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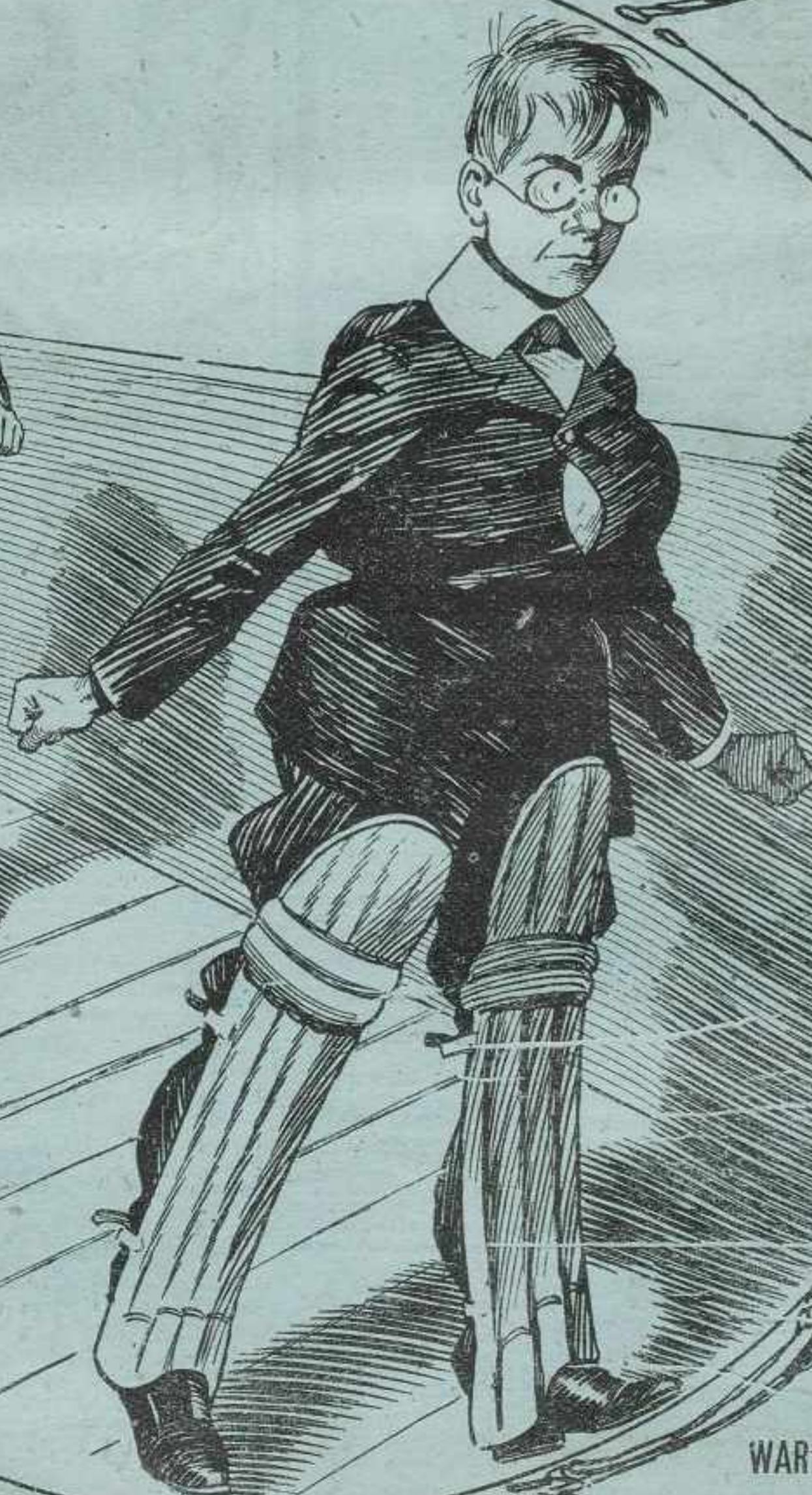
(NEW SERIES.)

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THE INVADERS.

DOUBLE-
LENGTH
TALE OF
TOM MERRY

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD.



NO. 6.

ON THE

VOL. 1.

WARPATH



Lord Roberts.



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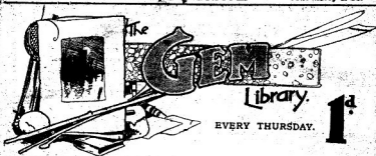
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A Complete Story for Everyone, and Every Story a Gem!

THE INVADERS.

A Splendid Complete Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

- BY -

MARTIN CLIFFORD.



CHAPTER I. Startling News!

TOM MERRY jumped up in alarm as Monty Lowther came tearing into his study in the School House at St. Jim's.

Lowther's face was wildly excited, and he dashed into the study at top speed, hardly seeing where he was going in his haste.

"Look out!" yelled Manners.

Tom Merry and Manners were playing chess, and the game had reached a most interesting point. But the warning came too late. Monty Lowther did not see the checkmate in time to save himself, and he dashed right into it and sent it flying. There was a maddening sound of chess-men on the floor, and Manners jumped up in wrath.

"You utter ass!" he roared. "See what you've done!"

"News," shouted Lowther; "news! Have you heard—"

"Confound your news! You've busted up our game of chess!"

"Yes, you utter duffer," exclaimed Tom Merry; "I should have had Manners' checkmate in three moves!"

"Rats!" exclaimed Manners warmly. "I should have had you checkmate in two—"

"Now, Manners!"

"Now, Tom Merry!"

"News!" shouted Lowther. "I tell you—"

"Bother your news!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Go and tell it to Blake in No. 6, or else go over to the New House and tell Figgins & Co. What you mean by saying that you'd have me mate in two moves, Manners, I can't understand. Why, your queen was—"

"Now you know your king was—"

"And as for your rook—"

"With my bishop covering the king's second, and the rook guarding the queen's square, you must see perfectly well—"

"I suppose that I had you mated in three moves!"

"I tell you that in two—"

"Blow your old chest!" yelled Monty Lowther. "I tell you it's news that will make you sit up! The Grammar School—"

"Bless the Grammar School! I wish you were there, or at Jericho, before you had upset that table, you ass! Now Manners will always be maintaining that he would have had me mate in two moves, while I know perfectly well that I should have mated in three! You know—"

"Well, it's Lowther's fault that we can't settle the point," exclaimed Manners; "I vote that we teach him a lesson about upsetting people's chess-tables when they're in the middle of a game—or, rather, nearly at the end in this case, as I should have mated in two—"

"Oh, dry up about your two moves! But your idea is a good one; Lowther ought to be snatched bald-headed—"

"I tell you there's great news; the Grammar School has—"

But Monty Lowther's increased charm did not stay to listen. They grasped Lowther and rolled him over, in spite of his desperate struggles, and rubbed his ~~head~~ in the hearthrug and mixed ashes in his hair. Monty Lowther yelled like a lunatic, but he could not ~~escape~~ and he was pretty thoroughly ragged before his ~~chance~~ let him go. Then he staggered to his feet, with his hair showing crimson where the dirt did not hide it, and his hair like a tangled mop, and his collar hanging by one stud.

"Well, you rotters!" he roared. "Catch me coming to you in a hurry with news again!"

"Yes, let us catch you, that's all!" said Manners; "we'll give you worse next time! Here I've been trying all the term to beat Tom Merry at chess, and now, when I should have mated in two moves, you must come rushing in and upsetting the table!"

"Now, look here, Manners, I'm getting fed up with your two moves!"

"You'd have got beaten with them if Lowther hadn't—"

"That's all very well to say now, but if—"

"Oh, hang your 'ifs'! Anybody can say 'if'! I tell you—"

"And I tell you—"
 "Shut up!" roared Lowther, with all the force of his lungs. "Will you listen to me! I tell you it's startling news, and most important!"

Tom Merry was picking up the pieces.
 "Oh, you can go ahead, I suppose," he said. "What is it? Have you been fighting with the Grammar School jokers, and come to tell us that we should get the same with you?"

"No, I haven't, Tom Merry, and if you think—"
 "Well, I do, sometimes, when my thinking box is in going order. But do get on with the washing and let us hear the news!"

"The Grammarians are coming here!"
 Tom Merry dropped the tub which he had already gathered and jumped up.

"What?"
 "What?" roared Manners.
 "It's true!"

Tom Merry and Manners stared at the bringer of news. Monty Lowther was much given to practical jokes, and the chums did not quite know how to receive the information he had brought. The news, if true, was startling enough in all conscience.

Ever since the new Grammar School had been opened at Rykombe a deadly rivalry had existed between it and St. Jim's. The latter had enough rivalries at home, with the feud between the School House and the New House, and the internecine warfare between the Terrible Three and Study No. 5 in the School House itself. But all parties at St. Jim's naturally united against the Grammar school. The news that the Grammarians were coming to St. Jim's was startling.

"You are certain," said Tom Merry suspiciously. "Frank Monk came here to see a truck on an order, but he got a reception which I am sure have cured him of wanting to come here again! Now, what do you mean?"

"I'm sure."
 "Do you mean a party of them are coming for a row?"
 "No, I don't mean that."

"Then what do you mean?" exclaimed Manners. "If you know anything, say what it is and how you know it!"

"I was in Mr. Hamilton's study—sent there to take my order—when Frank Monk told Mr. Lamb—"

"What did he tell him?"
 "That a number of the Grammar School jokers, and a few of the boys who were coming to St. Jim's to stay for a time. They were coming on a short notice. Something has broken out in the Grammar School—some fever or other—and a lot of the boys are going home; but Dr. Monk has arranged for some of them to come here and stay till it's all over."

Tom Merry's eyes sparkled.
 "My hat! That is news, and no mistake!"

"By Jove, yes!" said Manners. "We've had rows enough with the Grammarians when we've met them, but to have them in the house—"

"It will had to some more scrapping; rather!" Tom Merry remarked. "I wonder whether their leader—Frank Monk—will come with the lot who come here?"
 "Certain to, if he can manage it. He wouldn't miss a chance of regging us in our own quarters if he could help it!"

"You're right! I say, lad, brody lads!" said Tom Merry. "With a party of the Grammar boys installed here—the enemy within the gate, as it were—you shall have a high old time! Of course, they will try to get the upper hand, to show that their silly old Grammar School is the better show of the two!"

"And they will have to be put in their places!"
 "Exactly. But while they're here we shall have to make it gas with Study No. 5 and with Figgins & Co.," said Tom Merry suddenly. "If we're all rowing with one another, Monk and his cronies will get the better of us, as sure as a gun."

"Right ho!" said Manners. "Let's take a walk round now and explain things to these kids. Do you know when the Grammar boys are coming, Lowther?"

"Mr. Hamilton said the first lot would be here to-night."
 "My hat; that's a grand window! That means that there's no time to lose if we're to be ready for them. Come on!"

"I'm not going round the school in this state," growled Lowther. "I'm going to get cleaned up first! Wait for me!"

"No time to wait, old kid! You had better clean yourself up; you look as if you had it; and Manners and I will wait round. Come on, Manners!"

And the Terrible Three quitted the study, Lowther making for a bath-room, and Tom Merry and Manners directing their steps towards Study No. 5, the quarters of Blake, Herrige, Digby, and—last, but certainly not least—Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 2.

The Failure of the Boats.

"HAVE you heard the news, Merry?" asked Gore of the Shell, as Tom Merry and Manners came down the passage. They were groups of jokers in the passage, and at the door of the Shell, engaged in animated discussion, and everywhere the topic was the news of the impending invasion had evidently spread.

"News!" said Tom Merry languidly; "what news, Gore?"

"The Grammar boys are coming here!"
 "Agee, say, my dear fellow," said Tom Merry. "Haven't you heard anything remarkable about that? And be warned on leaving Gore saying something about that!"

The chums of the Shell stared at Tom Merry, and Tom Merry kicked at the door and opened it. He found the chums of the Fourth Form at home. An argument was proceeding in the study, and the voice of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the son of St. Jim's, could be heard raised in assertion.

"I tell you, deah boys, that it's woady an absolute fact!"
 "Rot!" said Jack Blake, with emphasis.
 "Bats!" said Herrige.
 "Falls!" said Digby.

There was a singular unanimity of opinion among D'Arcy's chums. The wall of the School House adjacent to the study in his eye and stared at the three talkative lads.

"I suggest your positions upon my oars as woad and bats!"
 "I suggest you that it is an absolute fact," said Tom Merry. "I suggest you that it is an absolute fact, I had it from Higgs of the Fifth."

"How Higgs of the Fifth?"
 "I refuse to do anything of the kind! Higgs assured me that it was an absolute fact, and I would not doubt gentleman's word!"

"Higgs is one ace, and you're another!"
 "I am not another. I assure you that the news is quite true, strange as it appears," said D'Arcy; "the Grammar boys are coming here."

"It would be more than their lives were worth," said Blake darkly. "I tell you, that they'd never have a nerve!"

"Woady, it does seem woady a nerve, seeing the term we are on with the Grammar School, but it is an absolute fact, all the same."

"Can't be true!" said Digby.
 "It is quite true. We ought to take steps to keep them in their place, you know, when they come. It should would be to make peace with Tom Merry and Mr. Figgins & Co., and then we should be united, and you could sleep on as usual!"

"Ha, ha!"
 "I can see nothin' whatever to grin at in that woady deah boys. We had a show called Tom Merry & Co., and must say that Tom Merry, as a woad, made a trucky things. D'Arcy & Co. would be bettah, and would probably be more successful."

"It was at this moment that Tom Merry kicked the door open."

But the chums of Study No. 5 were too interested in the discussion to look round and see who had entered the quarters.

"I can see no doing it," said Blake. "But, as a matter of fact, I don't believe for a moment that the Grammar boys are coming."

"Then you're wrong, as you usually are," said Tom Merry.

Blake turned round.
 "Hallo, an?" he greeted cheerfully.
 "Hallo, duffer!" replied Tom Merry, with equal cheerfulness.

"What are you bootlegging doing in a respectable study, demanded Blake. "There's the door. Travel!"

"My dear chap, I've come to bring you tidings of good news. The Grammarians are coming, and there will be larks."

"What did I tell you, deah boys?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus triumphantly.
 Blake, Herrige, and Digby stared in a dubious way at the hero of the Shell.

"Is that a fact, Tom Merry?" demanded Blake at last.
 "Yess, wathah! Didn't I tell you—"

"Shut up, Gummy! I'm talking to Tom Merry."



"I know you have a tender heart—," said Skimpole. "Yess, wathah!" replied D'Arcy. "If you want to borrow some tea, deah boy, you've come just at the right time, as I've just changed a fiveah I had f'rom my governah this mornin'."

"I refuse to shut up. I was the first bringer of the news, and you doubted the accuracy of my information, and I consider—"

"Shut up!" howled Blake. "Now, Tom Merry, are you sure about this?"

"Certainly. Lowther heard Mr. Kailton say so. The fellows are talking it over all through the house, for that matter."

"Well, I certainly thought that Higgs of the Fifth had been stuffing a fairy-tale into Gussy's empty noodle," confessed Blake.

"I suppose—"

"You know the young ass will believe anything as a rule." "Nonsense of the sort. You told me you could play football, Blake, but you could not impose upon my credulity."

"Oh, ring off, Gussy! If this news is correct, and Tom Merry says it is, there are some high old times in store." Blake rubbed his hands gleefully. "Of course, the monkeys will come here 'sige for a row."

"Yess, wathah, and—"

"They'll very likely try to run things their own way, and sit on us in our own quarters," said Blake; "and so likely as not they'll succeed, if we are ragging one another instead of uniting to face the enemy."

"Yess, wathah! And that's where my great ideah comes in."

"Hallo, has Gussy got an ideah?" asked Tom Merry, in astonishment. "Whose is it, yours?"

"My own!" exclaimed Arthur Argus indignantly. "It is an ideah that came into my 'briwah all of a sudden."

"Well, I don't see why that shouldn't happen," Tom Merry said, in a thoughtful way. "There's room for an ideah in his brain-box—room for a good many 'heah, as the thing is practically 'satisfact."

"Fay be 'satisfact," Tom Merry, at a nervous time like the present. My deah is to unite all parties at St. Jier's against the common enemy, the alliance to be known as D'Arcy & Co. And as I should be the leader, there it is

doubt that we should wipe up the ground with the Grammarnads. I am not the fellow to put myself forward in any way, as you all know; but what is required at a time like this is a fellow with tact and—er—er—er—

"And a jolly good opinion of himself," suggested Digby.
 "Well, I have some grounds for having a good opinion of myself, you know, and you have a good opinion of yourself, Dig, without any grounds that I should know of."
 "Gussy's idea is a good one," said Tom Merry, "excepting upon one point."

"What is that, Tom Merry? I should be pleased to receive suggestions—"

"Which must be written upon one side of the paper only," said Blake.

"Pray don't be funny, Blake. What is the point you refer to, Tom Merry?"

"Why, about the leader. The Co. is a good idea, and we've worked it before. But, of course, I'm the chap to lead."

"That's where you're wrong," said Blake. "I'm the man! I've been the leader of the Grammarnads, and made it the top note of the school."

"My hat! What a good suggestion!"

"Yours! Twenty-five pence," said Blake disdainfully.

"The terms of some leaders really surprise me."
 "And me, too! The New House would have been cock-houses at St. Jim's long ago, but for me!" exclaimed Tom Merry warmly.

"Now you're talking rot, Tom Merry, and you know it!" exclaimed Blake, with equal warmth. "As leader of the juniors of the School House, I claim—"

"As head of the juniors of the School House, I disallow your claim."

"I can see just how the matter stands, Tom Merry. You have come to this study looking for a check-out."

"Yess, wathah! I regard Tom Merry's check as simply feishful. Fowwags we had bettah throw them out, deah boys, and settle the matiah ourselves about deah!" with the invadah when they come."

"Fowwags you had," said Tom Merry. "Why, you could'n't throw one side of an out, Gussy."

"Not without the other," grinned Blake. "But I think that between us we can manage to check out the whole of you. Lead a hand, kid."

"Here, look here—"

"Rats! If you're not going to submit to proper authority, your place is on your back in the passage."

"Yass, wathah! It will be an instruction to them always to submit to proper authority. Cough the wothah, deah boys, and get 'em out!"

"Out—"

Tom Merry and Grammarnads were only two against four. They were promptly checked out, and their faces grinned at them from the doorway of Study No. 4 as they picked themselves up ruefully in the corridor.

"You young ass!" exclaimed Tom Merry wrathfully. "You'll be sorry when the Grammarnads are dusting that study up with you!"

"When that happens," said Blake, "we'll come to you and ask you to lead of Tom Merry. At present you can go and eat cake!"

"Yass, wathah! I weally think you had bettah go and eat cake, Tom Merry, and Marnahkah can do the same."

"If you want to lead somebody, I dare say you can get up a Co. among the Third Form lads," said Digby. "We're not being led just now."

"Asses!" said the Terrible Two, and they walked away down the corridor, followed by the laughter of the quartette in the doorway of Study No. 4.

The first step towards the union of the warring elements at St. Jim's against the invaders had been a glacial failure.

CHAPTER 8.

Visitors for Figgins.

