a bad ducking, and he doesn't seem to be very fit. Fatty is looking after the grub. Come on."

And Kerr led the way through the misty quadrangle towards the familiar spot where the juniors had more than once crossed the school wall into Rylcombe Lane.

CHAPTER 16.

Something Like a Feast!

"FIGGINS!"

"Here I am! That you, Monkey?"

"Right-ho!"

The deadly foes—friends now, for the time—met in the dusk of the lane, outside the towering gateway of St. Jim's. Carboy and Lane were with Monk, and all three were wrapped in coats and scarves against the February cold.

Monk cast a curious glance up at the big bronze gates under the stone arch. The gates were closed now, and locked for the night.

"How are we going to get in?" he asked.

"That's what I'm here for," grinned Figgins. "It would hardly do to ring up the porter and present your cards, you know!"

"Ha, ha! I suppose not. I imagine that you kids are not allowed to receive tea-parties from outside at this time in the evening."

"Exactly!" After looking up, nobody goes in or out, except masters and prefects. But we have a way of our own!"

"And so have we, at the Grammar School," chuckled Frank.

"I suppose so. This way, gentlemen. We get over this wall. It is as easy as rolling off a roof, so even you Grammar kids will be able to manage it!"

"Now then, Figgy, I should be sorry to have to use my hospitable host as a duster, but—"

"My mistake," said Figgins; "I forgot. Sorry."

"It's all right. Lead on, Macduff."

Figgins led the way to the spot where a big tree shadowed the wall, and pulled a rope out of the shadows; it dangled from a branch that overhung the wall above. A dim form appeared on the wall.

"Is that you, Kerr?"

"No, it's Tom Merry," said the hero of the Shell.

"Guests arrived?"

"Yes, here they are, as large as life!"

"Up they come, then! Quiet, though; some of the prefects have been nosing round, as if they thought something was on!"

"That's like them," growled Figgins; "always suspecting fellows like us of having something on! Why can't they let us alone!"

Tom Merry chuckled. Figgins' indignation, under the circumstances, seemed to him funny. Frank Monk had taken hold of the rope, and was swinging himself up the wall. Tom Merry gave him a hand at the top. Lane and Carboy followed, and then Figgins. The rope was concealed in the tree, and the juniors stood in the darkness of the quadrangle.

"Shove your caps over your ears, and your scarves up round your necks," said Figgins; "if you're seen they won't know you then."

The Grammarians obeyed. They crossed the quad in a body. As they came into the glimmer of light from the New House, a figure in a master-board loomed up. It was Mr. Ratcliff, the housemaster of the New House.

The juniors' hearts beat as they passed him. The housemaster glanced at them, but the mist and the muffling up saved the Grammarians from detection. It never crossed Mr. Ratcliff's mind that Grammar School boys might enter within the walls of St. Jim's. The juniors passed on into the house, and breathed freely as they went upstairs.

"Narrow shave!" murmured Frank Monk. "Who's Old Nossy?"

"He's our housemaster," replied Figgins, not exactly knowing whether he liked to hear the head of the New House described as "Old Nossy."

"Come on, this way."

There was a glimmer of light under the door of the disused box-room on the second floor. Figgins opened the door, and a savoury odour at once burst upon the nostrils of the invited guests.

The old box-room had fallen into disuse, partly on account of the rats, and it was usually an extremely dingy apartment. But a change had come over it. It had been swept and garnished. The old lumber had been utilised in making up seats for the guests, chairs being very limited in number. Some old boxes furnished tables. There was a grate in the room, and a ruddy fire blazed in it, and by the fire Marmaduke Smythe was seated, making toast.

Fatty Wynn was giving the final brown to some sausages in a frying-pan. There were two burners in the box-room, and both were flaring away, cheerfully illuminating the scene.

Fatty looked up with a welcoming grin on his plump face.

"All's ready," he said, taking the pan off the fire. "Glad you've got in safely, you kids! Any danger?"

"No," said Figgins. "We saw the light under the door as we came, though. Better lay something along it. I see you've got the window covered."

"Yes, rather. A light in the window would give us away, if anybody happened to see it from outside."

"Weally, this looks extremely comfy," said D'Arcy, looking round; "I must congratulate you, Figgins!"

"Thank you! If so high-tony a gent is satisfied," said Figgins solemnly, "why, it must be well, and everything in the garden is lovely. Feel all right, Marmy?"

"Hip-hip!" said Marmaduke.

"Very pleased to meet you again, Smythe," said D'Arcy, shaking hands with Marmaduke, an example which was followed by the rest of the chums of No. 6. "You are lookin'!"

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watah wotah, but I suppose that was the duckin'. I am afraid you must have found the watah watah cold, deah boy!"

"I didn't expect to find it warm," said Marmaduke. "No, I presume not. Weally—"
"Sit down wherever you can find room, kids," said the hospitable Figgins. "Seats near the fire for our esteemed enemies from the Grammar School. I can recommend these sauses. Selected by myself, and cooked by Fatty Wynn, with his own fair hands!"

"Prime!" said Frank Monk.
"Rippin'!" said Carboy.
"Gorgeous!" said Lane.
The sauses were certainly excellent. Fatty Wynn was unequalled as a cook at St. Jim's. The bacon was as beautifully done as the sauses; the potatoes were floury, and melted in the mouth. And the feast was not only well got up, it was endless in variety. Ten juniors had subscribed liberally towards it, and the result was fully satisfactory in every way.

The Grammarian guests paid their entertainers the best compliment possible by accepting big helpings of everything, and asking for more.

It was pretty evident that Monk, Lane, and Carboy were enjoying themselves. Their faces beamed, and a merry chatter ran unceasingly through the box-room, and, as the feast progressed, all thought of masters and prefects was banished.

The room was somewhat remote from the inhabited parts of the house, and the bed-rooms near at hand were not likely to be occupied till a later hour. So long as they did not make too much noise, the juniors were pretty safe from discovery.

But under the influence of a good meal and genial good-fellowship, the party showed less and less caution. They drank toasts in ginger-pop and currant wine, and voices grew unconsciously less subdued.

"My word, this is jolly!" said Digby. "We shall have to get up something of this kind in the School House."
"And in the Grammar School!" said Frank Monk. "One good turn deserves another. By Jove, I'm glad Smythe fell into the lake!"

"Oh, are you?" said Marmaduke.
"Yes, rather; or else we shouldn't have been invited to this jolly party!" grinned Frank. "Yes, another glass, Merry, please!"

"Pass the tarts along, Figgins!"
"Right-ho! Send the puffs down this way!"
"I say—" began Arthur Augustus, rising to his feet.

"The jam puffs, please, D'Arcy!"
"Yass, but I say—"
"Don't say anything, old chap; just pass along the jam puffs, and we'll be satisfied!"

"I say, I heard someone in the passage!"
"Oh, scissors!" Figgins jumped up. "Why couldn't you say so before, you ass?"
"I twid to!"

"Silence all!" whispered Figgins.
The feasters were all upon their feet now. A dead silence reigned in the box-room. In that silence footsteps could be plainly heard in the passage outside the box-room.

"Sorry," whispered Figgins; "I'm afraid there'll be a row."

Frank Monk grinned.
"That's all right; don't worry about us. It's all in the day's work, and we don't mind the fun."

"Turn the lights out!" said Tom Merry.
"But the fire—"
"I'll shove this box in front of it, and—"
"Well, it's a chance."

Frank Monk reached up and turned the gas out. The room was immediately plunged into darkness, save where the fire glimmered. Tom Merry slammed a big empty box in front of the grate, and the fire was hidden from view. Glimmers of light came round the box, but Tom Merry whispered a rapid order to the juniors to close up round it and shut in the light by crowding round the box.

"Good whoee!" muttered Figgins. "It may work."
The juniors crowded round the fireplace. Packed there, they intercepted the gleam from the fire, and hardly a ray fell into the room. Tom Merry spread his jacket over the top of the big box to close the last rift.