"BAL Jove, deah boys, that was wathah a come-down for Tom Mowwy, don't you know!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as the Terrible Two disappeared down the passage. "Of course, it was only what he might have expected for his feishful check in cotton boots and talkin' about our 'lathahs' his lead, you know."

"Rathah!" said Blake. "Those boundaries in the Shell have altogether set much more. I don't mind them following, but hussed if they're going to lead. But, as it seems to be a fact that the Grammarnads are coming, I think the Fourth Form ought to stand shoulder to shoulder."

"Yass, wathah?"

"And so the best thing we can do is to get up an alliance with Figgins & Co., before the Grammarnads arrive."

"Good wheez!" said Digby. "Those rows will have to be barred while the Grammarnads are here. Let's go over and see Figgins."

"Wait a moment, deah boys."

"Can't wait. What's the matter?"

"It's important."

"Well, what is it, your-we-would say? Back up!"

"I wathah to be wathah a check-outed me!"

"Pray don't be so impudently feishful. What I was about to wathah is that we are not privileged as to the question of leadership."

"Yes, we are," said Blake. "I'm leader. If anybody here wants to dispute it, I'm willing to argue the point, with or without gloves."

"But I weally think that Figgins will argue the point."

"We'll see about that. Come on."

"How the circus! Come along!"

And Blake hurried out of the study, with his chums at his heels. Blake was in rather a hurry, for he had a feeling that Tom Merry had probably gone over to the New House to enlist Figgins & Co. in an alliance, and he did not want to be second in the field.

The School House quartette crossed the quadrangle in the dusk of the March evening, and entered the porch of the New House. They were stared at by the New House fellows who saw them. The rivalry between the top houses at St. Jim's was as keen as it had ever been. But the four were not easy to tackle when they were all together, and they entered the New House unharmed.

Blake led the way up to Figgins's study. He held up his hand as a sign to his comrades to listen as they went along the upper corridor.

"They're there!" he exclaimed, under his breath.

The door of Figgins's study was open, and the light streamed out into the dimly-lit passage. The sounds of voices came out with the light.

Blake made a sign to his chums to be silent, and they halted at the open door and looked in. The inmates were far too excited to notice them. A scene of extremely warm argument was passing in the room.

The Terrible Three were all there. Blake had not been mistaken in thinking that Tom Merry would lose no time in seeking to enlist Figgins & Co. Lowther had joined his chums for the mission of peace to the New House. But the mission of peace seemed likely to turn itself into an expedition of war.

Tom Merry was trying to explain, but Figgins & Co. did not seem in a reasonable mood. Figgins, the long-limbed chief of the New House juniors, stood leaning against the mantelpiece. Kerr, the Scottish partner in the Co., was looking out a word in a Latin grammar, and he continued to do so as a sign of the discussion that was going on. Fatty Wynn, the Falstaff of the New House, was trying sarcasm, and an eastwings would not have interrupted Fatty when he was thus engaged. Marnaduke Smythe, the fourth and latest member of the Co., was idling his cricketbat. For the time was drawing nigh when King Football would make his bow and leave a clear field to King Cricket; and Marnaduke was ambitious of shining in the New House second eleven. Tom Merry had evidently arrived at a busy moment, and only Figgins seemed to be paying him any attention, though he was speaking really eloquently.

"The Grammarnads coming here, are they?" said Figgins.

"Yes, I heard somebody say so. Well, I don't see anything to make a fuss about."

"There will be a pretty good crowd of them."

"Not so many as there are of us, I suppose."

"Of course not; but Frank Monk is certain to be with them, and he'll start on the war-path at once, and they—"

"They will be wiped up."

"I don't know. If we're divided among ourselves, they may wipe us up."

POLLIE GREEN

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"Oh, yes! I don't suppose you School House bouncers will make much of a show," agreed Figgins. "I'm at one with you there, if that's what you mean." "I don't mean anything of the kind," said Tom Merry wrathfully. "If we knock our end up against the invaders, it will be the School House that does it." "I don't know. You've never been able to keep your end up against the New House."

"Hats! Who's cock-house at St. Jim's?"

"Why, we are!"

"More rats! This measly old casual-ward you call a house is nowhere! It's the School House that counts. But against the common enemy you ought to back us up."

"Stuff! Catch us backing you up!" said Figgins disdainfully. "We've had some. But I admit that there's something in what you say, and I'm willing to meet you half-way."

"How do you mean?"

"You think the Grammarians will start rowing with us—"

"I know they will."

"And trying to get the upper hand—"

"It's a dead cert."

"And that we ought to be united against them?"

"Of course. United we stand, divided we fall."

"Then, as I said, I'm willing to meet you half-way. As representatives of the cock-house at St. Jim's, we cannot so far desert ourselves as to follow a School House lead, but we are willing to lead you, if you like."

Kerr, Wynn, and Marmaduke burst into a simultaneous chuckle. The Terrible Three stared at Figgins, with feelings too deep for words.

"We three chaps shall join the Co.," said Figgins, with a wave of the hand. "So long as you are willing and obedient, and do as you're told—"

"Why, you mean—"

"You jabbering custom—"

"You New House reptile—"

The Terrible Three burst out at once into those polite expressions of opinion concerning Figgins. The New House leader grinned, and removed his broad shoulders from the mantelpiece, and straightened himself up lastly.

"You don't like the idea?" he asked.

"We think it's like your awful check."

"Then, travel along, kids, and don't interrupt our work any longer," said Figgins. "As you came in peace, go in peace; but if you stay any longer, you'll be in danger of going in pieces!"

"That's so," said Kerr, looking up from his Latin dictionary. "You're hothering me fearfully by standing there talking while I'm trying to look out a word."

"Yes, better get along," said Fatty Wynn. "These sausages are nearly done, and we want to have tea. Sorry we can't ask you, but there aren't enough to go round."

Tom Merry glowered at the Co.

"Of all the asses—," he began.

"Don't start talking about your relations here!" said Figgins loftily.

"Why, you long-legged apology for a gorilla—"

Figgins turned red.

"What's that, Tom Merry?"

"Long-legged apology for a gorilla!"

"Here, you want a lesson in politeness, I can see. Are you going, or will you have your nose rubbed in the hearth-rug?"

"Whichever you like."

"If you don't bank on the spot," said Figgins, "you won't have any more left. Now, then, to shift or to be shifted, that is the question."

"Oh, you couldn't shift me in a dog's age!"

"Couldn't it?" roared Figgins. "I'll jolly soon show you!"

And he fairly buried himself upon Tom Merry. The hero of the School, sitting loth, closed with him. They struggled furiously, and struggled against the table with a heep that sent it flying, and Kerr and his dictionary went to the floor together.

Kerr jumped up with a yell, and rushed into the fray; but Mandy Lowther was ready to meet him, and they fought man to man and fistic. Marmaduke tackled Mandy at the next moment. These couples were fighting desperately, tripping to and fro; and Fatty Wynn, frying his hand, watched them in dismay.

"I say, you inebriates, chuck it!" shouted Wynn, "I'm just going to have tea. The sausages will be spoiled if you're not here!"

But the combats were too excited to heed. Fatty shouted in vain. At the open door Blake and the Grays stood looking in, grinning. They found the scene amusing. Tom Merry's mission had not prospered, but Blake favored himself that he would have more success.

There was a sudden hissing, and a stifling smell of burning fat. Fatty Wynn gave a yell. The frying-pan had become tilted as he held it, and half its contents had suddenly shot into the fire.

Fatty Wynn gazed at the ruins of his intended feast in wrath and dismay. Then he jammed the pan, with what it still contained, down into the grate, and rushed into the tray to avenge the loss of the sausages upon the chums of the School.

With four avoines three the tide of battle turned against Tom Merry. Lowther was on the floor, with Kerr sitting on him, and Marmaduke was just holding his own against Marmaduke. Figgins and Fatty Wynn dragged Tom Merry to the grate; to carry out Fatty's threat, and Tom struggled, desperately. He caught sight of the four grinning faces at the door, and shouted for help.

"Recess, School House!"

Blake started. He had looked on at the discomfiture of his rivals with great glee, but Tom Merry's call changed his view of the situation.

A fellow had always to stand by his Home against the other, whatever private disputes he might have, and the cry of "Recess, School House!" left the chums of the Fourth no choice in the matter.

"Hang it!" muttered Blake. "Come on!"

And the School House four rushed to the recess.

CHAPTER 4.

Rough on Figgins & Co.

"RESCUE, School House!"

Tom Merry's call startled Figgins & Co., who had had no idea that there were any other School House lads near at hand. Blake was just occupying himself into the fray before the Co. could prepare for them. In a moment the tide of conflict was turned.

Figgins & Co. were simply awoken. They were bawled and bawled all over the study, hurled by and fro, and generally made to feel as though a specially large-sized earthquake had broken loose in the New House at St. Jim's.

"Thanks!" gasped Tom Merry, scrambling to his feet. "Even you Fourth-Form kids can be useful at times. Lead me a hand with Figgins."

"What's the idea?"

"Shove his paper into the cinders!"

"Ha, ha! Good whoops!"

"Hands off!" roared Figgins, struggling and hitting out wildly. "Recess, New House! School House rosters! Recess!"

The row in Figgins's study had already attracted attention. Answering voices came from the distance, and there was a peffering of feet in the corridor. Dugby sprang to the door, slammed it shut, and looked it.

There was a heavy thump on the panels from without.

"Anything wrong, Figg?"

It was the voice of Pratt, of the Fourth. And Figgins yelled in answer.

"Yes, come in!"

"The door won't open. It's locked!"

"Get in somehow!" roared Figgins, straggling in the grasp of Tom Merry and Blake, who were dragging him slowly but surely to the grate.

"Can't. It won't open! Why don't you unlock it?"

"I can't! They've got hold of me!"

"Why don't you make them let go?"

Figgins's reply was a howl of rage. Pratt's question seemed to him simply idiotic.

"Don't let it!" he shrieked.

"How can I beat in solid oak with my fingers?" was Pratt's not unseasonal question. "We'll bang on it if you like."

And Pratt and the other juniors in the passage did bang on the door, and made a terrific disturbance, but they might as well have hammered on a stone wall for all the impression their attack made upon the oaken door.

Meanwhile, matters fared very badly indeed with Figgins & Co. There were seven School House fellows against the four, and interference from the rest of the New House was impossible.

The School House fellows realized their advantage, and they made the best of it. Taking advantage whatever of the hammering on the door, they succeeded in dealing in a really drastic way with Figgins & Co.

Figgins's head was buried in the ashes in the grate and the spilled fat from the frying-pan fell. It resembled nothing that human language can describe. Figgins's face was the hue of a badgered wall, and his excitement. The Co. were not faring much better. Kerr was lying on his back, pinched down by Dugby and Mandy, who were dabbling his feet with ink. Fatty Wynn had retreated into a corner, and D'Arcy and Marmaduke were pelting him with books. Marmaduke

was being bound by his chair with the window-cord by Lowther and Blake. Tom Merry sat upon Figgins, keeping him down on the hearthrug, in spite of his spasmodic attempts to escape.

"I think," began Tom Merry, from his seat on Figgins's chest—"I think—Keep still, please, Figgins!"

"I'll—I'll—I'll be the death of you!"

"Quiet, bad boy! I think, cheap, that we have pretty well wiped out Figgins & Co.," said Tom Merry. "What do you think?"

"Yaa, wathah!"

"There doesn't seem to be much left of them, besides some wreckage," said Blake, looking curiously round the study.

"I'll wreckage you!" howled Figgins.

"Hallo! There's one of the wrecks talking! Have you had enough, Figgins; and do you acknowledge the School House to be cook-house at St. Jim's?"

"No, I don't! I—"

"Do you want some more ashes on your head?"

"You beat, I—"

"You'll want a werry-dumb for this job, I think!" said Tom Merry, looking thoughtfully at Figgins. "Mind where you're shying those books, D'Arcy. You know what a rick-landed set you are, and you'll do some damage yet!"

"That's all right, Tom Merry. I am shyer' these books at Fatty Wynn. It is awfully amusing to see him tryin' to dodge them, you know. I—"

A heavy lesson flew from D'Arcy's hand, and Tom Merry gave a yell. It caught him fairly under the chin and bowled him over.

"You are!" he roared.

"I really beg your pardon, Tom Merry. That was quite accidental, and I am quite sorry. I will be more careful with the next."

"If there's a next, I'll wring your neck, Gussy!"

"I refuse to permit anything of the sort. I—"

Figgins had jumped up, and was making a rush for the door. If he had succeeded in unlocking it, and letting in a flood of New House fellows, it would have gone hard with the School House chums. But Tom Merry knew that as well as he did, and he sprang upon Figgins, and brought him to the floor.

"Not this time, Figgys!"

"Leave's gerrap!"

"Some other evening, my dear fellow. Get me a strap, or a rope, or something, D'Arcy, and I'll tie him to the legs of the table."

"I really cannot see a strap or a rope at the present moment, Tom Merry."

"Your braces will do. Take them off, and—"

D'Arcy gave him a frigid glare.

"I refuse to take my braces off, Tom Merry, and I am extremely surprised at your havin' the leathal cheek to make such a request."

"Well, Figgys's braces will do. Come and get them off."

"Yaa, wathah, I am quite willin' to do so. That is a wery different matter. But my braces—"

"Hang your braces! Back up!"

Figgins's braces were soon off, and were tied tightly round his wrists, and then to the leg of the table. Figgins was a helpless prisoner.

"Ha, ha!" howled Blake, looking down at his old rival squirming like an eel on the floor. "We can't do better than serve the others the same."

"Yaa, wathah!"

And the Co. men joined Figgins on the floor, one at each corner of the table, tied there by their wrists. The School House lads surveyed the scene of their handiwork with great satisfaction.

Figgins spluttered with rage. Never had the great Figgins received such a crushing take-down within the walls of his own study, in his own House.

"You rotters!" roared Figgys. "You hate the grin now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But want till you try to get out of this room, that's all. The grin will be on the other side, then."

"Yaa, Tom Merry, I wathah think there is somethin' in what Figgys says, you know. These New House wathahs out there sound queer woff and ferocious."

The New House juniors certainly did sound rather ferocious. They had ceased the heavy hammering on the door, fearful that it might attract masters or prefects to the spot. But they were trying to force the lock, and the threats they heaped through the keyhole were really appalling.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't think those kids will get hold of us," he remarked. "You needn't lay that wattering anction to your soul, Figgys."

"You can't stay here all night."

"Well, so, I shouldn't care to spend the night in such quarters," said Tom Merry lightly; "I'm rather particular as to people like that."

"You—you rotter! You'll have to go out, and then—"

"Yaa, wathah! As a matter of fact, Tom Merry, we had better be getting back to the School House. We shall have to run the gauntlet."

"They wouldn't leave so much of you as your syoglass, Gussy. We're not stanning any gauntlet this evening."

"But we cannot stay here, Tom Merry, as Figgys werry twery remarks. If we are goin' to win the beauty gamblit, dash boys, the soonah the quackah. I will lead you, as the beavast person present."

And D'Arcy stepped to the door to unlock it. Tom Merry dragged him back just in time.

"Am? Do you want—"

"I refuse to be called an am."

"Do you want to let Gussy in to wipe up the floor with us?"

"We cannot remain here much longer."

"We're not going to."

"Then pwey let me unlock the door, Tom Merry. You are wumplin' my shoes at the present moment, and a thing like that always expawates me. Pwey let go my arth! I fully comprehend that you do not feel equal to leadin' a wush, but I am willin' to do so. Follow me, dash boys!"

Tom Merry jerked the swell of the School House back on suddenly that he sat down on Figgins. Figgins squirmed round, and D'Arcy sprang up with a fearful yell, clapping his hand to a fleshy spot.

"What on earth's the matter?"

"He bit me."

"Eh? Who bit you?"

"Figgins. The howwid wathah has given me a fearful bite!" howled D'Arcy. "I am sure that I am bleedin' to death."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughin' matter, Tom Merry. I am—"

"You're not bleeding, am?" growled Blake. "Don't make such a row. And just you look here, Figgins, next time you want to start as a cannibal, bite one of your own Co. You could get some big chews out of Fatty Wynn, for instance."

"Are you sure I am not bleedin', Blake?"

"Yes, of course I am."

"Verry well. It feels verry painful; it has put me in quite a luttah. If you were not tied up, Figgins, I should give you a doublet wathahs."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Figgins.

"Oh, pwey do not make that row, Figgins! It was really all your fault, Tom Merry, and I am extremely amoged—I may say expawated. I am goin' to open the door now and win the gamblit, and if you stop me I shall get angry and probably stwike you."

And D'Arcy made a movement towards the door. Tom Merry stopped him, but D'Arcy did not "stwike" him, as Tom stopped him by a push on the chest which made him assume a graceful sitting posture in the ashtray in the hearth.

"We're not going out that way, fathead," said Tom Merry calmly. "What's the matter with the window?"

"Bai Jove, I did not think of that, you know," said D'Arcy, getting up; "and I did not look for such a sensible suggestion from a person of your limited brain power, Tom Merry. Udash the mire, I will overhaul your wathah conduct."

"Thank you, Gussy! I was just getting palpitation of the pulmonary for fear of what you were going to do when you had sorted yourself out."

"Pwey don't wet, Tom Merry. I really think that the wathah we are out of the coony's quarters the battah. Pwey open the window, Lowthah. We shall want a long wathah, werry. Where are you goin' to get a long wathah?"

"It's all right. You can go for, and we can all jump out the top, and that will break our fall."

"I am going to do anything of the sort."

"No, ha! Then you shall have to find some other way. I imagine that Figgins & Co. have been out of the wathah for some time more than once, unless my memory deceives me, and so there's probably a rope about here somewhere."

"Yaa, wathah; I never thought of that."



"You-you you beast!" gasped Blak. "Jut you wait till ow-ooocch!"

"The things you don't think of, Gwey, would fill a dictionary. Have you got a rope about the place, Figg?"

"Find out!" grunted Figgins.

"That's what we're going to do. We'll look for the rope if you'd rather. Hunt for it, kids, and if you upset anything, remember you're in the enemy's country, and it doesn't matter."

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

"Shove over the bookcase to start with, then go through the cupboard, and then empty the coal locker into the middle of the carpet."

"Hold on!" sustained Figgins hastily. "The rope's coiled up at the bottom of the cupboard."

"Thank you, Figgins. That is kind of you."

"Oh, go and eat cake!"

The rope was soon found, and fastened to the table, and the end dropped into the quadrangle. One by one the School House fellows slid down it. Tom Merry remained till the last. He took the key from the door, and pushed it underneath to the crowded juniors outside.

For the moment the unexpected action passed unnoticed. The hammering and hacking at the lock continued.

"Anything more I can do for you, Figg?" inquired Tom Merry blandly.

"Yes, get out of my sight," growled Figgins; "your face worries me."

"Ha, ha! The key's under the door, if you like to call out to those silly kids," said Tom Merry. "Tata!"

Figgins shouted to the juniors outside. Tom Merry swung himself out of the window and went swiftly down the rope. The door was unlocked, and Pratt and French and a crowd of New House juniors burst into the room. But they came too late for vengeance. The School House boys were walking quietly away across the quad to their own house, and as they went they laughed like hyenas.

CHAPTER 8.

The Grammarians Arrive.

"HERE they are!"

It was a loud shout at the gates of St. Jim's. In the early dusk of the March evening, the Saints were gathered at the gates, looking eagerly for the expected arrival of the Grammarians.

Excitement ran high at St. Jim's. This invasion on their own territory by the boys of the rival school was an unprecedented event. How long the Grammarians were to remain they did not know. But one thing was certain—there would be ructions at St. Jim's so long as they stayed.

The Saints—at all events, the juniors—had prepared for the reception of their visitors. Sinks and hot drinks had provided themselves with spurs. Figgins & Co. had peashooters. The Twelfth Three had thoughtfully had in a supply of eggs. All was ready for the arrival of the Grammarians.

"Have they are?"

The shout from some juniors out in the lane put the waiting crowd on the spot alive at once. Tom Merry's eyes sparkled.

"Ready, Manners?"

"Neither," said Manners, feeling in his coat pocket. "Oh, my hat, one of those beastly eggs is broken!"

"Ha, ha! Never mind, so long as the rest are all right."

"I'm thinking of my sock. It's as sticky as—"

"Never mind your sock. Look out for the enemy."

"Yess, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Bethah your beastly coat, Manners. It isn't much of a coat, anyway, you know, and I have often wonderd where you got such a thing unless you buy."

"Oh, you dry egg!" said Manners crossly.

"I wathah to dry up."

"Have they come?" shouted Figgins.

There was a clatter of harness and wheels in the lane. A

brake loomed up under the lamps at the gates of St. Jim's.

- "Here they are!"
- "Give 'em a welcome!"
- "Go for 'em!"
- "Fire!"

"My dear boys, pray what is the cause of this excitement?"

It was a voice from the brake, as a little old gentleman with white whiskers and spectacles rose into view.

The hands that were raised in half-momentary of various kinds dropped again.

"Dr. Monk!"

It was the Head of the Grammar School, who had come over with the first party of Grammarians. Tom Merry gave a whistle of dismay.

"Oh, rats, it's a frost, then?" growled Lowther.

"Yes, wait! It would be better had form to show disrespect to the Head of the Grammar School, don't you know?"

The boys of St. Jim's all felt the same. They could not tell the brake while Dr. Monk was near. Even if they had been capable of such bad form, the remembrance of the birth in the Head's study would have deterred them.

Dr. Monk beamed upon the crowd. The Grammarians in the brake—among whom were prominent Frank Monk, the son of the headmaster, and his chums Lane and Carboy—grinned at the Saints, secure from attack, and made faces at them with perfect freedom, sheltered by the presence of the headmaster. Dr. Monk was not particularly observant, and he came to the conclusion that the crowd had gathered at the gate to do honour to the new arrivals.

"My dear lads," he exclaimed, rubbing his hands, as he stood up in the brake, which had halted in the crowd—"my dear lads, this is a very kind of you, and I take it as a personal compliment to myself."

"You came jolly near taking something else," murmured Monty Lowther, slipping an egg back into his pocket.

"To turn out like this to give us a welcome," resumed Dr. Monk, "shows with what a hearty good-will you greet the boys who are taking shelter for a time within the walls of this ancient college."

"Hear hear!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Rats, rats!" said Gore of the Shell.

"Bosh, bosh!" said Mellich of the Fourth.

Tom Merry gave him a back-handed clump on the mouth which stopped his jeer in the middle, and Mellich gave a yelp. Gore drew out of the way, for Tom Merry looked like bestowing a similar attention upon him.

"You'd better shut up, you two," Tom Merry remarked.

"Look here," growled Mellich; "I—"

"Oh, shut up!"

And Mellich shut up, his eyes gleaming like a rat's. The unsuspecting speech of Dr. Monk had touched most of the juniors, and they gave him a ringing cheer. The old gentleman beamed upon them through his spectacles, and rubbed his hands.

"Thank you, my boys; thank you!" he exclaimed. "This is very gratifying—very gratifying indeed! I am certain that my boys will mingle with you on the very friendliest terms, and there will not be the slightest hint of a quarrel during their stay at St. James's Collegiate School. I—"

The Head of the Grammar School was suddenly interrupted by the brake moving on. The sudden jolt caused Dr. Monk to sit down, and he disappeared from sight for a moment. As he rose again, the brake moved on and drove up to the door of the Principal's house. There Dr. Holmes came out to greet his friend, and all chance of a demonstration was over.

There was a great deal of disappointment among the juniors. They had counted upon giving the Grammarians a reception which would warn them what to expect while they remained within the walls of St. Jim's.

"Beastly rotten," said Figgins; "after we took the trouble to bring our pea-shooters, too! We can't waste those peas, you know; better let the School House kids have them!"

"Good idea!" said Kerr.

And Figgins & Co., without the slightest warning, opened fire. D'Arcy gave a yell as a stinging pea caught him under the ear.

"Bai Jove! What was that?" he howled.

"Hallo, what's the matter now?" exclaimed Blake.

"What the dickens are you jumping about like a giddy kangaroo for, Gussy?"

"I felt a pain—"

"Ow!" ejaculated Digby. "Are there wasps about? I just got a sting on the ear—Why, it was a pea!"

"It's those New House rotters!" yelled Blake. "They're got pea-shooters! Ow! Here, where are those squirts? Return fire!"

The squirts soon came into play.

Figgins & Co. tried to dodge them, but it was little use, and they received the contents of the squirts; and then the chums of No. 6 made a dash for the fountain to refill them. Figgins & Co. pursued them, plying them with stinging peas. Tom Merry grinned, and made a sign to his chums.

"This is where we come in!" he remarked. "No good taking these eggs back to the tuck-shop, and I know they're too ancient to cook!"

"Ho, hal! Let's be generous, and give 'em to the poor—I mean to Figgins & Co!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

"That's the ideal! Fire!"

The Terrible Three "fired." The eggs flew with deadly aim and burst all over Figgins & Co.

The New House juniors were taken in the flank by the new attack, and the eggs were all over them before they knew what was coming.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Figgins, as he rubbed a highly-scalded yolk from his face. "I— Oh—oh!" he yelled, as a new egg caught him on the chin—and broke there.

"Too bad, even of this!"

Figs & Co. had had enough of it, too. They broke away in full flight, and Tom Merry hurled his last egg after them with a shout of laughter.

Then there was a rest in the dust of the quadrangle.

"Ow! Ouch! Who threw that egg?"

"My hat," gasped Lowther; "it's Kildare!"

The juniors stood petrified.

The disturbance in the quadrangle had brought the captain of St. Jim's upon the scene, and he had arrived just in time to stop that last egg—with his face! It splashed over his features, and for once Kildare, the good-tempered captain of St. Jim's, was really angry.

"Who threw that egg?" he roared.

There was no reply. D'Arcy screwed his eyes into his eyes and surveyed the splashed countenance of the school captain with great interest.

"Bai Jove, you do look wathah funny, Kildare!" he remarked. "What an extremely unfortunate occurrence!"

Kildare aimed the swell of the School House by the shoulder, and shook him till his eyeglass dropped off and dangled at the end of its string.

"You young rascal!"

D'Arcy wriggled in his grasp.

"Pway do not be so wuff, Kildare! You are wumplin' my collar and ewasin' my jacket, and you know I am wathah particulah about—"

"Did you throw that egg?"

"Certainly not. I should have regarded such an action as extremely undig," said D'Arcy. "As a matter of fact—"

"Who did, then?"

"I am afraid I must refuse to answer that question, deah boy! I could not possibly, as one gentleman to another, give Tom Mewwy away!"

"You utter ass!" growled Blake. Kildare released the swell of the School House, with an involuntary laugh.

D'Arcy turned a frigid stare upon Blake.

"Pway explain yourself, Blake! What do you mean by chawacterizin' me as an uttah ass? I wegard the expression as wude and opprobwious!"

"You've given Tom Merry away!"

"On the contrary, I have expressly stated that I shall do nothin' of the kind!"

"You—you— Oh, there ain't a word!"

Kildare strode towards Tom Merry. The hero of the Shell met him with a fearless look, without showing the slightest desire to retreat.

"Did you throw that egg, Merry?"

"Yes, Kildare."

"At me?"

"Oh, no! You know I wouldn't do that, Kildare, I hope. That was an accident. I threw it at Figgins!"

Kildare hesitated for a moment. His anger never lasted long.

"Well, if you throw eggs about in the quadrangle again, you will get into trouble," he said; and walked away.

The juniors burst into a cheer as he went. Kildare was always popular. And his temper had been sorely tried this time. Tom Merry gave Arthur Augustus a shake.

"You nearly got me into a fearful row, you ass!" he exclaimed. "If it had been Monteth, or Knox, instead of Kildare, I should have been in for it!"

"I did nothin' of the sort!"

"You mentioned my name, ass!"

"Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought about that!"

"Oh, you want drowning!" growled Tom Merry, turning away. "Come on, kids; the reception has turned out a frost, but we'll make the Grammarians feel at home, somehow, all the same!"

CHAPTER 6.
The Invitations.

THAT evening was one long remembered at St. Jim's. The curious spectacle of a dozen Grammar youths walking about the college as if they owned it was seen for the first time. Frank Monk and his comrades did not seem to be in the slightest degree awed by their surroundings. They made themselves quite at home at once, and showed it by their manner.

They looked over the school, and sauntered along the passages, and peered into the class-rooms, with a sniffing, patronising air, which put the backs of the Saints up as usual.

St. Jim's had determined that there would be raffles if the invaders put on any sort of side, and the Grammarians had started by putting on "side" of the most pronounced description.

"I never saw a chap like Frank Monk for cheek!" Monty Lowther remarked, as he sat in the study later at prep. "One would think he owned the place by the way he swaggered about in it!"

Tom Merry nodded. "Yes, they seem to have taken the place under their wing," he said. "But there will be a come-down as soon as we get a chance."

"They will have to be put in their place, of course." "Yes; and it's unfortunate that we couldn't manage to make it pay with Steady No. 6 and Figgins & Co.," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "—But there's no grating with those obstinate bouncers. I—— Hello, come in!"

A knock at the door interrupted Tom Merry. It opened, and the grinning face of Frank Monk appeared. Behind him were the grinning faces of Carboy and Lane.

Tom Merry started at the second knock.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "What do you want here? This isn't the monkey house?"

"Isn't it?" said Monk, with an air of surprise. "Judging by the occupants, you know, I should have thought it was." Lowther giggled. The three Grammarians came into the study.

"But we haven't come for a row," said Monk. "My idea is that we should make it pay for the first evening, and leave rows over till to-morrow. What do you think?"

The Terrible Three looked at one another.

"Well, it's not a bad idea, if you feel nervous!" said Tom Merry.

"Nervous! Do I look nervous?" grinned Frank.

"I must say you don't; I never saw such a kid for cool cheek!"

Frank Monk laughed.

"Well, what do you think of the idea? My idea is to let you kids down lightly. We've come here, I don't know for how long; but, of course, we shall take the head of the lower school while we're here. We shall expect you fellows to leave your places, and to keep in it."

"Exactly," said Carboy and Lane.

The chums of the Shell breathed hard.

"I dare say you know where we've been accommodated?" went on Monk.

"No, we don't. The sub-cellar would be good enough!"

"We've got a room in the Principal's house," explained Monk. "A big room that overlooks the chapel garden; it used to be a class-room."

"Oh, yes; 10?"

"That's it. There isn't a room for us in the studio, and I fancy the Head thinks there would be rows if we were distributed about in the rooms."

"He's right!"

"So we're going to do one proposition and so forth together in No. 10," went on Frank. "It's a good idea! Our winging quarters will be on the top floor of the Principal's house, over No. 12. There are some more of us coming."

"My word; there are too many of you already!"

"You'll think so before you're finished! But to rows to-night," said Monk, with a wave of the hand. "We haven't come here to rag you; we're going to give a house-warning!"

"You're going to give a what?"

"A house-warning. Going to celebrate our installation in our new quarters, you know, by giving a feed. Will you come?"

"Well, that's very decent of you," said Tom Merry. "Of course, we are going to dissent you in the way you should go, but we're not your fearful chucks; but there's no harm in having a friendly feed to start with."

"My idea exactly," said Lowther. "When is it coming off?"

"At eight exactly!"

"Good! We'll be there," said Tom Merry. "We shall

have our prep finished before then. Is anybody else coming?"

"Rather! We've brought a big hamper with us," explained Monk, "and we want to make a good feed of it. We're going to ask Blake and his lot, and Figgins & Co. Some of the other fellows will come, too. Then we're to expect you!"

"Certainly. We'll be glad to come."

"Right!" said Monk. "And the three Grammarians left the study. They made their way along to Study No. 4, and found the four chums there deep in their preparation. Blake resumed the invitation, however, with great cordiality, and promised to be on the scene at the stroke of eight.

"Yess, walah," said D'Arrey; "and we take it as a great honour, dark boys, to feed with our respected enemies. Of course, you know that to-morrow we are goin' to give you a fearful thrawl-in!"

"Or got out," said Monk. "So long!"

"I repeat, Frank Monk, that to-morrow——"

But the Grammarians were gone.

Arthur Augustus frowned slightly.

"I wonder it as walah words of Frank Monk to walk away before I had finished makin' my remarks to him!" he exclaimed.

"Well, he couldn't stay here all night, could he?" suggested Digby.

D'Arrey sniffed, and went on with his work.

Monk, Lane, and Carboy left the School House, and crossed the quadrangle. There was a mustering of rooms in the dark as they approached the New House, and a sudden rush of feet.

"Look out!" yelled Frank.

But the warning came too late. In a moment the Grammarians were rolling on the ground under the grasp of Figgins & Co. Figgins sat on Frank Monk, pinning him down, and chorused:

"Got the rotten!"

"Lemme get up!"

"Rats! You've been sniffing round the place long enough, kids, and it's time you were taught manners. What do you fellows think?"

"Rather!" said Kerr. "The side those youngsters put on is amazing. The frog-march is a good cure for it, I believe."

"Or a ducking in the fountain," suggested Marmaduke.

"I say, Figgins, I've got an idea!" sang out Fatty Wynn, who had bestowed his plump person on Carboy's chest, and was almost suffocating the unfortunate Grammarian.

"Well, what's the idea, Fatty?"

"Why, hold 'em to ransom, you know—make 'em stand a feed."

"Rate! Do you ever think of anything but feeding, Fatty Wynn?"

"Not when I'm hungry," said Fatty. "In my opinion it's a jolly good idea. I think they ought to be made to stand a feed for ransom, I think——"

"No, you don't; you eat, but you never think—you couldn't! My idea is that the frog-march is the thing!"

"Well, a tick!" gasped Monk. "Let me speak."

"No need for you to speak, my son! We've caught you! I'm doing all the talking in this act! You can shut up!"

"I want to say——"

"Never mind what you want to say! The frog-march is the thing, but we shall want help. I'll call——"

"We came over——"

"You fall over, you mean," chuckled Figgins, "and we fell on you. We watched you coming across the quad, and were ready. This is only a sample of what you're going to get while you stay here, till you learn manners. We——"

"We came over to ask you——"

"To ask us to be kind and gentle with you!" said Figgins.

"Well, perhaps we will, if you learn to keep your places!"

"To ask you to be a feed."

"Eh, what?" exclaimed Fatty Wynn, pinning up his ears.

"To ask you to a feed in our new quarters!"

"I say, Figgins, that alters the case, you know. If they come over as friends, we can't rag them, you know," said Fatty Wynn anxiously.

"I expect they're only getting——"

"No, honest! I am!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "We're giving a house-warning, and we want you fellows to come."

Figgins gave a grunt.

"Well, in that case I suppose we shall have to make it pay. Frank Monk! You've had a lucky escape, you young bouncers!"

"Shall we let them go, Figg?" asked Kerr.

"Yes, let the rotten go!"

The three Grammarians were allowed to rise. They had, indeed, got easily out of a scrape, and they were grinning

as coolly as ever. The quarter to eight chimed out from the tower of St. Jim's.

"At eight sharp, at Study No. 10, in the Principal's House," said Frank Monk. "We shall expect you, and we'll leave your punishment till to-morrow."

"Our punishment! Why, you—"
But the Grammarian trio were walking away, chuckling. Figgins & Co. stared after them, and then at one another.

"Cool, by Jove!" said Figgins. "We shall have our hands full with those kids."
"Never mind," said Fatty Wynns. "They're not so bad, you know; they're standing a feed, and if there's enough of it, I don't see why we shouldn't give them a hearty welcome to St. Jim's. I wish Frank Monk had fired the time a little earlier."

"Why, it's less than a quarter of an hour now!"
"Yes, I know; but I'm fearfully hungry."
"You're had 'em," granted Figgins.
"Well, only a pork pie, and a few sausages and some mashed potatoes, and a kipper, and some cake," said Fatty Wynns. "What do you call that? I tell you I'm going to be punctual in Study No. 10!"
And Fatty Wynns kept his word.

CHAPTER 7. The House-Warming.

"PLEASE we're come!"
The Terrible Threesome made that remark together as they entered Study No. 10 in the Principal's House. The Principal's House at St. Jim's was simply an off-shoot, as it were, of the School House, and was reached by a wide flagged corridor. It had a door into the quadrangle, also, but that was only used by the doctor and his family. Study No. 10 was a large apartment, with three tall windows looking out upon a stretch of garden, shaded by old trees, and bounded at the end by the chapel rails. The garden was now lying deep under the dusk, and the elm-trees looked like specters in the light that fell from the high windows of Study No. 10.

The room presented a rather festive appearance. Desks had been put back, and two large tables placed together in the centre of the room, covered with white cloths, which Frank Monk had borrowed from Mrs. Minnis, the School House dame. The daylight glistened on the white cloth, and on all sorts and conditions of crockery ware. For the founders of the feast had been very short of these necessary articles, and had had to borrow them from all sides.

The fire blazed up cheerfully in the grate. The dozen Grammarians were looking very cheerful, too. Colder invasions of an enemy's country had never been seen. They had been only a couple of hours at St. Jim's, but they were quite at home.

"Welcome gentlemen," said Frank Monk, waving his hand with the air of a prince. "I am glad to see you so punctual."

"Yes, we're setting you boundaries a good example."
"Yaxx, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, coming in with Blake, Digby, and Herries. "Here we are, dear boys. I trust that we are not too early."

"Just right," said Frank Monk cheerily, giving the swell of St. Jim's a welcoming slap on the shoulder that made him stagger.

"By Jove! What do you mean by that, Fwank Monk?"
"—mean that we're awfully glad to see you."
"Then give express your gladness in a less wuff way, dear boys. I have a strong objection to—"
"I'm awfully glad to see you, too, Gussy!" exclaimed Carby, raising his hands to give the School House swell a slap also.

D'Arcy dodged in time.
"Fwax moderate your twantsprit!" he exclaimed. "Of course, I know it is nice for bossedahs like you to be visited by a weally swagghah fellow like me, but there is no need to get excited about it."