The room was now in dense darkness. In the darkness the door was heard to open, and there was a murmur of voices. The juniors remained breathlessly silent.

"I suppose we were mistaken." It was the voice of Monteith, the head prefect of the New House.
"I don't know." It was Kildare's voice that replied. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, had been visiting Monteith in the New House to talk over matters connected with

the St. Jim's first eleven. "I'm pretty certain there was a row here."

"They're gone, then."
"H'm! I suppose so."

Dead silence. The juniors hardly breathed. Would the prefects go before anything was discovered? In the dead silence a low voice, full of indignation, was suddenly heard.

"You're twiddin' on my toe!" It was the voice of Arthur Augustus.

Figgins pinched the swell of the School House violently; but it was too late. In fact, it only made matters worse, for the injured D'Arcy, startled by the pinch, gave a sudden yelp.

"They're here, then!" said the voice of Monteith; and there was a chuckle from the New House prefect. "I'd know that voice anywhere. It's some fellows from your House, Kildare, up to some mischief here."

Kildare laughed as he felt for his matches.

"I suppose you're right, Monteith."
A match flared out. Kildare, holding it up, advanced into the room, followed by Monteith. He looked grimly at the juniors.

"Quite a family party," he remarked.

The juniors looked extremely sheepish, but made no reply.

"Light the gas, please, Merry."
Tom Merry lit the gas. The juniors moved from the grate, and it was time, for some of them were getting uncomfortably warm; and the box, rammed close up against the fire, was beginning to scorch.

"Pull that box away!" said Kildare.

Monty Lowther pulled the box away.

The two prefects looked over the crowd of juniors and the remains of the feast. They exchanged a smile, and Tom Merry's hops roared.

"I say, Kildare," he began.

"You had better leave the talkin' to me, Mewey," said Arthur Augustus; "I can explain the mattah betteh to Kildare."

"Dry up, Gussy!" said Blake.

"I refuse to dwy up. I will explain—"

"What are these Grammar School boys doing here?" exclaimed Kildare. "Monk, Lane, and Carboy, I think."

"Exactly!" said Frank Monk calmly. "We're the giddy guests. Sorry you've got into a row, Figgins."

"Pwasy allow me to speak. You see, Kildare and Monteith, gentlemen both, this is how it happens that we are breakin' a wule at this present moment. We were givin' a feed in honah of the return of our esteemed friend Marmaduke Smythe, these boundahs pweferrin' a feed to my wippin' ideah of a triumphal arch. The study wasn't big enough, and so we bowwowed the box-woom."

"Without asking permission? And suppose you had set it on fire?" demanded Kildare. "You young rascals—"

"I weally object to the term young wascal, which is not a propah expession for one gentleman to use to another," said D'Arcy, with dignity.

Kildare laughed, and Monteith chimed in.

"As for the pwesence of our guests," went on D'Arcy, "I am quite aware that it is contwary to the wules, but undah the circs—"

"That will do, D'Arcy."

"Not at all, deah boy; I haven't explained the circs yet. If you knew that Fwank Monk spwung into a fwozen lake and wisked his life to save Marmaduke's, you would not wondah that we twid to do honour to a bwave action."

Kildare started.

"Is that the fact?"

"Yass, watah?"

"Rather!" said Tom Merry. "Marmaduke would very likely have been drowned if Monk hadn't gone in for him, and we had a fearful work getting them out. Some of us had a ducking in doing it. Frank Monk is a giddy hero."

"Oh, rot!" said Monk, turning red.

"Ha, h'm!" said Kildare, looking perplexed. "You know very well that lighting a fire in a box-room and holding a feed is against the rules, and that you deserve to be cased for bringing visitors into the school surreptitiously after locking-up; but I admit that the circumstances are peculiar."

"That's so," said Monteith, with a smile. "I think, under the circumstances—"

"You think—"

"The young rascals ought to be licked, but—"

"Very well. You hear, you young scamps? You're let off, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, but don't let it happen again. You would not have got off so lightly if Mr. Ratcliff had found you. I can tell you."