"Ha, ha, ha! Hello, here's Figgins!"
Figgins & Co. came in. They were warmly welcomed, and the juniors proceeded to sit down at the table. Some of the Grammarians were busy placing the viands in readiness, and Lane had charge of a huge kettle and a coffee-pot.
"Make the coffee, Laney," said Frank. "We're ready."
"Right you are!"

And there was immediately a fragrant scent of coffee in the room. Arthur Augustus beamed as he sat down. He surveyed the table up and down with his monocle in his eye, and what he saw seemed to meet with his approval.

"By Jove, I wathah like this, Blake," he said. "These Gwammah sads can do things in heastly good style when they wuff you know."
"These what?" exclaimed Carby.

"Gwammah sads."
"Now, then, Gussy," exclaimed Tom Merry, "how dare you use opprobrious expressions towards our entertainers?"
D'Arcy reddened. He was touched in the very tenderest spot.

"By Jove, I am weally sorry, you know?" he exclaimed. "That was a slip of the tongue, of course. While I am the host of the Gwammahians, I should be far from expressing my weal opinion of them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Fwax don't laugh at my remarks, Tom Mewwy, when I am apologizin' to our esteemed hosts and entertainers," said D'Arcy severely. "I regard the Gwammah sads—I mean the esteemed Gwammahians—as entitled to a public apology."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Frank Monk.
"It is not all waight, Fwank Monk. I know what is due to the wales of courtesy as well as you do, dear boy, and I know that I owe the Gwammahians presents an apology for allowin' that opprobrious expression inadvertently to escape me."

And Arthur Augustus rose to his feet, and screwed his eyelids tighter into his eye, evidently with the intention of making an apology to the white table full of Grammarian youngsters. A general grin went round, but a little thing like that was not likely to deter D'Arcy when he had made up his mind.

"Gentlemen of the Gwammah School!"
"Shut up!" said Digby.
"I wufuse to shut up! Gentlemen of the Gwammah School, I wuse—"

Blake dragged him down into his seat. D'Arcy struggled, and his elbow crashed into Blake's tearcup, which Lane had just filled with coffee. The hot contents of the cup went with a splash over Blake's legs, and he jumped up with a fenshish yell.

"Ow! I'm scalded! Yow! Ow!"
D'Arcy turned his apocryfe upon him.
"I regard that as entirely your own fault, Blake. It is an unfortunate occurrence, and I wewet it; but I cannot say it was undeserved. You should not be such a wuff ass!"

"You—you—Ow! Yow!"
Digby and Herries mopped Blake's trousers with their handkerchiefs. Arthur Augustus turned to the convulsed company.

"Gentlemen of the Gwammah School, I wuse on this surprisins occasion to—I mean, I wuse to explain that the wemah I just made, to which Carby wewy intewally took exception, was a slip of the tongue. I had an intention of referrin' to any of the honowable company present as sads. I would wewah think of statin' such a painful twach on such a festive occasion—"

"Boo, boo!" roared the Grammarians.
"Fwax do not intewrupt me. I beg to twendah my most sincere apologies for the inadvertent use of that objectionable expression."

"Your apology is accepted," said Monk. "Sit down!"
"But I have not finished yet."
"Never mind. Sit down!"
"But, wendah the circs—"
"Sit down!" roared Tom Merry, shoving Arthur Augustus into his seat. "Sit down, and keep there, you duffer!"

D'Arcy gave him a withering look.
"If it were not for my respect for the company, Tom Mewwy, I should give you a fashful thwashin'!" he exclaimed.
"Sit down!"
"I wufuse to sit down! Gentlemen of the Gwammah

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School, I have a few more remarks to make, but I shall not detain you more than ten minutes."

"Hoo—boo!"
 "Sit up!"
 "Sit down!"
 "Ring off!"

"Oh, do sit down," said Frank Monk, grinning. "I'm afraid they'll throw things at you, and I shouldn't like that to happen."

"Weally, Frank Monk, if you wouset me, as my book says to sit down, I shall have no alternative but to acquiesce," said D'Arcy.

"Well, I do, then," cried Frank Monk.
 "Very well. You consider my apology sufficient!"
 "Quite. How are your trousers now, Blake?"
 "Oh, it's all right!" said Blake, taking his place again.
 "I shall kill that thing when I get it home in the study."
 "I refuse to be spoken of in such terms."

"Oh, put a ban into your mouth, and leave off talking! You go on like a gramophone!" growled Blake. "You can fill my cup again, Lane; and if D'Arcy talks any more, I'll pour it down the back of his neck!"

And D'Arcy, becoming busy just then with a plate of ham and tongue, the subject was allowed to drop. Ere long the feast was in full swing, and Grammarians and Saints hobnobbed with the most complete cordiality.

CHAPTER 8.

Kicked Out!

THE Grammarian house-warming seemed destined to be a success. Frank Monk and his chums had thoughtfully provided a very extensive feast, and even Fatty Wynn was satisfied. Fatty, needless to say, came out very strong. His shining face and bounding pulse showed how much he was enjoying himself. He made it a point of politeness never to refuse anything that was offered, and to take something from every dish that was passed, and by this means he travelled through a quantity of provender that would have meant severe dyspepsia to anybody else. But Fatty Wynn had a perfect digestion; perhaps because he gave it so much exercise.

As the inner warm—or, rather, the inner boy—was gradually satisfied, and the more solid portion of the feast was disposed of, toasts were drunk in current-wine and coffee. The hilarity was at its height, when an unfortunate argument began at one corner of the table. Pratt, of the New House, was among the guests, and Pratt was, unluckily, placed next to a Grammarian with whom he had been in the habit of having a fight whenever they chanced to meet. The natural result was that they glowered at one another, and finally argued, and the argument gradually warmed up.

"Hallo! What's the row over there?" called out Frank Monk.

"Shut up, Hammond!"

"He says we can't play footer!" exclaimed Hammond excitedly. He says—

"Never mind what he says!"

"He says we can't play footer!"

"Well, let him."

"I tell you, he says—"

"Shut up, Pratt!" called out Blake. "What do you mean by disturbing the harmony of the feast? Just like one of you New House rotters!"

"Eh—what?" exclaimed Figgins, who had been going to jump on the offender himself, but naturally took the other side as soon as Blake spoke. "What's that, Blake?"

"I say that—"

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Tom Merry anxiously. "Don't start a house-war!"

"Whom are you talking to, Tom Merry?"

"To you, you see!"

"Peace!" exclaimed Frank Monk. "It was all Hammond's fault. Hammond, if you say another word, I'll drop on you."

"He says we can't play footer for toffee!"

"That is very wise of you, Pratt. You know, you ought not to blurt out a painful remark like that in the presence of company."

"Truth!" exclaimed Carboy. "Ha, ha! I like to see you chaps play footer, that's all. You get near the ball sometimes."

"Sometimes," said Lane; "but not often."

"I regard that remark as derogatory to this coll—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Don't start rowing, now."

"He says we can't play footer for toffee."

"Well, as a matter of fact, dear boy, you can't play footer for toffee, or anything else," said Arthur Augustus.

"Weally—"

"Dry up, Gump!"

"I refuse to dry up."

"Peace, I tell you!"

"He says we can't play footer—"
 "And you can't, either," yelled Pratt. "The way you fellows play footer is enough to make a jackass laugh!"
 "No wonder it makes you laugh, then."
 "What do you mean by that, Hammond?"
 "I mean—"
 "You mean that you want a thick ear!"
 "I mean that you couldn't give me one."
 "Couldn't I?"

The next moment the two old foes, forgetful of anything else, were clutched at one another and fighting furiously. There was a rush of Grammarians and Saints to separate them. Unfortunately, Blake ran into Figgins, and sent him staggering; and Figgins trod on Carboy's toe. Carboy shoved him off, and Figgins, who was getting excited himself, retaliated by giving Carboy a push which made him sit down in a hurry. Lane rushed to the rescue, and sent nothing more was needed.

The room was in an uproar in a moment.
 "Grammar, come!"
 "St. Jim's asses!"
 "Yab!"
 "Yoo!"
 "Hold on!" roared Frank Monk, vainly trying to establish reason. "This is a friendly feud, and—"
 "And it looks like one!" grunted Tom Merry.
 "If we hadn't made it pay, you bounders," yelled Monty Lowther, "we'd wipe up the floor with you!"
 "Oh, don't let that trouble you!" exclaimed Frank. "If the pax is off, we're quite willing to teach you a lesson."
 "It looks as if it's off. But we came here as guests."
 "Then, we'll let you off."

"We don't want to be let off, you cheeky Grammarian! We're letting you off!"

"Then, don't!"

"Do you want a prize now?"

"I want all the prize money you can give me."

"Then, pax is off."

"Yes, right off."

"Good! Here goes!"

And the next moment Monty Lowther and Frank Monk were rolling about in a deadly embrace. Pratt and Hammond, the original disturbers of the peace, had rolled under the table, and were propping one another there. Hammond was underneath, and was getting decidedly the worst of it. In his frantic efforts to get loose, he grasped the tablecloth, and dragged it down by the corner, and there was a terrific crashing of crockery.

Crash, crash, crash!

"My word!" gasped Digby, as the coffee-pot descended upon his head and spilt its contents over him. "What's that—another foot?"

"Oh!" roared D'Arcy, who had a shower of cups and saucers upon him as he rolled on the floor, clutching hold of Carboy. "Stop that! Stop it at once, I say! How dare you hit me, you wottaks!"

"Kick them out!" roared Frank Monk. "Pax is off, and it's time to give 'em a lesson. Kick them out!"

The Grammarians gave a cheer.

All thought of pax was at an end. The feast was over, and pandemonium reigned. The odds were slightly on the Grammarian side, and every adversary counted in such a desperate encounter. D'Arcy was dragged sprawling to the door by Carboy and Lane, and sent whirling forth in spite of his struggles.

"Welaase me, you wottaks!" he howled. "You are simply spoiling my clothes! My collar will never be weally straight again! Welaase me! Oh!"

The Grammarians released him, and he shot into the passage. The next moment Blake went hurtling after him, and he fell on D'Arcy, just as the swell of the School House was usefully packing himself up.

Down went D'Arcy again, with Blake sprawling across him. The School House swell gave a yelp, and he heard his eyelids crack on the floor.

"You clumsy ass!" he shrieked. "You have splashed my beautiful eyeglasses! What do you mean by splashing 'em like that?"

"What do you mean by getting into the way!" roared Blake.

"You clumsy bounder!"

"You howlin' ass!"

"If you call me a howlin' ass, I shall strike you, Blake!"

"I'll dust the floor with you!"

"Oh! What's that?" howled Arthur Augustus.

"That" was Herbie, who came bounding out of Study No. 12, and bumped into Blake and D'Arcy, and sent them both sprawling. The next moment Pratt came out head first, and Digby followed him in the same unceremonious way.

But Jura, however,

"Come on!" shouted Blake. "Let's get in again!"

match those Grammar cads baldheaded! Follow your leader!

He rushed towards the door, but there was no getting in. The doorway was crammed by the Terrible Three, fighting desperately to withstand a rush of the Grammarians, who were bent on kicking them out. The odds were too great, and Tom Merry, Mansers, and Lowther came flying out, staggering over Blake, and sending him flying, too.

"Ho, ha, ha!" roared the Grammar jammers.

"Now the rest of them!" shouted Frank Monk.

Figgins & Co. were holding their own gallantly, but the Grammarians were too many for them. The New House juniors were hurled forth after the others, and fell about like ninjaps in the passage.

The room was cleared of all but Frank Monk and his followers. They packed the doorway, ready to resist a rush if one should be made, and howling with laughter.

"We're not going to stand this," howled Tom Merry, red with excitement. "Follow me, kids!"

He rushed to the attack undauntedly. The rest followed, accepting D'Arcy, who was hunting for his broken eyeglasses. But they were exhausted, and the Grammarians had the advantage of position. The attack was repulsed, and the grinning Grammarians still dominated the doorway, yelling defiance at their assailants.

"Yah!"

"Go home?"

"Boo!"

"Go home!" murmured D'Arcy. "Yaaa, wathah, that's about the best thing we can do, dash boys. I feel howlowly dirty and wumped, and I must weally go and change my clothes."

And he went. And the rest of the Saints, feeling that the game was up for the present, followed, leaving the Grammarians victorious.

CHAPTER 9.

"In this Style, 3a, 3d."

THERE were very plain traces of the conflict in the Fourth Form and the Shell the next day. Swollen noses, discoloured eyes, and cut lips were abundant. But the masters judiciously failed to see these signs of battle. There were times when it was wisest to be a little blind, and this was one of them. And truly the fighting-men of the Lower Forms had been punished enough in the conflict itself. Scarce a participant in the fray who had not some bruise or cut to show.

"There's no getting away from the fact that we had the worst of it last night," Tom Merry remarked to his chums, during morning school.

Mansers added gloomily.

"Yes, but the Grammar cads had the advantage, you know. The next time we meet them it will be on more equal terms."

"We must see to that," said Lowther. "If we really had form to finish a feud with a row, as a matter of fact, but I suppose it was bound to come about. We gave them a rut for their money, anyway."

"It's all due to the dispute among ourselves," said Tom Merry, with a decided nod of the head. "If all the fellows had followed my lead and backed me up—backed us up, I mean—there would have been a different tale to tell."

"You are talking, Merry," said Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell.

"Yes, sir."

"Takes fifty loons."

"Ow! I mean, you, sir."

And the discussion of the serious state of affairs at St. Jim's was postponed till the class should be dismissed. Tom Merry had been thinking very seriously about it. So long as the Grammarians were unmade and the Saints divided, Frank Monk was bound to have the advantage. Tom Merry determined to try the effect of a remonstrance and argument on Blake and Figgins.

The Shell came out a few minutes after the Fourth Form, and Study No. 6 were standing on the steps of the School House chatting when the Terrible Three joined them. Blake looked rather suspiciously at Tom Merry. Blake had a black eye, which was matched by a dark bruise on Tom Merry's cheek.

"I want to speak to you, Blake."

"No law against that that I know of," said Blake. "If you've come to tell me that you've been thinking it over."

"Good! So have we. You mean you see clearly that it's no good our ragging one another while the Grammar cads are here."

"That's it. I'm glad to see you take such a sensible view of the case," said Tom Merry. "We must unite under one leader if we are to hold our own on our own ground."

"Glad to hear you say so," said Blake heartily. "Can you answer for your friends as well as yourself?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Good! When Figgins & Co. know that you are following my lead, I dare say they will come into the combine, too."

"Eh! Following what? What are you talking about?"

"Following my lead."

"My word! If you're not off! I wasn't talking about following your lead. What I meant to say was, have you realised that we can't succeed unless you follow mine?"

Blake stared at the hero of the Shell with the most withering expression he could screw up into his features.

"Do you mean to say that you've got nothing more sensible than that to propose?" he demanded. "Haven't you heard that stale old idea yet?"

"You know very well that I do."

"I know very well that if anybody leads this combine, his name is going to be Jack Blake," said the chief of Study No. 6, with emphasis.

"Now, you know you're talking rot, Blake."

"Yaaa, wathah! My opinion is that the leadah ought to be selected from Study No. 5, but I weally am the propah person. What you weepin' is a fellow—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Blake. "I suppose we shall never agree on that point, Tom Merry. You follows in the Shell are so confoundedly conceited."

"And you Fourth Form kids are so silly."

"Who are you calling kids?"

"You young duffers."

The Fourth-Formers looked aggressive; but just then Mr. Hailton, the master of the School House, looked out, and the dispute was cut short. The juniors assumed extremely innocent looks under the housemaster's eyes, and strode away.

After Augustine went upstairs to Study No. 6. As he opened the door, his chums below heard him give a startled exclamation.

"Hallo, something's up!" exclaimed Blake.

Blake, Herries, and Digby ran quickly upstairs and along the corridor after D'Arcy. The chums of the Shell followed, curious to know what was happening. As they came along the passage they saw Blake, Herries, and Digby in the doorway of No. 6, screaming with laughter.

"Hallo, there's some jape on there!" murmured Tom Merry. "Let's go and see what it is. Can't be a Grammarian jape, I think, or Blake wouldn't be killing himself over it."

"Gussy seems to be annoyed," chuckled Lowther, as they ran along the passage. The voice of the School House itself could be heard, raised in tones of indignation.

"Bai Jove! The impertinent wotnah! The feahful cads! Blake, if you insist upon that idiotic cockin', I shall be tempted to swack you! Howwever, pray stop laughin' like a beastly hyonal Digby, I wegard your gigglin' as offensive."

The Terrible Three scuffed upon the scene. They looked past the Fourth-Formers, into the study. Then they bent into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy was standing in indignant amazement staring at a pile of hats erected on the study table. D'Arcy rather fancied his hats, and his comestock extravagance was a new silk topper. He generally had two or three on hand, and his hat-box was a continual bother at the study. The practical jokers who had visited No. 6 evidently knew of the Hittie hats.

These silk toppers were arranged on the table one above another, and the rest of D'Arcy's hats and caps were arranged round them. They made a grosly pile. And on the middle hat was pinned a card, bearing the following inscription:

IN THIS STYLE, 3a, 3d.

Tom Merry laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. It was evidently a job of the Grammarians, and it appealed to the School House boys—accepting D'Arcy. The swell of the School House evidently regarded it as anything but comic.

"I weally fail to see what you silly asses are gwainin' and cockin' at," he exclaimed. "There is nothin' funny in pinin' a fellow's hats on the beastly table and stickin' a silly placard on them. In this style, three-and-nine! Bai Jove, I wegard that as an outrageous insult! Fancy me wearin' a beastly hat that only cost three-and-nine! Can you imagine such a thing, dash boys?"

"Certainly not," said Tom Merry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Paw, cease this unlimy movement!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is a joke of the Gwammah cads," said D'Arcy, taking the offending placard off the hat. "Bai Jove, they have stuck the beastly pin right into the hat. I shall give

Frank Monk a fearful thwack for this. I don't mind the damage to the hat so much, but to fantasize that I pay only three-and-pence for my lovely hat—believe me, I regard that as a beastly insult! Yaaa, wataah!

And D'Arcy made for the door, with a vengeful gleam in his eye. Blaks caught him by the arm.

"Where are you going, Gussy?"

"I pray release me, Blaks. I am going to find Frank Monk, to thwack him."

"Don't be an ass; you know——"

"I insist upon your releasin' me at once, Blaks."

"Now, look here——"

"I refuse to look there."

And D'Arcy jerked himself away and strode off in search of the Grammararians. He left the juniors shivering with laughter. The Terrible Three were still chuckling as they walked away to their own study. But a surprise was waiting for them there.

CHAPTER 10.

A Slight Mistake.

TOM MERRY was the first to enter the study. The next moment he gave a wild yell, as his foot caught in something and he pitched forward headlong.

"Look out!" he shouted.

But there was no time for his chums to look out. They were following him in, and their feet caught in the same cord stretched across the study, and they followed Tom Merry headlong to the floor.

There was a creak and a crack. The end of the cord was fastened to the bookcase, and the book on it had been too much for the stability of that article of furniture. The bookcase reared up, and the books scattered in a shower upon the Terrible Three.

"Ow!" roared Lowther, as Liddell and Beatt caught him upon the head. "Ow! Ow!"