"By Jove, that's so!" said Monteith. "Still, Mr. Ratcliff is with the head now, and won't be 'k just yet. Come, and let us get our business finished, Kildare; I'll look in here in half an hour's time to make sure that these rascals are gone."

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And the Sixth-Formers left the room.
 "By Jove," said Tom Merry, "Monteith's a good sort! You know what he meant by that last remark? We're safe for half an hour, to finish the feed."

"Yans, wathah! Monteith used to be a wotath at one time."

"Oh, dry up!"
 "Wats! I say he used to be a wotath at one time, but he is a weally wippin' fellow now, and I approve of him. I am verry glad I was able to get you all out of this scrape, deah boys."

"You got us into it, you mean," growled Figgins. "If you hadn't spoken they would never have known we were here."

"Wats! Someone trod on my beasty toe."
 "I'd have trod on you all over," said Blake, "if things hadn't turned out so well. But let's get the feed going again."

In high spirits the juniors renewed their attacks upon the good things. But all good things come to an end at last, and so did that feed in the New House box-rooms. The time came at last to part. When Monteith looked into the room again, after half an hour had well elapsed, he found it vacant. The prefect stamped out the remains of the fire, and withdrew, with a smile on his face.



The ONLY NEW AND ORIGINAL SCHOOL TALE by this famous author.



TEMPEST HEADLAND

A SPLENDID NEW SCHOOL TALE.

By S. CLARKE HOOK.

READ THIS FIRST!

Tempest Headland is a large school standing in an exposed position of Britain's coast.

A fearful storm is raging outside, when Cyril Conway tells Herr Ludwig, who is taking the class for German, that he can see from the window a ship being driven ashore. Dr. Buchanan, the headmaster, Herr Ludwig, and the boys immediately make their way to the cliff, but on reaching there they find that the ship has sunk. However, the Head is instrumental in saving a little black boy. He is taken to the school, and notes to the amount of £1,000, with a request that it may be used for his up-bringing, is found on him. A medical man examines the nigger, and he finds the boy has had such a shock to his system as to affect all memory of the past. Billy Barnes and Cyril Conway decide to name their new schoolmate Snowy White Adonis Venus. He is taken, as a fag by Graft, a bully. To pay out Mopps, the porter, for his zeal in reporting offences, Cyril Conway rigs up a ghost in the school tower. To test its frightening powers, Cyril makes Venus go with him one night to the tower. Before leaving the dormitory, Conway pours a jug of water over Snigg, and tells him that he and Venus are going on a swimming excursion. Venus gets a terrible fright from the ghost, and, thus satisfied, Cyril and he make their way back to the dormitory.

(Now go on with the story.)

A Vanishing Trick.

"Suppose de doctor forgets 'bout dat clock?" said Venus, the next morning.

"Trust him—he won't forget," replied Cyril. "I often wish he would forget sometimes, but he has got the most beasty retentive memory of any man I ever met."

At seven o'clock the chums were back, Cyril having given Billy Barnes strict injunctions as to how to act. He knew that Billy would make some sort of mistake if he could, but Cyril hoped for the best.

"Has a telegram come for me, Mopps?" inquired Cyril.

In a body the juniors crossed the quadrangle, and escorted their guests to the wall, and climbed over it into the lane to see them off. With many expressions of mutual goodwill they parted, and the three Grammarians disappeared into the mists of the lane.

The St. Jim's juniors re-entered the grounds, and parted in the misty quad to go to their respective houses. They were in high spirits.

"We're all together again now," said Figgins; "family circle complete."

"A regular gathering of the clans," Kerr remarked.
 "Exactly! And now we're going to show you School House boundaries that we're the cock-house at St. Jim's; so look out."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "As head of the School House juniors, I accept the challenge, and I'll jolly soon—"

"More rats!" said Blake. "We're the head of the School House juniors, and we'll soon put you boundaries in your place, both of you."

And Arthur Augustus chimed in:
 "Yans, wathah!"

THE END.

(Another double-length tale dealing with Tom Merry & Co., next Thursday. Please fill in the order form in this issue and hand it to your newsagent.)

"No, it ain't, and I dunno what a boy of your time of life can be expecting a telegram for. It looks very suspicious, and so I tell you. Looks to me very much as though you had look to getting, and I shall make it my duty to speak to the doctor about it. But—"

"What's the matter, Mopps? Have you lost another bloater, or is it only your head this time?"

"If I do get at you I will make you sorry, and so I tell you. Where's that 'ere key got to? I know I hung it up last time as I went to the tower."

"Perhaps you left it in the door," suggested Cyril.

Mopps gazed at him with a dreamy expression in his eyes. He was wondering whether he had left it in the door, for he had done that before now; but as it was a pouring wet night he did not much care for the walk to the clock-tower to see if the key was there. However, there was no help for it. Muttering all sorts of things he left his room, taking particular care to lock the door after him. He was absent several minutes, and he returned very wet and exceedingly cross. He had not found the key in the door, but doubtless that was because it was in his pocket.

"You ain't put it up de chimney, or any ob dese places, I suppose, old boss? You may hab got dat key in your mouf, or used it as a watchkey and mislaid it in de works ob your watch."

"You empty-headed varmint! You ain't got the sense of a hen maggot!" howled Mopps.

"Well, I'm only helping you to find dat key, Mopps, and you ain't got de right to lose your temper 'cos a person tries to help you wid his assistance. Dere goes de doctor's bell, too. I shouldn't wonder if dat man wants to know if you hab forgotten to remember to wiaid de clock. Shall I go and tell him dat you tink you'n swallowed de key when you put it into your mouf for safety?"

"Oh, you black varmint, I'd like to have the flogging of you!"

"I can't help being black, Mopps, any more dan you can help being red and sort ob fat."

"You can help being a hutter demon!" howled Mopps.

PLEASE FILL IN THE ORDER FORM IN THIS ISSUE.

hurrying away to see what the ringing was about. It was about what Cyril had expected. It always annoyed the doctor when the clock was allowed to run down, especially as Mopps generally made a mess of setting the hands, and threw its striking gear out of order, which necessitated sending for the clockmaker.

For these reasons the doctor always made a point of reminding Mopps, and that worthy said that he was on the point of going when the bell rang.

The doctor looked as though he did not believe him because Mopps always said that when he forgot all about it.

Mopps re-entered his room in an angrier state of mind than ever, and continued his search for another quarter of an hour, and this brought it up to the time when Billy, who was already in the tower, would expect Mopps' arrival, so Cyril decided on giving a little real assistance.

"I suppose you did not take it off the hook and put it into your pocket by mistake?"

"Do you take me for as big an idiot as yourself, you silly beast of a boy?"

"Well, Mopps, I must admit that I think you the silliest ass that ever walked in shoeleather; but I don't blame you for it. You can't help not having any brains. I expect you were born that way. No, my poor dear creature, I don't mind you, because you are a harmless sort of a lunatic. Of course, if you were a dangerous maniac, it would be a different thing; all the same, I feel sure you have got the key in your pocket."

"I tell you I ain't! Why, bust me, here it is!" cried Mopps, diving his hand into his side-pocket.

"Yah, yah, yah! Who's de idiot now, Mopps?" inquired Venus. "I must say you ain't got such a good memory as you ought to hab. But just go and wind dat clock, else I shall feel it de child's duty to report you to de doctor."

"You black reptile, get out of my way!" roared Mopps, putting on his hat.

"This way, quick!" exclaimed Cyril. "We can watch proceedings from the top of the tower, and we shall find Billy somewhere about there. I hope he has lighted up the ghost. I know the howls from the talking machine will come all right."

The chums gained the college roof, and entered the tower by the turret door. Then they descended the step ladder, and found that Billy had done his duty.

Mopps had brought a lantern, and placing it on the ground he unlocked the door of the clock-tower.