"My hat!" gasped Manners. "What is it? What's happening? Is it an earthquake?"

Tom Merry struggled to his feet.

He stared at the fallen bookcase and the scattered books, and then looked round the study with a wrathful eye.

The room was in a state of shocking disorder. The table had been turned upon its side, and the drawer had fallen out, and all sorts of articles were scattered on the floor. The feeder was standing on end against the window-ledge, and the seats and cinders had been kicked all over the room. The chairs were overturned, the contents of the cupboard scattered on the floor. The coal from the locker had been distributed with a liberal hand in every quarter.

The chums of the Shell looked at one another as they picked themselves up.

"The Grammar reads!" muttered Lowther.

"Wait a tick," said Tom Merry. "What's this?"

He picked up a school cap which lay among the wreckage.

"A New House cap!" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry nodded.

"No good jumping to conclusions too quickly," he remarked. "Figgins & Co. have done this in return for the doing so gave his study."

"By Jove, and no night have gone for the Grammarians over it!" exclaimed Lowther. "I say, we're not going to take this lying down, you know. Let's go over to the New House and make them s-s-s-s."

"Good! It's about time the sisters had a lesson," exclaimed Manners wrathfully. "It will take us hours to get this to rights. My word!"

"Come on, then!"

Equally wrathful and bent upon prompt vengeance, the Terrible Three hurried out of the study. As they went down the passage a Shell boy came along, and tried to stop them. It was Skimpole of the Shell, a youth with a head so large that it seemed certain that he must have at least twice the average amount of brain power. Skimpole himself was certain of it.

"I say, Tom Merry, I want to speak to you. It's spot important!" he exclaimed, catching the hero of the Shell by the button.

"Can't stop now!"

"But it's most important!"

"Learn to say 'no'!"

"I say, it's a most important matter!"

"Look here, I've no time to listen to Socialism now!" yelled Tom Merry. "Let me go, or I'll tell the world."

Skimpole was one of the subjects which Skimpole's mighty brain led him to take up. He talked it in season and out of season, and loved everybody who would listen to him almost to extinction with it.

"But really, Tom Merry——"

"Let go, you ass! I don't want to break your neck if it can be helped!"

"It's about the Grammarians. Now they are here——"

"So what?"

"I can't; it's a question of duty with me! My duty as a Socialist will not allow me to sit down idly while——"

"Won't he, try!" said Tom Merry; and he gave the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's a push on the chest which instantly placed him in a sitting posture.

Skimpole sat there, bewildered, staring after the chums of the Shell as they vanished.

"Dear me," he murmured; "the way of the reformer is set with thorns, indeed! But I am determined that the Grammarians shall be converted to Socialism while they are here."

Tom Merry and his chums ran on.

They caught sight of Figgins & Co. at the gates as they crossed the quadrangle. They entered the New House, and ran up the stairs. An invasion in broad daylight was not a thing the New House juniors were likely to look for; and, as a matter of fact, the Terrible Three did not encounter a soul.

They dashed into Figgins's study.

"By Jove, fancy leaving the door unlocked, after what they've been doing in our quarters!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. "These carelessness for you!"

"Let's get to work!" roared Tom Merry. "They may be in any minute, and then we shall get chucked out!"

"That's so; we can't fight the whole House! Fortunately, it doesn't take long to wreck a study!" chuckled Lowther.

It did not take the Terrible Three long!

They set to work in a really scientific manner. They upset everything that could be upset. They scattered ink and cinders to right and left. They put the provisions from the cupboard into the coal-bucket, and the coal from the locker into the cupboard. A few minutes made a wonderful difference in Figgins & Co.'s study.

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Tom Merry, looking round with an air of satisfaction. "I fancy Figgins & Co. will have as big a job to get this cleaned up as we shall have now in our quarters!"

"Ho, ho, ha! I think they will! Hello, they're here!"

There was a shout of fury at the door. Figgins & Co. had come in, and they were staring at the school-house trio and the wreck they had made as if they could hardly believe the evidence of their own eyesight.

"You—you—!" gasped Figgins. "Oh, my hat! Go for 'em! Break 'em up into little bits! Kick it to 'em!"

Figgins & Co. didn't stop to ask questions. They rushed to the attack, and the Terrible Three met them with equal spirit. A wild and whirling fight raged in the wrecked study.

Tumbling over the scattered articles and amid the overturned Juniors, the combatants fought fiercely, making a terrific din, which they were far too excited to notice.

Figgins & Co. were four to three, but the three were the pick of the School House, so the fight was not so very unequal, and the chums of the Shell were simply furious.

There was a shout in the passage, which the juniors did not even hear, and then a heavy footstep, which also passed unheeded. Then Montelli, the head prefect of the New House, looked sharply into the study.

"Stop that row at once, you rascals!"

Figgins exclaimed bitterly, under the grip of Monty Lowther. Lowther staggered back, gasping for breath.

"Were we making a row, Montelli?" gasped Figgins.

Montelli smiled in spite of himself.

"I should say you were, you rascals!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean by it? What are those School House youngsters doing here?"

"Blessed if I know! We found 'em."

"We came to wreck the study, Montelli," said Tom Merry. "I'm sorry. He glanced round at the disorderly room."

"And I think you've done it," he added triumphantly.

The New House prefect laughed.

"Yes, I think you have, too!" he remarked.

"Let me see at him!" howled Figgins. "I'll teach him to wreck this study!"

"Stand back, Figgins!"

"I tell you, Montelli——"

"It's all for the best, Figgins!" cried Tom Merry. "Hardly you didn't expect us to find it lying down, did you?"

"Take what lying down, and?"

"What you chaps did to our study."

Figgins gave him a glare of astonishment.

"What have we done to your study?"

"Wrecked it, and left your cap there to tell the tale. You should really have been more careful, Figgins, if you didn't want to offend the poor Girls!"

"My cap," howled Figgins; "I've lost my cap! Frank Monk snatched it from my head in the quadrangle, and ran off with it, and got it in the School House before I could collar him!"

Tom Merry gave a jump. "Do you mean to say that you haven't been to our study, Figgins?"

"Of course I haven't!" "And you didn't wreck it?" gasped Messers.

"And! How could I wreck it without going there?" "He couldn't," said Messy Lowther. "But is that honest in you, Figgins? Haven't you or the Co. been over in our quarters since morning school?"

"No, I tell you!" "Then," said Tom Merry, in bewilderment, "then we've made a mistake! We found our quarters wrecked, and your cap among the ruins, and, naturally, we jumped to the conclusion that it was a New House raid!"

"And we came over for vengeance!" said Lowther. "And we've had it!" added Messers.

"You ought to have!" "You ought to have!" "Do you think I should leave my cap there if I had really done it?"

"I should have," said the Grammarian of course. "And they showed the cap there to make you go for us!" said Kerr.

"And you fall into the trap like a lot of silly goose?" Patsy Wynn remarked.

Mostly laughed and walked away. The row was over in the study, and the president's interference was not required. But seven juniors were wading wild with wrath. The Terrible Three and the New House quartette had suffered equally from the little game played by the Grammarians, and they wanted vengeance, and wanted it badly.

"By Jove," exclaimed Tom Merry, "we've been taken in all along the line! Let's go and give the Grammarians a warning!"

"Good whom?" exclaimed Figgins & Co. with one voice. "Come on, Open!"

And School House and New House kids, forgetful of their late encounter, rushed off at once to visit the quarters of the common enemy. They entered the School House, and dashed along the passage which led to the Grammarian room. They found the door of No. 19 shut, and when they tried it, it proved to be locked.

Tom Merry hammered on the panels. "Open this door!" "Open this door!"

"There was no reply from within. "Open this door!" roared Figgins. "We've come to seal you!"

"We're going to make you all up! Open the door!" "No reply. Whether the Grammarians were within the room or not it was impossible to tell. If they were there they kept very quiet, and Tom Merry hammered at the door till an angry protest came tearing along the passage, voice in hand, and then the juniors withdrew.

In the quadrangle they gathered again, still angry, and very disappointed. Dinner was nearly ready in the big hall, and the boys were trooping in. Among them went a party of Grammarians, keeping together, and among the Grammarians the groups were Monk, Lane, and Carter. They had not been in No. 19 at all! Monk caught the juniors' looks turned upon him, and knew his hand to the juniors as he walked into the dining hall.

"My hat!" said Figgins. "He can tell from my looks that we've been slogging one another, and he's enjoying it!"

"All the fault of you kids!" growled Lowther. "The Grammarians are getting the best of it all the time, and it's all your fault!"

"How do you make that best, eat?" "Why, we ought all to come this time and make common cause against the enemy, and you New House kids insist upon sticking out of the combine!"

"We're ready to form a Co. with ourselves at the head of it!"

"Not good enough." "It's you School House fellows who are obstinate asses!"

"Oh, come in and feed!" said Tom Merry. "Good bye, Figgins. When you want to join the combine, in a properly constituted position, you can let me know."

"Hate!" said Figgins. And they separated.

CHAPTER 11.

Trouble in the Glass-Room!

"SAY, Tom Merry?" Skimpole leaned over his desk and whispered to the ears of the Shell. Tom Merry did not look round, but he made a movement of his shoulders as a hint to Skimpole to shut up—a hint the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's was far from taking.

Tom Merry had written in his mind. In the first place, the success of the Grammarians since their arrival at St. Jim's had been complete, and it was a blow to the prestige of the old school. To be defeated on their own territory by a small party of intruders was too bad. The Grammarians were not disposed to take their success lightly, either, or to hide their light under a bushel. They glared at the discomfited juniors, bragged very audibly of what they intended to do, and generally made themselves obnoxious.

That was Tom Merry's chief worry—the success of the Grammarians, and the apparent hopelessness of forming a combine among the Galsins to oppose them. But he had others. His nose was swollen and red, and hurt him considerably, a result of the fight in Figgins's study. His left ear was bruised and hurting. One of his eyes was threatening to grow purple at last. Then the Shell was being taken in German by Herr Schneider, and, with as many troubles upon his mind, Tom Merry was not in a humor for examining Herr Schneider's beautiful Deutsch.

It was an unlucky moment for Skimpole to tackle him, for it was never safe to talk in class when Herr Schneider was the master present. But Skimpole was not to be deterred by considerations of that kind.

"I say, Tom Merry!" "Shut up, you ass!" murmured Tom Merry, without turning his head.

"I beg your pardon, Merry, I did not quite hear what you said."

"Shut up!" "You mean that you don't wish me to speak to you?"

"Yes, you fathead!" "If it were not my duty as a Socialist to forgive all offenses, I should pour my ink down the back of your neck, Tom Merry!"

"Oh, do shut up!" "I cannot very well do so, as I have a most important matter to speak to you about. I tried to do so before, and you pushed me over in the most possible manner."

Tom Merry chuckled. "I wish old Schneider weren't here," he murmured, "I'd push you over again, and jimmie on you this time."

"I conjectured something of the sort, Merry, and that is partly the reason why I have chosen this moment for speaking to you."

"You and Schneider will spot us talking, and we shall be detained, or get an imposition, and I've got to write up the 'Weekly' leading article to-day."

"Herr Schneider is attending to Gibbons at the present moment, and is not looking this way. I say, Merry, it's a most important matter."

"Oh, go on, then, and get it over!" "The Grammarians are here now—"

THERE'S AN ORDER FORM IN THIS ISSUE.



D'Arcy stood in indignant amazement and stared at a pile of hats erected on his study table.

"Don't I know it?"

"But has it struck you what a splendid opportunity we have now, if we take it, while the Grammarians are here, of—"

"Of what?"

"Of converting Rylcombe Grammar School to Socialism," said Skimpole eagerly.

Tom Merry could not help giving a chuckle, which made the short German master turn his head at once.

"I think I hear something," he said. "Ach! Vich poy was it tat laff mit himself pefore?"

"Bismarck!"

"Vich poy," went on Herr Schneider, with emphasis—"vich poy laff mit himself pefore? I think I banish tat poy after. Answer me!"

No one spoke. The German master's fat red face grew redder.

"I think I have said something," he remarked, "tat I will have order in de class. I will not have you to talk and to laff vilo to lesson progresses itself pefore. I demand te poy who laff."

But the boy who had "laffed" did not speak up.

"Main Gott! Vili you answer me after? I order te poy who laff to come out and receive to caning," shouted Herr Schneider.

But apparently even that inditement was not tempting enough, for the boy who had "laffed" did not come forward.

"Very well," said Herr Schneider grimly, "I will keep order in dis class somehow. I will not have to talk and to laff vilo to lesson progresses mit itself pefore. Te whole class will be detained half an hour—"

Tom Merry rose in his place.

"If you please, sir, it was I."

The German master fixed his eyes upon the handsome, cherry face of the hero of the Shell. He sniffed grimly.

"So it was you, Merry! You laff ven you hear your master pronounce te powerful Sherman, hein?"

"Oh, no, sir! I wasn't laughing at you, sir. I never laugh at you in class, sir."

Tom Merry put the slightest emphasis on the words "in class," which was not lost upon the Shell, and a suppressed giggle followed his speech. Herr Schneider was not slow to detect the cause of it, and he turned redder.

"Ach! I think tat you vas mean to be impertinent after, ain't it?"

"Impertinent, sir! To you, sir! Oh, sir!"

The class giggled again. Herr Schneider flung a warning forefinger at Tom Merry.

"Te class will not be detained, but you will write out vun hundred lines from Schiller, Merry, and pring tom to me before you go mit yourself to pad-to-night pefore. You will not forget tat, ain't it?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Te lesson will proceed," said Herr Schneider. "I do not think you will laff again, Merry, pefore."

Tom Merry sat down. He did not, indeed, feel much like laughing. A hundred lines from Schiller was no light job, possibly. He felt more like jumping on Skimpole than anything else just then. But the matter beyond was not finished. He only waited for Herr Schneider to be occupied with Göttern, the dance of the Gods, before he leaned over the desk and tapped Tom Merry on the shoulder.

"I say, Tom Merry—"

Tom murmured something under his breath.

"What do you think of my class, Merry?"

"Shut up!"

"It is impossible to shut up, Merry. The Grammarians will probably be here only a few days, and there is no time to be lost. The proposition you have just received will probably take up most of your evening, and you will have no time to listen to me after school. The matter must be settled now."

"Schneider will be down on us in a second if you don't shut up."

"I can risk that, for the good of the cause. A true"

Socialist must always be prepared to make sacrifices—to sacrifice himself or others, as the case may require. For the sake of promoting the good cause, I would cheerfully receive an imposition of a thousand lines, and see you receive the same, Tom Merry.

"You'll receive something on your nose if you don't shut up," granted Tom Merry. "Can't you see Schneider is on the spot?"

"Never mind Schneider. When Socialism comes in, this dread of authority will go long since, and a school will probably be managed by a committee elected by all the forms. However, that may be some time coming."

"Yes, I fancy it will be."

"The present business is to convert the Grammarians to Socialism, while they are here; then, when they return to the Grammar School, each one becomes a propagandist—an apostle, as it were, spreading the light in dark places."

"Well, convert 'em, then, but do shut up now!"

"But you will probably be talking football, or cricket, or hockey, or some such trifling matter, to Manners and Loring at tea-time. It is better to get this matter settled now. Will you help me, for the sake of the toiling millions?"

"How the toiling millions!" said Tom Merry irritably.

"That is an utterly heartless speech, Tom Merry. Think of the millions of overworked, underpaid, underfed fellow-beings, slaving from morn to night, in hopeless darkness, to whom Socialism is the only possible saviour."

"Ah! You was talking to Merry, Skimpole."

"Eh! Did you speak, sir?"

"Yes, you were talking to Merry!" roared Herr Schneider.

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! I think so with myself indeed. Merry, you will take another hundred lines, and you will take fifty, Skimpole."

"If you please, sir, I regard this imposition as unjust. There was a gasp from the Shell. Herr Schneider stared at the amateur Socialist in blank amazement, petrified by his audacity.

"Ach! Mein Gott! Vat you say, Skimpole!"

"I consider this impost. unjust, sir."

"Ach! Come out here, Skimpole!"

Skimpole came out, looking rather nervous. The German master seemed excited, and it was no use talking Socialism and the absurdity of corporal punishment to an excited German with a pointer in his hand.

"So you think that imposition was unjust after, Skimpole?"

"Yes, sir. If you will allow me to point out—"

"I will do it pointing out, Skimpole. I will point out to you that you are insolent, and that you will do you hundred lines instead of fifty, and will also have to casing. Hold out your hand."

And Skimpole received three on each hand, laid on with plenty of vim, and he went back to his place a sadder if not wiser youth. Even his fervour in the good cause was damped. During the remainder of the German lesson nothing more was heard of Socialism in the Shell class-room, much to Tom Merry's relief.

CHAPTER 12.

No Backers!

COMING out to practice, Merry?"

Blake asked the question as he met the Shell coming out after school. Tom Merry shook his head dolefully.

"Can't?"

"Why can't you? What's the matter?"

"I've got two hundred lines of Schiller to write out."

"My hat! Old Schneider has been going to it, hasn't he?"

"It was all Skimpole's fault! He would talk in class. He's got an idea of converting Frank Monk and the Grammar class to Socialism while they're here—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that they can spread the light when they go home to the Grammar School."

"My only hat! What a wheeze!"

"So I've got to write out two hundred from Schiller. I shall have to cut everything else. Schneider was in deadly earnest, and the lines have to be shown up before bed. I'm going to begin these now."

"Sorry! Somebody ought to suffocate Skimpole."

Tom Merry laughed readily and walked away. Blake strolled towards St. J. No. 5, and a few minutes later he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned to see Skimpole.

"I say, Blake, I would to speak to you."

Blake looked suspicious.

"About Socialism?" he asked.

"Well, yes."

"Then I'm off."

And Blake darted away. Skimpole looked after him more in awe than in anger. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came along, and passed to brush a speck of dust from his immaculate trousers. Skimpole seized his opportunity.

"D'Arcy, wait a moment!"

"Yess, deah boy, what is it!" drawled the swell of the School House.

"I know you have a tender heart—"

"Yess, wathah! If you want to borrow some tin, deah boy, you're come just at the right time, as I've just changed a five. It had from my goshawk this mornin'."

"You're a dearest fellow, D'Arcy."

"Yess; how much?"

"I don't want money—"

"Bai Jove, don't you! What do you want, then?"

"Only a few words."

"I'll give you them with pleasure."

"I mean, I want to speak a few words," said Skimpole.

"While the Grammarians are here at St. J. No. 5, don't you think it's a ripping opportunity to—"

"To dust up the ground with them? Yess, wathah, if we two form a combine, and stop wovin' among ourselves for a bit. They have installed me feashfully by hinton' that I give you three-and-a-half for my beauty here, you know."

"I don't mean that. Don't you think it's a splendid opportunity for converting them to Socialism?"

"Bai Jove!"

"So that on returning to the Grammar School each of them will be a bearer of the good news to his school-fellows to spread the light."

"Bai Jove, I must really be goin'!"

"Sleep a minute, D'Arcy!"

"Queue up, deah boy; important engagement."

And the swell of the School House happened away. Skimpole looked disappointed, but just then he spied Digby and Herriss coming along arm-in-arm, and he hastened to plant himself in their way. They had to stop.