His jaws gaped open, and his eyes started in their sockets. He did not yell for the simple reason that he was struck speechless at the sight of that monstrous form with its grinning jaws, all illumined by the flickering red glow. This was bad enough, but when its arm moved and it began to howl out all sorts of things, it was rather more than Mopps could stand.

Yelling "Murder!" at the top of his voice, he fled at the greatest pace that he could command, and never stopped till he reached the doctor's study.

That gentleman was well accustomed to most surprises, but he was considerably startled at what followed.

"Woohoo! Murder!" howled Mopps, nearly knocking the doctor over in his wild terror. "Save me, sir! Keep it horf!"

"Have you gone mad, William?" demanded the doctor.

"The 'aunted tower! The ghost! Woohoo!"

"To stop that absurd noise!"

"Oh, it's the horfulest demon you ever saw, sir. I've had a shock o my system as I shall never get over."

"Nonsense! I suppose some foolish trick has been played on you."

"Then worn't no trick about it," groaned Mopps, sinking into an easy chair, and mopping his brow with a red handkerchief.

"Oh dear, oh dear! I believe I'm dying. The demon had got horrid, grinning jaws, and it's all fiery, while its howls was suthing frigtful. I never did hear such howls in all my life. They worn't human."

"You are talking utter nonsense. If you saw anything, no doubt it was a boy dressed up."

"We've got some awful looking boys in this college, I will admit, but we ain't got one so frigtful as that demon, and we ain't got one with a voice like it, either; nor yet one as stands forty feet high."

"Absurd! Come with me to the tower, and we will see what it really is."

"Not for a pension, sir."

"Very well, stay where you are."

"Oh, don't leave me, sir! That horrid demon might come and kill me. It said it was going to do so, or words to that effect."

"I cannot understand a man being so cowardly!" exclaimed the doctor. "I am going to the clock-tower. You can please yourself whether you will come with me or stay where you are."

Mopps hesitated for a moment, then decided to follow the doctor.

"There! Where is your ghost?" demanded the doctor, picking up the lantern and entering the place.

"Gorn!"

"I suppose some silly trick has been played on you."

"It worn't no trick, sir."

"Wind up the clock, and don't be so foolish!"

"Gorn!" murmured Mopps, obeying, though every now and then he gazed around as though to make sure it really had gone.

It had, for the simple reason that the comrades had hauled it up, and they had followed its example, in case of accidents.

Cyril Conway's Remorse.

Dr. Buchanan was busy in his study; this was not at all unusual, because he generally was busy, either there or somewhere else; but he was particularly busy on this particular evening, and the woodpecker-like tapping at his door did not please him. He sighed, raised his eyes from the examination-papers he was preparing, and said as gently as he could, "Come in!"

There were some whispering voices outside, and then the tapping recommenced, while there was some laughter that was unmistakable.

"Yah, yah, yah!"

"Do come in, boy!" cried the doctor.

"Good-evening, sir!" exclaimed Cyril, entering the study and making a most polite bow, while his chum Venus stood at the door with a grin on his face that did credit even to a nigger. "A nice evening, sir!" murmured Cyril, bowing again.

"I am glad to hear it," observed the doctor, gazing at him sternly through his glasses; for at that moment a gust of wind from the sea swept some hail upon the window panes.

"I mean—er—it is rather an unpleasant sort of evening, but probably this is a clearing-up shower."

"Did you come here to discuss the weather with me?"

"No, sir!"

"He's sort ob breaking de ice, sah!" observed Venus, by way of helping his chum out of his difficulty.

"I was not aware that Cyril Conway was so nervous, or that I am so formidable that it is necessary to break the ice, as you call it; unless you are sent here for punishment!"

"No, sir; not at all."

"I am very glad."

"So am I, sir; I'm extremely glad. To-morrow is Mopps's birthday."

"I presume you mean William the porter?"

"Yes, sir. We call him Mopps for euphony. His birthday is to-morrow."

"So you have just remarked, and, as I am very busy, I would be glad if you would come to the point."

"Quite so, sir. Er—as his birthday only comes once a year—"

"He is not singular in that respect!"

"No, sir, but he is singular in every other respect! Now, we have the feeling that Mopps was frightened by a certain ghost, and, seeing that to-morrow is his birthday, and as it is also a half-holiday, that we would like him to go for a little outing."

"Is this remorse for the trick of the ghost?"

"I should be sorry to say anything about that ghost, sir."

"There I think you are wise, for I have the conviction that you could tell me more about that ghost than I am ever likely to learn. Do I understand that you wish me to give Mopps—"

"William, sah! Yah, yah, yah! Dat man's name is William. Woohoo!"

The doctor looked round so sharply that the daring Venus bolted; but he came back again, and the doctor did not look very serious as he met Cyril's lamb-like gaze.

"Do I understand that you wish me to give William a half day off?" continued the doctor, glancing sideways at Venus's grinning face, which once more appeared round the half-open door.

"A whole day, sir, if you please."

"Well, your request is granted. Good-evening!"

"Thank you very much, sir! No doubt you will give him permission in the usual way, and, if you see no objection, I would rather he did not know I had asked the favour. Er—I also wished to know, sir, whether you would extend your favour to Venus and me? You see, sir, I thought we would like to go with Mopps and sort of cheer up the old gummage."

"I do not fancy he will care for the sort of cheering up, as you call it, that you two would give him."

"Oh, if he would rather not come with us, sir, of course, we could go alone!"

ANSWERS

(Continued).



THE TEMPEST HEADLAND

The Only New and Original School Tale.
By S. CLARKE HOOK.

"It seems to me that you are asking for a day's holiday in a very roundabout manner!"

"A half-day, sir. Not much doing on Saturday morning."

"Then there should be. I spoke to all the boys, saying that I should expect them to work hard for the coming examination."

"Yes, sir. I remember your words very well. There is always extra work before an examination, and—"

"Have you been working hard, and doing extra work?"

"Why—no, sir—er—not yet."

"I spoke to you all three weeks ago. You have now three days before the examination. When do you propose to commence working hard?"

Cyril did not know, so he did not tell.

"I tink de boy means to begin on Monday, sah," said Venus, by way of smoothing matters over. "Saturday is a bad day to begin, 'cos you'm bound to forget what you learn on de Sunday. He will start quite fresh after de holiday."

"Have you done any extra work, Conway?" demanded the doctor sternly.

"No, sir; not yet."

"Go away, and shut the door."

"Yes, sir," exclaimed Cyril, bowing again and obeying the order, which was a very peremptory one; but ere he had quite closed the door, the doctor called him back.

"Conway," he exclaimed, "your request is granted! I am exceedingly annoyed to hear that you have not been working, and you thoroughly deserve to be punished for it. But I will not allow your veracity to cause you disappointment. Had you told me you had been working I should have let you go, I therefore allow you to go now that you have spoken the absolute truth. I am pleased to say that I have always found you so, and have not the slightest doubt that I always shall. Good-night, my lads! You may get up to some mischief—I fear you will, and that no words of mine would stop it—but I have the feeling that there will be no vice about it. When I asked you to look after the welfare of—of Venus, Cyril, I had the assurance that he would learn much good from you. Truthfulness and honesty form a grand foundation. The building on such foundation will not be perfect, but it will be such that no one need be ashamed of."

"It's very good of you to speak like that, sir, and I don't deserve it. I hope you are right, sir, and I rather fancy you are utterly and entirely wrong."

"Yah, yah, yah! De boy is telling his master he's utterly and entirely wrong! Must be de extra experience dat boy has had in life! Yah, yah, yah! Tink we had better go after dat little lot!"

So did Cyril, and they went; but the doctor only smiled, because he understood his extraordinary pupil's meaning far better than Venus would ever do in his lifetime.

"Now, listen to me, you chunk of black stupidity," said Cyril. "Buster won't be in his study." Buster was the new master. His name was Rolls, a fact that has been previously mentioned.

"Nunno!" exclaimed Venus dubiously. "Dat man won't be in his study now, and I dunno dat he will care for us being in it."