"I want to speak to you, you chaps!"

"Please don't!" said Herriss.

"It's a rather important matter."

"Oh, go on, and get it over!" said Digby, taking out his watch. "We'll give you a minute. Go on, and I'll time you!"

"The Grammarians are here at St. J. No. 5—"

"Yes; I believe I've noticed something of the sort."

"While they're here there's a grand opportunity to convert them to Socialism; so that, on returning to the Grammar School, each of them will be a bearer of the good news, to spread the light—"

"What is he talking about?" asked Herriss.

"Blessed if I know!" said Digby. "What are you talking about, Skimpy?"

"I'm talking about Socialism."

"Time's up!"

"Listen to me, you fellows!"

"Can't be did? I gave you a full minute, and timed you. Time's up. Come on, Herriss! As a matter of fact, you had a second over time, Skimpole."

"Just listen to me for a minute!"

"You've had your minute; come on, Herriss!"

And Digby gruffly but firmly pushed the amateur Socialist out of the way, and the chums walked on. Skimpole looked annoyed; Socialism seemed to be at a discount in the School House.

The amateur Socialist scratched his tufts of light-coloured hair in a thoughtful way. A new idea had come into his mind.

"I think I had better go over to the New House," he murmured; "a prophet is never properly honoured in his own country. Figgins is a sensible fellow, and I dare say I shall be able to persuade him."

And Skimpole went forth in search of Figgins. He found Figgins & Co. playing leap-frog on the New House side of the quadrangle. They were very busy, and did not see the amateur Socialist as he came up. He called to Figgins.

"Figgins! I say, Figgins!"

"Tack in your twopenny, Fatty!" shouted Figgins.

"Right-ho, Figg; don't letp me here all day!"

"I'm coming!"

Figgins came along with kangaroo-like jumps over the hended backs of the Co. Fatty Wynn was last in the row, and Skimpole hastened to meet Figgins as soon as he should have made his last jump. Figgins came over Fatty Wynn with legs flying, and ran right into Skimpole, and the amateur Socialist went down in a heap with the long-legged chief of the New House juniors sprawling across him.

"Ow!" roared Skimpole. "Ow; you've hurt me!"

"And I'm going to hurt you some more, you see!" howled Figgins. "What the dickens do you mean by getting in the way?"

"I want to speak to you!"

"Speak, then!"
 "Get off my chest!"
 "I'm going to sit on your chest," said Figgins firmly, "till you're finished; you're safest like that. Now, what is it?"
 "I—I—I say—got off my chest!"
 "You've said that before. If you're simply going to repeat your remarks, Skimpole, you cannot expect me to waste time listening to them!"

"I—I—I'm suffocating!"
 "That's of no consequence. If it proves fatal, I'll stand my which in the funeral expenses. Now, get on with the washing!"

"The Gram-Gram-Grammarians are here—ow!—and while they're—ow!—here, it's a splendid opportunity for converting them so—Ow—ow—ow!"

"Blessed if I know how you're going to convert the Grammarians to 'Ow—ow—ow!'" said Figgins. "What is it? Something in Chinese, or Hindustani?"

"Ow! A splendid opportunity for converting them to Socialism; so that each of them, on returning to the Grammar School will be a bear—ow!—a bear—"

"Each of them will be a bear!" said Figgins, puzzled. "You're off your rocker! If you're alluding to their manners, they're bears already! H—"

"Each of these will be a bearer of the good news, to spread the light—"

"Ow—ow—ow!" Skimpole gasped. "To spread the light of So—"

"Right!"
 "To spread the light of—Ow—ow—ow!"

"There you go again with your 'Ow—ow—ow!' You can't expect a sensible chap to sit on your chest listening to meaningless piffle like that," said Figgins severely.

"Ow! You're suffocating me! Ow! I want you to help me convert the Grammarians to—Ow—ow—ow!"

"Couldn't he do it himself? I don't know what 'Ow—ow—ow!' is, and if he would now like you've got, it will wash a lot of explaining!"

"Ow! Get off my chest! I—"

"Right—ho!" Figgins rose, and Skimpole staggered up, gasping. "If you want to convert the Grammarians, my son, go and do it; tackle them in their own quarters; but don't bother me! Now bunk!"

"But, I say, Figgins—"

"Bunk!" roared Figgins.

And Skimpole thought he had better obey. He wandered away disconsolately. It was clear that in neither house would he receive any support in his splendid idea. But Figgins's suggestion of hearing the Grammarians alone in their den was a good one. Skimpole thought it over, and made up his mind.

"I'll do it," he murmured. "They'll all be in No. 10 doing their prep. after tea, and then I can go in and speak to them, and if they don't like it they can lump it. Perhaps I shall get hurt, but I must face that in the cause of Socialism. Still, in case they are very rough, it will be just as well to take precautions."

And Skimpole sought his study, to make some notes for his intended speech to the Grammarians, and also to take some precautions in case they were very rough; as was very likely to be the case.

CHAPTER 13.

Skimpole Takes Precautions.

TOM MERRY was looking very thoughtful as he lifted the steaming kettle from the fire in his study in the School House, and poured a quantity of water into the teapot to warm it; an indispensable preparation for making tea. Lowther was laying the table, and Manners opening a tin of sardines.

Manners was sitting in the easy-chair near the fender, the tin between his knees, working the tin-opener with great energy. Tom Merry put the kettle on the fire again, and slowly and reflectively swished the hot water round in the teapot.

"What's the worry?" asked Monty Lowther, looking across at him. "Thinking of that beastly German imposition?"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I've got an idea about that," said Lowther. "Suppose we capture Skimpole, and stand over him with a cricket-stump while he writes out the impot? That would be only fair, and it would be a lesson to him!"

Tom laughed.

"Good idea; only Schneider would know it wasn't my hand! Never mind the impot; I wasn't thinking about that!"

"What are you wrinkling your manly brow about, then?"
 "I was thinking of a whistle for bringing the Grammarians to their senses," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I think I've hit on a scheme."

"Good! It's about-time!"
 "Oh, we should have knocked them into a cocked hat already, Monty, if we had combined against them as we ought to have done!"

"Only we haven't," said Monty Lowther; "and the combine looks as far off as ever, to my mind. We shall have to go it alone."

"That won't do. This is rather a big scheme, and we shall have to be all in it. I think Figgins, and Blake, and the rest will come some time when they know I've got a plan in my head."

"If you tell 'em the plan they'll pinch it!"
 "I shan't tell 'em till they've agreed to come into the combine and follow our lead," said Tom Merry sagaciously; "not much!"

"Ow!" roared Manners. "Ow! Oh! Stop it!"
 Tom Merry stared at him.

"What's the matter, Manners?"
 Manners had jumped up suddenly, yelling, and the half-opened sardine-tin went with a crash to the floor.

"You see, you're pouring that hot water all over my legs!" roared Manners, hopping on one foot and then on the other.

Tom Merry glanced at the teapot in his hand. He had absent-mindedly turned the spout towards Manners, and the hot water had poured out over his unfortunate chum's trousers.

"By Jove! I'm sorry, Manners! I didn't notice—I was thinking—"

"Ow! You'd better give me a wide berth when you start thinking again!" growled Manners, mopping his trousers with his handkerchief. "There's the sardines spilt now, and a good look at the hearthstone is—"

"Can't be helped; I've got a ripping whizzer!"
 "Oh, how your ripping whizzer!" said Manners crossly, as he picked up the tin of sardines. "Make the tea, and never mind the whizzer!"

"Keep your wool on, old chap!" said Tom Merry good-temperedly. "I tell you it's a whizzer that will make the Grammar cads sing small all the time they're at St. Jim's, and they'll never be able to crow again if it comes off all right!"

"Well, what is it?" asked Lowther.

"My idea is to catch them when they're all in the room—Study No. 10, you know—"

"That's easy enough, as they'll be doing their prep. there every evening after tea," said Lowther, with a nod.

"Exactly! Then we can fasten the door on the outside—"

"Well, that's a stale old whizzer, and no mistake!"
 "As; that's not all!"

"What more is there?" asked Lowther, as he proceeded to cut bread-and-butter. "I expect you're ransacking some old gag, but we'll give you a hearing; go on!"

"You know the windows of Study No. 10 look out on the garden!"

"Yes, with the elms all round and the chapel rails at the bottom," said Lowther; "a nice, solitary spot for settling any little affairs of gentlemen! But you're not thinking of challenging Monk to have the gloves on, are you?"

"No, ass!"

"Well, why can't you explain what you're thinking of, then?"

"I'm trying to," howled Tom Merry; "but you keep on interrupting me! As you see, the garden under the windows of Study No. 10 is a solitary spot, and it's so shut in by the elms that it can't be observed from the other windows; not very much, at any rate. Now, it would be easy to smuggle Taggles's long ladder round there—"

Lowther looked interested at last.

"Ah, you're thinking of smacking the Grammar cads through the windows?" he asked. "But they'd push us out, you know!"

"I'm not—Hullo, what do you want, Goo?"

Goo had just opened the door of the study. He was grinning. The chums of the Shell-looked at him suspiciously.

"It's Skimpole!" said Goo. "He's in the warpath against Mr. Wood!"

"What's the game now?"

"He's going to convert the Grammarians to Socialism," grinned Goo. "He says he can't get anybody to back him up, so he's going to Study No. 10 to preach to them alone, while they're doing their prep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll snatch him half-headed," said Lowther; "she gibby-aye! I say, Tom, we oughtn't to let him go!"

"Oh, you couldn't stop him," said Goo; "he's made up his mind! He's as obstinate as a mule! But he's getting ready for business; it's too funny for anything! He come and look at him! I shall bust something, I think!"

Skimpole Does Not Get a Hearing.

And Goro went off into a scream of laughter. "What on earth is he doing, then?" asked Tom Merry, in wonder.

"Getting ready for the fray," gasped Goro. "Come and look! A thing like this has to be soon to be appreciated." The Terrible Threepence glared at the tea on the table regretfully, and then followed Goro. They watched their tea, but they were concerned for Skimpole. Skimpole had various ideas, some of them sensible and some the reverse, but all a little unusual. But he was such a harmless, good natured, obliging fellow that no one could help liking him. Even Goro, the bully of the Shell, who shared his study with him, could not help having a half-angry-like for Skimpole.

"The confounded one!" muttered Tom Merry. "The Grammarians will not like it if he goes into their quarters and starts preaching at them."

"Oh, we'll stop him!" said Lowther. "But you won't!" grunted Goro. "Wild horses wouldn't stop him, I think. Here you are! No charge for admission, and the fustiest frank on earth."

"You forget yourself, Goro," said Monty Lowther. "Oh, none of your staid old customs for me!" said Goro. "Keep them for the 'Winking' Show, look at that animal!"

The theme of the Shell started curiously into the study, and their remark into a simultaneous, irresistible roar of laughter.

Skimpole was certainly preparing for the fray. He seemed to have borrowed the idea of arming himself for the fray from some crusader of old. His face and head were covered and fully protected by a cane mesh, such as fencers use, and his jacket was buttoned tightly over some bulging stuffs, probably pillows, one at his back and one on his chest. His trousers were similarly stuffed, and his legs were protected by an enormous pair of cricked leg-guards. He was surveying himself with great satisfaction, when the laughter at the door made him look up, and he saw the Terrible Threepence in a twinkling.

Skimpole's face remained quite grave. He was taking what seemed to him to be fully justifiable precautions, and he could see nothing to laugh at.

"My hat!" gasped Tom Merry, with tears in his eyes. "What's all that for, Skimpole?"

"I am going to make a speech to the Grammarians in their own quarters," said Skimpole. "My duty as a Socialist will not allow me to neglect this opportunity of converting them, so that on returning to the Grammar School each of them may be a bearer of the—"

"Oh, don't let's have all that over again!" said Monty Lowther. "I advise you to leave the Grammarians alone."

"I cannot very well do that, as my duty as a Socialist—"

"Oh, come along and have tea!" said Lowther. "His duty as a silly ass compels him to go and be used to mop the floor with."

"I have taken precautions in case the Grammarians should appear at all rough," said Skimpole; "but I hope that by appealing to their better nature I may be able to soften them, and induce them to give me a hearing."

"Well, if you hope that, you're the most amazing idiot I've come across for a long time," said Goro. "I'll come along to see you slaughtered. When are you going?"

"I am going now," said Skimpole, coming to the door. "I really hope that all the precautions I have taken will prove superfluous; but it is always well to be prepared for contingencies. If you fellows like to come along, and back to me—"

"Thank you," said Lowther. "we've got a pressing engagement."

"Very well. Later on I hope to convert you, but at present the benighted state of the Grammarians claims all my attention."

And Skimpole walked away. A strange figure he made as he went. Goro, giggling, followed him, eager to see the fun. Lowther passed his arm through Tom Merry's and dragged him away.

"Come on, Tommy; the tea will be cold."

Tom Merry hesitated.

"Come on, I tell you! What are you thinking about?"

"I say, we can't let that silly ass go into it alone," said Tom Merry.

"Let's go along and see fair play."

Monty Lowther gave an expressive grunt.

"That's just like you, Tom; the tea will get cold."

"Blow the tea!"

"That will only make it colder," said Lowther, who never lost the opportunity of making an irritating play upon words. "You blow your hands to make them warm, but with tea it's a different matter. You—"

"Oh, come on! Come with me."

"I suppose we must give him his head," said Lowther, as Tom Merry followed in the track of the amateur Socialist.

"Come along, Manners! It means a row instead of a feed, I suppose, but I dare say we shall see some fun."

And the theme of the Shell followed their leader.

THERE was an air of busy work about Study No. 10, where the Grammarians were doing their preparation for the morrow evening. The invaders of St. Jim's had to do the "prep" in the room in company, and they had had their tea in hall, as it was impossible to assign them studies in either the School House or the New House. But this arrangement was quite agreeable to the Grammarians. In the midst of the enemy's country as it were, they felt safer together, and they made Study No. 10 a stronghold to which they could always retreat for security. So far, excepting for the row at the house-warming, they had not been disturbed in their own quarters.

Frank Monk lifted his head from his desk with a sigh of relief, and threw down his pen. He pitched his books on either side of him, and jumped up.

"Hallo, you're lively!" said Carboy.

"Come, aren't you finished yet?" said Monk. "Get a move on you. I've got something to tell you fellows."

"Go ahead!" said Lane, laying down his pen.

"Hannosed was telling me that he heard Figgins and Blake talking over a little scheme they've got in mind for taking us down a peg."

Lane and Carboy chuckled.

"What's the scheme? It's time they had a look-in," Carboy remarked. "All the same, I fancy they won't get it."

"That's so. It can't be done, I think, that we've kept our end up solidly since we've been in this school," said Frank thoughtfully.

"More than kept it up. St. Jim's have been beaten all along the line."

"That's so," said Lane. "Every where they've tried has been beaten, and we've never tackled them without looking them."

"Yes, I think we've got reason to be rather pleased with ourselves," assented Frank Monk. "We needn't be afraid of anything that Figgins and Blake can do; and as for Tom Merry, either he's lying low, or he's done in. We're the masters of the situation, and we shall remain so if we keep things moving. St. Jim's are not going to be allowed a look-in. But to come to business, Hannosed says Figgins and Blake have made it past, and they're going to have a try at raking us in our own room."

"Ha, ha! Anything more?"

"No, that's all Hannosed knows; but it's enough to put us on our guard," grinned Monk.

"If they try that little game they'll find us ready, that's all. If we can get Blake and Figgins in here, and keep the rest out, we can make a good job of it. You see—Hallo! What on earth's that?"

Monk looked off suddenly at the sight of a weird figure that had peered the door of Study No. 10, without the preliminary of knocking, and entered the room.

It was Skimpole, in his extraordinary array. The Grammarians stared at him, and broke into a peal of laughter. Skimpole appeared to be quite unmoved by it. He walked gravely into the room, unheeding the merriment of the grammar youths.

"What is it?" gasped Lane.

"The wild man from Gorgeo," Monk suggested. "What's that he's got on his sapper?"

"He's fencing mask. And shin-guards?"

"So it is! I suppose he knows what he's got to expect, coming into our quarters like this. Hallo, he's talking!"

While the Grammarians seemed too amazed to interfere with him, Skimpole mounted a chair in the centre of the room, and waved his hand to the staring juniors.

"Gentlemen—"

"My hat! He's going to make a speech!"

"Kick him out!"

"Roll him over!"

"Gentlemen—"

"Boo! Shut up! Kick him out!"

"Hold on," exclaimed Frank Monk, coming forward. "let's hear what he's got to say. Now, then, say what's your little game, and how did you get out of the Zoo?"

"Gentlemen, I have a few words to say to you on an important subject. When I say gentlemen," went on Skimpole, with an air of explanation, "I don't mean that I regard you as gentlemen, in distinction—"

There was a howl from the Grammarians; but Frank Monk waved the excited youths back.

"Let's hear what he's got to say. Plenty of time to jump on him."

"Something in that," agreed Carboy. "Keep quiet! I suppose the kid's off his silly rocker. Go on, ass!"

"When I call you gentlemen, I do not mean that I regard you distinctively as such, but that, under proper conditions



The Grammarians recoiled back in dismay as Tom Merry played the water upon them.

of society, every individual would have a chance of being a gentleman, and would naturally desire to be one; and, therefore, I regard it as requisite to apply the word gentleman to everyone, however rough, uncouth, or brutal he may be. That is why I call you—"

"Why, the utter rotter! Rough—uncouth—brutal!"

"Please do not interrupt me. These interruptions are a proof of a rough, lacking disposition. As a Socialist I cannot blame you for this, knowing that it is not due to any fault inherent in your nature, but to the base and sordid surroundings of your childhood."

The Grammarians simply gasped. That anybody should dare to come into their quarters alone and talk to them in this strain seemed almost incredible, and they could only gasp as they listened.

"To the base and sordid surroundings of your childhood," went on Skimpole, "and to the negligence or brutality of those who should have trained you to better things. But although I cannot, as a Socialist, blame you for these proofs of a bad training by careless parents, yet I must ask you to

cease, as otherwise it will be impossible for me to explain to you—"

"Roll him over!"

"Kick him out!"

"Please allow me to finish. I shall not be more than an hour. While you are staying at St. Jack's I have an opportunity of explaining to you the great benefits of Socialism, and converting you to that grand cause."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that, on returning to the Grammar School, you may each of you become a bearer of the good news, to spread the light—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Several missiles flew through the air. Then it was seen that Skimpole had not done unwisely in putting on his armour before he faced the enemy. Apples and other missiles rattled on his cane mask, and several pea-shooters came into active play without effect.

"Gentlemen, I wish to explain to you—"

"Shot up!"

"My duty as a Socialist will not allow me to shut up."
 "Hold your tongue!"
 "A true Socialist never holds his tongue."
 "Ha, ha, ha! Get out!"
 "I speak in the cause of the toiling millions. Think of them, toiling by day and night in order that such as we may live in the lux of idleness."
 "In the what?" shrieked Frank Monk.
 "In the lap of luxury, I mean. Ah, my brothers—"
 "Rats!" said Lane. "Your brothers are out on Rykoonbe Common, feeding on the thieves."
 "My brothers, my foolish and ignorant but beloved brothers—"

"I say, that's about-enough!" said Frank Monk. "We're too modest to want any more compliments. It's time for you to travel."