"Well, that doesn't matter; he can't have everything he likes. You see, I want Mopps to overhear a little of our

conversation, so I will ring Ludvig's bell. That will bring the idiot this way, and when he sees a light in this study and hears our voices he will listen, so as to have something to report."

"Don't you tink he had better do de day's reporting after we come back from de outing?"

"Why, I sha'n't say anything that he can report. I want him to know that he is going to have a holiday to-morrow, because he will receive the letter telling him of his good fortune by to-night's post. Here goes. Nip into that other study and light the gas."

Venus did so, and Cyril, having rung the bell, followed him. They soon heard Mopps coming along the corridor, then Cyril commenced to speak in a voice that he knew would be audible.

"Fancy the doctor giving Mopps a whole holiday for to-morrow just because it's his birthday!"

"I dunno dat de man deserves it eider."

"Funny thing that we should have got the day off, too; but it shows you that he knows good boys when he sees them. We will row up the river as far as the Swan Inn, have dinner there, and then row back. That will be about ten miles, and quite enough for one day's work. Just shut the door, Venus, and—"

Cyril gave that door a kick that sent it flying against the top of Mopps's head, and he uttered a furious howl and came rushing into the room.

"You varmint!" he hooted, rubbing his head. "What did you want to slam a door like that for?"

"What door, Mopps?" inquired Cyril, glancing round as though there had been half a dozen doors in the room.

"Why, that 'ere door, you worm! You've knes ed it against my 'ead!"

"That wasn't at all edifying! But, look here, Mopps, we have got a day off to-morrow, and I don't think it was very nice of you to go and ask for the very same day off just because it is your birthday. Are you going to take cooky out with you?"

"Who says as I've asked for a day off?"

"Oh, we know all about it! Look here, you can go to the doctor now, and he will confirm it. You can say that we have told you we have got a day off, and ask him if it is right. That will be an excuse for going to him."

"You will get yourselves into trouble if it ain't true, and so I tell you."

"Oh, it's true enough! We will go into your lodge, and you can come and tell us what he says. We are going for a quiet row up the river. The fact is we want to ask Job the landlord if that ticket you sold us has won a prize in the raffle. The drawing was yesterday, you know."

"I can take the ticket and ask him, if you like. I've got a ticket of my own."

"Ah, but you might find that yours had won a prize and ours had not! You see, we should never know the difference. Besides, think what a fearful walk it would be for you. We sha'n't feel it as we are going in a boat, and there is a hamper, why, we can bring it back in the boat. No, if you like to give me your ticket, I will let you know whether either of us happens to have been a winner."

"No fear; I'm not trusting my ticket with you! I'll jest go and make sure as you ain't up to any of your monkey tricks!"

"He's as soft as butter!" exclaimed Cyril, as Mopps waddled away. "I rather fancy we shall find our little scheme work all right, and that we shall get a little of our own back to-morrow. This way, my grinning lump of loveliness. The postman is overdue, and I particularly want to be with Mopps when he opens the letter that he will receive."

"Yah, yah, yah! Makes me laugh to tink 'bout dat letter! Yah, yah, yah!"

"Prut! I vish you would laugh mit less noise!" growled Herr Ludvig, coming towards his study. "I hope you have not been up to any mischief in my room?"

"Mischief, sir?" exclaimed Cyril.

(Another long instalment of this splendid school tale next Thursday. Kindly fill in the order form and hand it to your newsagent.)

How do you do?

WHOM TO WRITE TO: The Editor, "GEM" Library, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London, who will be pleased to hear from you.

Judging by the batch of letters received this morning, expressing the desire that the "Gem" should be permanently enlarged to One Penny, I feel every confidence that you will all be pleased with this our first number.

Personally, I consider "The Gathering of the Clans" one of the best yarns Martin Clifford has yet written, excepting, of course, next Thursday's story:

"MISS PRISCILLA'S MISSION,"

which, if not better, is equally good. However, you can judge for yourself, and I hope that you will not fail to send me a postcard criticism.

THE EDITOR.