"I am not finished yet."
 "Don't trouble about finishing. Get out."
 "I shall do nothing of the kind. I shall just leave this room, till I have explained to you the grand truths of Socialism, and let in a little intelligence upon your extremely foolish brains."
 "Change his coat!"

The Grammarians made a rush, and this time Frank Monk did not stop them. Skimpole struggled desperately in the midst of a surging crowd. His desperate attempt saved him from many hard knocks as he was dragged off the chair and bumped along the floor.

"Out with him!"
 "Kick him out!"
 "Please do not be so rough. I must explain to you—"
 "Ha, ha, ha! Bump him along!"

Skimpole was bumped along to the door, vainly struggling, and still attempting to gasp out the grand truths of Socialism. The laughter of the Grammarians drowned his voice.
 "Frog's-march him along the passage," said Frank Monk, "and leave him in the School House for his keepers to find!"

"Good!"
 Skimpole was rushed out into the passage. And the frog's-march he certainly would have had, but three sturdy figures came upon the scene with a rush, and the Grammarians, taken by surprise, dropped their prisoner and scouted back under the sudden attack. The Terrible Three waited no time in work. They hit out right and left, and the Grammarians scolded away, and before they could recover from their surprise, Tom Merry, Lowther, and Manservant had picked up Skimpole, and were rushing him off to the School House at top speed.

They were safe in their own quarters below the Grammarian's school passage. They bumped Skimpole down upon the floor, and he lay there gasping like a newly-landed fish.

"My only hat," gasped Tom Merry. "Who knocked as you see aren't you! Have you had enough of scolding for a bit, Skimpole?"

"Certainly not," gasped Skimpole. "I am rather out of breath now, but I shall return to the attack later. Thank you very much for coming to my rescue. How fortunate it was that I put on these things! I should have been severely hurt otherwise. As it is, I am quite breathless and very much knocked about. But the bearer of the good news must expect to be decided and knocked about."

"He must, rather, if he's the kind of sort you are," agreed Tom Merry.

Skimpole poked himself up.
 "While the Grammarians are here, I have my duty to do," he said. "I must convert them to the great truths of Socialism, so that, on returning to the Grammar School—"
 "Chase it!"

"On returning to the Grammar School, they may each of them become the bearer of the good news—"
 "Ring off!"

"And spread the light—"
 "Get out!" roared the Terrible Three, with one voice. And Skimpole got out.

CHAPTER 15.

Caught in the Trap.

SCRATCH—scratch—scratch! went Tom Merry's busy pen. He was alone in the study, working his way through his German composition—a task which seemed to lengthen out before him as he advanced, as compositions have a way of doing. His pen travelled over the paper with a ceaseless scratching, and he did not hear a tap at the door, nor see a face that looked in upon him, till a stamp on the floor attracted his attention, and also had the effect of making him jump and scatter a variety of blows over his paper.
 "Hallo, Blake!" he said. "You startled me. What the

diablen do you mean by popping in like this, like a demon in a pantomime!"

Blake grinned.
 "What the diablen do you mean by swooting away like this, when I want to speak to you?" he demanded.
 "I'm not swooting; this is a heavenly Schneider impot."
 "Oh, well, you can leave it now, if you like."
 "Thanks; but it's got to be shown up this evening."
 "Never mind that. You'll only get an extra fifty—"
 "I don't want an extra fifty," said Tom Merry. "I'm not greedy, and two hundred lines from Schiller are as much as I really want at any time."

"But there's something on," said Blake, coming further into the study, and lowering his voice mysteriously. "We were not going to let you into it at first, as you Shell boundaries are so awfully cocky; but upon the whole, we're going to give you a chance."

"That's really kind of you, Blake, and I appreciate it sincerely; but I don't think I'll take advantage of your generosity. I've got to get my impot finished."
 "Shut up a tick, and listen to me. It's up against the Grammarians."

"Well, go ahead," said Tom Merry resignedly. "I'll listen as long as it takes me to arrange these bits, anyway."
 "We're going to rush them in their own quarters, and lock them on their own ground, and muck up Study No. 10 generally," said Blake, with a grin. "Figgins & Co. have come into the plan with us."
 "And who's leader?"

"We've agreed that there's to be no leader."
 "If you want me to lead you—"

"We don't," said Blake promptly. "But we're willing to let you in on equal terms—you, and Lowther, and Manservant. After all, there's no special need for a leader in a case like this. We've simply got to take the Grammarians by surprise, and rush them, and snatch them bald-headed."

"Suppose you find them on their guard?"
 "I don't see how they can be on their guard, when we've kept our plans a dead secret; but, anyway, we shall be man to man, and I suppose we can give as good as we get."

"Oh, certainly! Is that all?"
 "Yes, that's all," said Blake, rather aggressively.
 "Good. Now buzz off, and let me finish my impot."

"Aren't you going to join?" shouted Blake.
 "Not unless you're looking for a leader."

"Look here, Tom Merry, you're altogether too benighted."
 "Not at all. But there must be some leader, or things will go wrong; and as the person naturally fitted for the post, of course, I—"

"Oh, rot! You can go and eat ome!"
 "Thanks. I've had my tea. But I tell you what, Blake, I've got an absolutely ripping scheme for getting the Grammarians in their place."
 "What is it?"

"That's my secret," said Tom Merry coolly. "You'll fail, I expect, in this little idea of yours; you're not up to their weight. Then if you like to come to me—"
 "No, fear!"

"If you and Figgins like to follow my lead, I'll show you how to get the upper hand of the invaders. Till then, I'm busy."

"You can keep men as long as you like!" said Blake wrathfully; and he marched out and slammed the door. Tom Merry laughed, and went on with his imposition.

The chimes of Study No. 6 met Blake in the lower passage. They met him with inquiring looks in answer to which Blake shook his head.

"They won't come into it!" asked Arthur Augustus. "I regarded that as wathah written of them, you know."
 "Tom Merry's got some wathah up his sleeve," said Blake. "It's waiting for to be licked, so that we shall be willing to follow his lead."
 "Like his cheek!" said Digby.

"Yash, wathah!"
 "We'll show him whether we shall fail or not," said Blake emphatically. "Hallo, here's the Co. 1 Tom Merry's not in, Figgis."

"We can do without him," said Figgins easily. "I've brought French and Pratt as well as Wynn, Kerr, and Marry. How many of you are there?"
 "Walch and Gore are going to join. We shall be a dozen in all."

"Good. Now for the plan. We've got to take care that the Grammarians don't get their door shut."

"Right. If we're locked out, we may as well give up the wathah."
 "We agreed that there was to be no leader."
 "Exactly."

"But, under the circumstances, I suppose I had better—"

"No!" said Blake, with emphasis. "Under the circumstances, I suppose you had better not."

Figgins grunted.

"Well, somebody must go in first and keep the Grammarians in talk, so that the rest may have a chance to rush in before the door can be slammed and locked."

"You and I can go in first together."

"Very well. You other fellows stand ready to rush in when I whistle."

"When I whistle, you mean, Figg?"

"Oh, rats! When we both whistle," said Figgins. "Is that understood? When you hear a whistle, you rush in, and smite the Grammarians hard and thigh."

"Yes, wathah."

"That's settled then. Come along, Blake. We're all here now, and there's no need to waste time. We go in together, inl!"

"That's right."

"You'd better leave the talking to me, or the Grammarians will get suspicious that there is something on."

"How curious! I was just thinking that you had better leave it to me for the very same reason."

"But Jove! You will never agree. Suppose you both take a back seat, and leave it to me, dear boys? In that case you would have the great satisfaction of knowing that the matter was in able hands, and likely to be dealt with in a more intelligent manner than if you swanged it yourselves."

"Oh, shut up, Goon!"

"Unshut the circus, I must refuse to shut up. I think—"

"Come along, kids," said Blake. And the juniors marched off, leaving Arthur Argemont still talking.

"Is it settled, who's to do the speaking?" whispered Figgins, when they had almost reached the door of Study No. 10.

"Yes, I, of course."

"Not at all."

"Go it together," said Digby impatiently. "Figgins can take top voice, and Blake can sing seconds, and you can both be happy."

The two disputants checked; but there was no time for further argument, as they were now at the door of Study No. 10.

Blake opened the door, and he and Figgins entered the room, the rest of the juniors remaining carefully out of sight.

Blake expected to find the Grammarians peacefully occupied with their prep, and did not know that a scout had been watching, and had brought Frank Monk news of the intended invasion at good time, and that the approaching footsteps along the passage had been listened to just inside the door.

"I say, you fellows—" began Blake.

"I say, you fellows—" began Figgins.

Neither of them got any farther.

There was a rush of feet, and Blake and Figgins were swept away by a tide of Grammarian juniors, and then the door was slammed and locked in a twinkling.

For a moment Blake and his comrades hardly realized what had happened. They struggled desperately in the grasp of the Grammarians, and yelled to their friends for aid, and the trick succeeded upon the juniors in the passage.

"But Jove, it's a swag!" exclaimed D'Arcy.

Kerr braked himself upon the door.

But the lock was strong, and the stout oak did not budge. The other juniors hurried up the Scotch's partner in the Co.,

and the door sleek and groined under crash after crash. But nothing short of a battering-ram could have opened it.

"But Jove, they've captured Figgins and Blake!" said D'Arcy. "Do you know, dear boys, I really think that they must have been on to the little game, and were prepared for us, all the heavenly time."

"That's pretty plain!" grunted Kerr.

"Yes, wathah, now that I point it out."

The Co. hammered at the door. They made plenty of noise, but no other result came from their efforts. They could hear the sounds of scuffling within the room, and the Scotch made them wild. Their heads were flying against hopeless odds, and they could land no aid.

"But Jove, it's too heavenly bad, you know?"

The noise within died away. The two Scouts had evidently been overpowered, and were prisoners in the hands of the Grammarians. Kerr hammered furiously on the door.

A voice came from within, in reply to the knocking—the voice of Frank Monk, accompanied by a gleeful chuckle.

"Hallo, out there! Do you want anything?"

"Yes," howled Kerr, "we want to come in!"

"Sorry; no dogs admitted!"

The juniors gave a hoarl of rage, and battered the door again. From within came a hoarl of laughter from the victorious Grammarians.

"If you want to see Blake and Figgins again," called out Frank Monk, through the keyhole, "you had better go round to the garden. We don't want to keep your rubbish here, and we'll chuck it out of the window to you."

"You—"

"You'd better get round and pick it up."

"But Jove, you know, it's a long way to the ground. Frank Monk, and you will probably break their heads if you let them see them out of the window!"

"I can't bother over little things like that," replied the voice through the keyhole. "You just go and gather up the points."

"I wonder that remark as brutal. But how extremely fortunate, dear boys, that it was not I who enticed that wren's nest!" said D'Arcy. "I might have been in the hands of those wulf waiters too—"

"I wish you were!" grunted Kerr. "Come on, kids, let's get outside!"

It was evidently useless to attempt to pass the door. That remained hermetically sealed against all attacks. The juniors left the house, and in a few minutes were gathered in the garden under the windows of Study No. 10, looking up curiously.

CHAPTER 15.

A Study in Black and Red.

"GET them!" grunted Frank Monk. He nodded pleasantly to Blake and Figgins, who were waiting in the grasp of the Grammarian juniors, and looking anything but pleasant.

"Get them—rather!" said Carboy. "They walked into the little trap like good little boys!"

"It was no kind of them!" snorted Lara. "They knew you should be disappointed if they didn't come, and so they came!"

"And they didn't know we knew," smiled Frank, "and they didn't think we were ready for them, and they were coming, and were quite on the get-rick. Oh, so?"

"What else, innocent kids they met?"

"How simple and unscrupulous!"

Blake and Figgins wrinkled. The chief of the Grammarians was hard to lose. It was true that they had walked into the trap unawares, but it was very gallant.

"JOY 6"

UNTIL I SAY "STOP!"

PLEASE RESERVE ME

THIS BOOK EVERY WEEK!

to be reminded of it. They wriggled, and stared at the Grammararians, and at each other.

"You see what's come of your confounded obstinacy, Figgins!" Blake growled.

"Miser!" exclaimed Figgins. "You're, you mean? If you had only had common sense enough to follow my lead!"

"If you had only been sane enough to know that you were bound to make a muck of it, if we gave you your head!"

"If you—"

"If you—"

"Listen to them!" said Monk. "This is rather amusing! Go on, Figgins! We've your say!"

Figgins shut his mouth.

"Haven't you any more to say, Blake?"

"No, king you!" growled Blake.

"Very well, as we'll get to business. Open the window, Lave, my boy—the middle one. Get out the rope, Carboy." Monk's orders were quickly obeyed.

Blake and Figgins, remaining in view, were tied together side by side, Blake's left side to Figgins's right, and their other arms were bound down by their sides. Then they were drawn up to the window, and forced out of it, mingling together upon the window-sill, held by the Grammararians from behind, so that they should not slip off.

The St. Jim's juniors were in the garden below by this time. There was a sheer wall of twenty feet under the window, and it was impossible for the Gs to make any attempt to effect a rescue. They could only stand and watch what passed above, and hurl threats at the grinning Grammararians.

Frank Monk kissed his hand to the juniors in the garden. Kerr and Digby shook their hats in salute, and Herries bowed an assent. Blake gave a roar at the badly-directed missile cast by him under the chin, and the Grammararians roared, too.

"Now, then," said Frank Monk, with a businesslike air, "get tight hold of the rope, kids, and don't let them dip. It would be a pity to break their poor little necks. Have you got the root ready?"

"Here it is," said Carboy, placing a huge tin pan full full of soot on the broad sill beside the helpless prisoners.

"Pour some water into it."

"Right ho!"

"And mix it up well."

Carboy obeyed. The prisoners watched him in sickening appreciation as the horrible mess in the basin was mixed up. It was soon done.

"Good!" said Frank Monk. "Give me the brush. Now, then, if you're ready, Blake and Figgins, I am!"

"Don't you dare to put any of that stuff on me!" gasped Blake.

"Don't you touch me with it!" yelled Figgins.

"Ha, ha! Why, I've had it mixed up for your special benefit. Which of you two is to take the lead?"

It was clear enough what Frank Monk meant by taking the lead. He had a handful of the black paste ready to lay on. Blake and Figgins had been disputing for the leadership only a short time before, but now both of them had a sudden attack of diffidence.

"Oh, Figgins!" said Blake promptly.

"Well, if you can't settle the point, I'll start alphabetically," said Monk. "B comes before F, so here goes!"

He drew the sooty brush gently down Blake's countenance, from the middle of the forehead, over the nose and mouth, over the chin, and finished at the collar. The effect was startling: The black line divided Blake's face into two halves, and even his friends below could not help grinning at the curious effect it produced.

"You—you beast!" gasped Blake. "Just you wait

till—er—ooooh!" The end of the brush had come into his mouth, and he gasped and shut it quickly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Grammararians.

And from below came a cackle.

"Blas, Joe, that is very wuffy on Blake, you know, but it really looks very funny! I am walth interested to see how Figgins will look."

"Oh, are you?" growled Kerr.

"Veah, wathah! Peay don't push against me in that wude manah, Fatty Wyan. You inconvenience me, and I am afraid you will disawverage my tin."

"I'll disawverage your features if you don't look out!" granted Fatty Wyan.

There was a fresh yell of laughter from the Grammararians.

Frank Monk had divided Figgins's countenance into two equal halves in the same way, and the effect was quite as comical as on Blake's case.

Frank Monk appeared now to be warming to his work. He painted in transverse lines, and then laid down the brush. Another brush and a bottle of red ink were next forthcoming, and Frank filled in all the spaces left unshaded with red. Arthur Augustus couldn't resist another cackle at the result.

"Blas, Joe, that it really artistic!"

Blake and Figgins were wriggling with rage.

"Are you done?" asked Figgins, in a choked voice.

"Yes, nearly," said Monk cheerfully. "If you only got to mix a little soot in your hair, Figgins, and then I shall be finished."

"If you—"

"Don't you like the idea?"

"I'll break you into little pieces if you—"

"Ha, ha! Here goes! I'll mix it!"

And soot and water were mixed freely with Figgins's rather lengthy locks, and then the same kind office was done for Blake.

"Blas Joe!" came D'Arcy's comment from below. "That looks fanorahy, but evah! Do you know, deah boys, I really wonderah that Frank Monk has a sense of humah, I do really!"

The next moment the swell of the School House gave a yell.

In his interest in the proceedings he had advanced incautiously near the window, and Monk, being now finished with the soot and water, suddenly hurled the remainder of the contents of the pan over D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus received the shower full upon his head, and was transformed with startling suddenness into a very good imitation of a pligger moustrel.

The juniors burst into a roar.

"Oh!" gasped D'Arcy. "Monk, you bewild brute, I will give you a fearful thrashing for that! Blas Joe, I will break every bone in your body!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kerr. "Do you think that's feany, you ass?"

"No, I don't! I regard it as a wude and beauty joke, and I shall give Frank Monk a fearful thrashing—"

"He's got a sense of humour, though, hasn't he?" grinned Digby.

"No, I had to see anything of the kind."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus, gasping with wrath, dashed away in search of a wash and a change of clothes. Frank Monk waved his hand to the juniors below the window.

"We're done with these old things now," he said. "You can take your rubbish away. Lower the young assen down, kids!"

The Grammararians gently pushed Blake and Figgins off the sill, and lowered the ropes, and the two juniors descended swinging to the ground.

There they walked awkwardly away, still tied together by their arms. The affair had got wind by this time, and

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"Sit down!" roared Tom Merry, showing Arthur Augustus into his seat. "Sit down, and keep there, you duffer!"

follows were crowding into the garden to see the fun, and the sight of Blake and Figgins raised roars of laughter on every side. From the windows of Study No. 10 the Grammarians yelled their merriment, and the Saints could not help joining in it.

"Oh," gasped Blake, "I shall never get over this! Can't some of you cackling Mists get us loose!"

"Dutle me, somebody!" groaned Figgins. "Oh, do stop that silly cackling, and set a fellow loose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you untie me?"

"It's a pity to spoil a good joke!" grinned Gore. "Don't untie them, kids. Let 'em walk round St. Jim's like that, and give the school a treat."

But the Co. were not likely to adopt Gore's suggestion. Kerr and Digby opened their pocket-knives and cut the ropes, and Blake and Figgins stood free. They dashed off to escape the ridicule of the crowd, but the fellows were not easily eluded. A laughing crowd followed them, and fresh spectators seemed to start up at every step, and Blake and Figgins found no relief till they got into a bath-room, and locked themselves up there.

It was some time before they were seen again, and then their countenances bore very visible traces of hard scrubbing, and their hair was extremely untidy.

CHAPTER 17.

Tom Merry Takes the Lead!

TOM MERRY threw aside his pen with a sigh of relief. He had finished the long imposition, and he jumped up to stretch his legs. The door of the study opened the next moment, and Lowther and Manners came in. They were chuckling.

Tom Merry looked at them inquiringly. Something had evidently happened to amuse the chums of the Shell highly.

"Well, what's the news?" asked Tom. "Have Blake and Figgins been tackling the Grammarians, and got the worst of it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Lowther. "You've hit it! I wish you could have seen Figgins a little while back; his face was a study in black and red—black soot and red ink!"

"Frank Mook has some rather good ideas!" observed

Manners. "No must have known they were coming, and he had everything ready for them!"

"But what has happened?" demanded Tom Merry.

With many a chuckle, the chums of the Shell explained. Tom Merry was chuckling, too, before they had finished. The door of the study opened as the Terrible-Three were shouting with laughter, and Blake locked in.

"Hallo, what are you cackling about?" he exclaimed.

"You," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh, haven't you done grinning over that story yet? You fellows haven't made so good a show against the Grammar cads that you can afford to cackle at our—our little accident!" said Blake crossly.

"My dear chap," said Tom Merry, "as soon as you're willing to follow our lead, we'll undertake to get the Grammar cads down!"

"That's what I've come here to speak about."

"Go on, kid."

"Have you really got a whoose, for getting the better of the Grammar cads, or were you only gawking?" demanded Blake.

"Would you rather have a thick ear or a black eye?" was Tom Merry's polite counter-question.

"Well, you've got a whoose, then!"

"Yes, of course I have."

"What is it?"

"A secret," said Tom Merry blandly.

Blake could not help grinning.

"Well, what I want to say is, that if you can undertake to give the Grammar cads the kybock, we're ready to follow your lead; that's all!"

"Good; that's settled, then?"

"Let us know when you're going to start, that's all," said Blake, as he nodded and went on down the passage.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I thought they would soon sound in time," he remarked. "I wonder whether Figgins & Co. will look at the matter in the same light!"

"If they don't we'll do it without them," said Monty Lowther. "We want to work the whoose to-night, while the Grammar cads are on time guard. After what they've done, they don't look for a fresh row."

"That's so. Hallo, here's Figgins!"

The chief of the New House juniors came into the study. He was looking rather sheepish, and his hair was in great disorder.

"I say, Tom Merry," he began.
"Well, my son, what is it?" asked the hero of the Shell cheerfully.

"What's this I've heard about your having a whizzo up against the Grammarians?"

"I really don't know what you've heard, Figgins; you ought to know that better than I do," said Tom Merry.

"Oh, don't you! Have you really got a plan?"

"Yes, really."

"A good one?"

"Excellent."

"And you think you'll be able to give the Grammar case the bye-bye?"

"I can't say for sure," said Figgins eagerly.

"I can't say for sure."

"Then you'll want to see us—the Co. and myself—we're with you all the way. Anything to stop those confounded Grammar men from crowing over us?"

"It's a bargain! Mind, you come into the Co. as followers."

"That's understood."

"Then be in the garden, behind the window of Study No. 10, in a quarter of an hour," said Tom Merry. "We'll join you there, and the show will begin."

Figgins looked puzzled.

"In the garden? What are we going to do there?"

"That's for your leader to decide," said Tom Merry lightly. "A follower's place is to ask his leader questions, Figgins."

"Oh, don't you begin to get on side, you School House rotter!"

"Is that proper language to use to your leader?" said Tom Merry severely.

"Oh, rot! I mean that's all right. I'll be there with the Co., though I'm blasted if I see the whole you're going to do."

"You'll see soon enough, my son!"

And Figgins departed, looking mystified.

"Now then," said Tom Merry, "there's no time to be lost. We've got to make sure first that Monk & Co. are in Study No. 10, and then get the door fastened up the outside. You can see to that, Lowther, while Manners goes and gets Figgins's long ladder, and I see to the box."

"Right-ho!"

And the Terrible Three hurried out of the study. There was no time to be lost.

There was little doubt that the Grammarians would remain in their own quarters for a while. After the defeat of the combined juniors, both School House and New House were eager for vengeance, and Frank Monk was pretty certain to keep on the safe side of the door of Study No. 10 till the excitement died away.

In a quarter of an hour Figgins & Co. came into the garden, under the window of Study No. 10. The dark was beginning over St. Jim's, but there was light enough for Tom Merry's purpose. The Terrible Three were already on the spot.

It was darker indoors than out, and the blinds of Study No. 10 were drawn and the light gleamed through them. No one, naturally, was looking on, and the Grammarians remained in blissful ignorance of the fact that enemies were gathering below.

Study No. 5 were already on the ground. If Argy had bathed himself, changed his clothes, and put on a clean collar, and looked as neat as a new pin again. But the wall of the School House was in an exaggerated state of mind, ready for anything. One of his favorite valets had been quite spoiled by the shower of soap and water, and a thing like that was not to be easily forgotten or forgiven. If Argy was in a mood for vengeance.

"Blissed if I know what the game is!" Figgins remarked to Blake.

"Do you?"

Blake shook his head.

"No, but if it ends in smoke, I shall have something to say to Tom Merry, that's all!"

"So shall I," said Figgins; "something emphatic!"

"Hallo, what are you going to do with that ladder, Lowther?"

"I'm not going to eat it!" said Lowther. "Look, and you'll see!"

Two or three fellows gave a hand with the ladder, and it was reared up against the middle window-ail. Lowther ascended it nimbly and fastened the top with a cord to a staple, which he drove into the wall just below the sill with

a single blow of a mallet. There was a sound of an exclamation within the room; the blow of the mallet had been heard. Lowther slithered quickly down the ladder.

"Quick, Tom!"

"Be ready!" said Tom Merry quickly.

He came towards the ladder at a run. He was trailing a garden-hose behind him, and the juniors gazed at it in amazement.

"My word!" ejaculated Digby. "Is that the little game?"

"That Jerry; I regard that as wipple!"

Tom Merry, with his thumb over the nose of the hose, ascended the ladder quickly. Manners ran up behind him to lend him aid. Lowther looked triumphantly at Figgins & Co. and Study No. 5.

"Well, what do you think of that?" he demanded.

"You're going to give the Grammarians a wash!"

"That's the idea."

"Is the water on in the hose?"

"Of course it is, lathered!"

"Oh, I don't know about courses, it would be just like you fellows to forget a thing like that! But are you sure the Grammarians are in the room?"

"We made sure of that long ago."

"But they'll soon slither out when the water begins to play on them," said Blake. "It won't be much of a job!"

Lowther chuckled.

"They'll find it pretty hard to slither out of Study No. 10 in a hurry," he remarked; "that is, unless they go up the chimney!"

"Why can't they go out of the door?"

"Because it's fastened on the outside."

"Who fastened it?"

"I did, with a couple of screws they can't possibly get loose."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Figgins. "It's a jolly good scheme, and no mistake; unless they chuck Tom Merry off the ladder!"

"They won't do that in a hurry, while he's got the hose-pipe!" said Blake. "My hat; this is a really good jape for you Shell bowdler!"

"I'm going up the ladder to lend a hand," said Figgins; "Tom Merry will wait holding on if they get near enough to push him."

And Figgins ascended the ladder after Manners.

"Hold on the ladder, some of you," said Lowther.

"They'll try to shift it, so put your weight on it!"

"What-ho!"

And some of the Co. crowded on the ladder to make it weighty, and others held tightly to its sides. There was not much chance of the Grammarians dodging the ladder.

Meanwhile, the Grammarians had opened the window.

They wondered what had happened outside, and Carboy had come to investigate. The wind shot up, and the window was opened; and at the same moment Tom Merry removed his thumb from the nose.

Swish!

A powerful jet of water struck the amazed Carboy under the chin and fairly hurled him backwards.

He gave a yell as he tumbled over, and the other Grammarians jumped up in amazement, and Frank Monk rushed to the window.

"What the—?"

He got no further!

The jet of water splashed in his face, and he staggered back and went over. There was a forward rush of the Grammarians, but it was soon changed into a backward one, but retreat did not save them.

Tom Merry was fairly on the war-path now!

The water came in from the big hose in a continual stream, and there was no escaping it. The Grammarians rushed hither and thither like scared rabbits, but there was no slaking that deadly stream of water.

"My word!" gasped Frank Monk, staggering to his feet.

"Let's get out!"

He sprang to the door and tore at the handle. But the door did not budge. Monk dragged at it, and dragged at it again; and the handle came off in his frantic dragging; but the strong, oak door remained firmly fast.

He reeled back in dismay.

"We can't get out!"

"They've fastened it on the outside!" shrieked Carboy.

Monk grunted his tooth.

"Then let's push the window!"

"Come on, then!"

There was evidently nothing else to be done. The Grammarians, angry and excited, followed their leader, and dashed desperately to the window through which the steams of cold water played ceaselessly upon them.

ANSWERS

CHAPTER I.

Tom Merry Wins.

TOM MERRY did not finish. He did not turn a hair as the Grammarians rushed forward. He knew the power he had in his hands. Stepping back a little from the sill, he directed the full force of the water upon the advancing jaspers.

The powerful flood dashing to their faces forced the most determined of the Grammarians to halt. It simply knocked them over, and they went staggering back in confusion. They called, and called forward again, only to be driven backward once more by the force of the torrent.

Yells and threats and gasps filled Study No. 10, and the Grammarians, most of them losing their heads by this time, were unable to find its helplessly.

Even Frank Monk was at a loss. Twice again he tried to face the storm, each time the tearing jet of water hurled him backwards. He was soaked to the skin, and the water was running from his hair in streams.

"Stop it!" he gasped.

Tom Merry shut off the water.

"Keep your distance, then!" he exclaimed.

The Grammarians were not likely to fall to do that. They looked as far as they could from the middle window.

The juniors below were chuckling gaily. Figgins and Mansure were laughing so much that they came near falling off the ladder. Blake had climbed an elm to get a good view of the interior of Study No. 10, and he clung to the branch laughing hysterically. The tables had been turned upon the Grammarians completely. They were quite at the mercy of Tom Merry.

"Stop it!" howled the Grammar youths. "We make it pay!"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Do you?" he said. "We've got something to say about that!"

"Yaaa, wathah!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly. "Aftah spoilin' a fellow's waistcoat, I wogard it as frahful thack to talk about makin' it pay!"

"You've got to toe the line, my infants," said Tom Merry solemnly. "Keep your distance, please, while your uncle is talking to you."

"What do you want us to do, confound you!"

"You give in, first of all!"

"I suppose so!" growled Monk. "We're drenched to the skin. You've about flooded the room. Is this what you call playing the game?"

"Yes, rather. Quite as good as making up a fellow's face in black and red."

Frank Monk laughed.

"Well, I suppose it is. Go ahead!"

"Do you give in? No supposing; but you ee so."

"Ye-ee-ee-ee."

The answer seemed to be born from Monk. It went sorely against the grain with him to give in. But there was nothing else to be done.

"Good! Do you all give in?"

"No!" growled two or three obstinate youths.

"Very well."

Swish! Tom Merry turned the water on again. The flood sought out the Grammarians in every corner. Monk gave a roar.

"Stop it! We give in!"

"All of you!"

"Yes, yes, yes!" And this time there was not a dissentient voice.

"Good! Tom Merry shut off the water. "Now, then, we're willing to make it pay on one condition, and one condition only."

"Oh, go on! What's the condition?"

"You've got to admit yourselves hopelessly licked—"

"We won't!"

"Eh! What?"

"Oh, shut up! Yes; we'll admit that if you like!"

"Good! And you've got to promise to be good little boys—"

"We won't!" yelled a dozen voices.

"Yes, you will. You'll promise to be good little boys, and always to behave yourselves nicely while you remain at St. Jim's; always treat us with great respect, and never, never to have the cheek to jape anybody belonging to this school."

"We won't!"

"Is that final?"

"Yes, you rattee—yes!"

Tom Merry wasted no more time in words. He let the water go again, and the flooding of Study No. 10 recommenced. Monk, Lane, and Carbay made a desperate rush to the window. The jet of water hurled them back. Blinded

and breathless, they had to grab it up. But the water did not stop. It followed them. The room was almost swimming, and a flood was running out under the door into the passage. There was great concern to be a terrible row over the affair. But Tom Merry did not care. He was on the war-path, and he had his reputation to maintain. The results could be thought of afterwards.

"Oh, stop it!" yelled Monk at last. "We can't stand this!"

"Is it surrender?"

"Ye-ee-ee!"

"Good! Open the window on the right, and address your remarks to the respected members of St. Jim's below, and repeat what I tell you."

Frank Monk hesitated for a moment. But there was no alternative, and he slowly opened the end window, and the St. Jim's juniors below greeted him with a delighted yell.

"Now, then," said Tom Merry, "start! Repeat after me what I tell you!"

"Oh, go on, confound you!"

"Respected Saints—"

"Respected Saints," mumbled Frank Monk.

"Louder, please!"

"Respected Saints!" bawled Frank Monk. And the delighted juniors below shouted "Hear, hear!"

The crowd in the garden was increasing in numbers now, and half the Lower Forms of St. Jim's were there to hear what the Grammarian leader had to say.

"We are only a set of silly Grammarian snobs—"

"I won't!"

"You know what you'll get if you don't?"

"Hed on! We are only a set of silly Grammarian snobs!" yelled Frank Monk furiously.

And the juniors of St. Jim's yelled "Hear, hear!"

"And we know it's like our cheek to set up to jape anybody belonging to St. Jim's—"

Frank Monk withed and repeated the words.

"And we know it's like our cheek to set up to jape anybody belonging to St. Jim's—"

"And we deserve the licking we've got, and we promise it future to be good little boys, and very respectful and obedient to our superiors, the juniors of St. Jim's," went on Tom Merry calmly.

"I—I—I— All right, I'm going on!" And Frank Monk repeated the words, and the crowd in the garden yelled again.

"And we hope you young gentlemen of St. Jim's will kindly allow us to exist, and not be too hard on us while we stay here," said Tom Merry.

"I—I won't! Yes, I will! And we hope you young gentlemen of St. Jim's will allow us to exist, and will not be too hard upon us while we stay here!" growled Frank Monk.

"Hear, hear!"

"Anything more, Tom Merry, you beast?"

"No; that's about enough. Do all you fellows say the same!"

"No-yes, Yes!"

"Good! Now you can dry yourselves, if you can! We make it pay," said Tom Merry graciously. "We are letting you down lightly."

"Yaaa, wathah!"

Tom Merry unfastened the latch of the top and descended. The Grammarians jumped into the window, hailing yells and cat-calls after him. Tom Merry made a motion with the handle of the bow, and they disappeared in a twinkling. The juniors of St. Jim's yelled with laughter.

"By Jove, there will be a fearful row over this!" said Figgins, chuckling.

"Wasn't it?" said Blake. "We've licked the Grammarians!"

"Yaaa, wathah! I weally consist that they will regah be able to wipe out a defeat like that, Josh boys! They have sewendohed publicly, and they can't get over that. Tom-Mowwy, I congratulate you! This match has been overwud out almost as well as I could have done. It's grand, lad! Joyo!"

There was a row over the occurrence, but the juniors who had in fact the music faced it bravely. They did not care. They had licked the Grammarians, and made their own up to it, and during the remainder of the Grammarian stay at St. Jim's, the strangers within G's gates were noticeably less impetuous. Tom Merry had won at last, and St. Jim's had indisputably got the better of the invaders.

THE END.

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[Now go on with the story.]

Mopps Gets Hurt!

Venus was making his way along the passage past the dormitories. He wanted to meet Cyril, and he did not want to meet Graft the bully, so that his movements were cautious.

The bully's door was not closed, and on the principle of a child in the dark who has conjured up a ghost in a certain room, Venus was just about to make a timid peep that dashed upon when Graft came out, seized him by the ear, and wrenched him into the study.

"Why did you not come to me when Snigg gave you the order?" demanded the bully, glaring at him in the manner he had got when desirous of terrifying small boys.

"Look at dat, now!" exclaimed Venus, looking as innocent as he possibly could. "I'll go and ask dat boy why he—"

"No, you wun't, you little black beast!" scolded Graft, giving Venus a blow on the head with his fist, then muttering fiercely as he found it painful to his knuckles. You could not hurt Venus's head with an ordinary fist. "You will stay where you are, you little demon, and get my tea."

"I duno how dat has got to be done," growled Venus. "You dare puse de bell for my own tea, and de door would not like it if I did not go in to tea—neither would I."

Graft made no verbal reply. He merely locked the door and got down his cane.

"Get my tea!" he cried, giving Venus a cut across the shoulders that caused him to leap into the air and utter a howl.

"Here, steady wid dat cane, Graft! I 'spect I can get your tea straight widout dat slapping."

"If I have any more of your insolence, I shall lay you across that table and lash you till you howl for mercy. Get my tea!"

"I'd much rader get de tea dan de de yowling," observed Venus, setting about his task. "I don't mind getting de tea, but I do mind going widout my own. I suppose, Graft, you will be de hab tea after you has done?"

"Do you really, you stupid little black beast? You need be an utter idiot if you imagine any such thing. You shall

see me eat my tea, if that is any satisfaction to you, and while I am doing it you shall make me hot-buttered toast. Now, look alive, unless you want waking up with this cane!"

Venus set about his task, and he was doing it remarkably well, but Graft was in a very bad temper, and when he got like that there was no pleasing him.

"I don't want all that tea put in the pot, you little idiot!" he scolded. "Take half of it out, and just you be careful that the water is boiling, or it will be the worse for you."

Venus was inclined to be nervous, because the bully was accompanying his orders with a few stinging cuts. However, he filled the china teapot, which was a large one, right to the top, and then carried it to the table in one hand, while he carried a plate of hot buttered toast in the other. Then Venus placed the plate of toast in front of Graft; but, alas, as he did so, he forgot about the teapot on the other hand, and as he slightly tipped it up, a stream of scalding water poured down the back of the bully's legs.

The howl of pain and fury that the bully uttered as scalded Venus that he flung the teapot to the ground and fled round the table.

This was unfortunate, especially for Graft. The teapot caught him in the chest, spouted boiling tea all over him, and then fell to the floor with a crash that gave the impression a new one would be required before Graft had his tea.

For some moments the bully kept about, howling with the pain of the thing, then he quieted down with a suddenness that should have made Venus suspicious.

A smile came over his sunken face, and his voice was soft and as sweet as he could make it.

"Well, it can't be helped," he exclaimed, looking about as amiable as a crocodile that is going to seize its prey. "Come here, my lad. Accidents will happen."

"Dat's just what I'm thinking 'bout, boss," answered Venus, keeping at the other side of the table. "I don't want another accident to happen, so if it's all de same to you, I will keep here or 'yehabouts, while you keep dere or dereabouts."

"Don't be silly, Venus!"

"I ain't going to be so silly as to get 'hear you for de next two-free days, if I can help it. My impression 'bout you is dat you'm scalded yourself, and your temper is always more-less rocky. I'm inclined to tink dat temper is something like de tea you hab 'yehab. It's sort ob too hot to be comfortable."

The study was quite a small one, and Graft must certainly have caught Venus sooner or later, therefore it may seem strange that the bully did not make a rush at him, and take the vengeance he was fully determined to have. But Graft remembered a previous occasion when he had chased Venus round his study. He certainly caught him, but not before the table was overturned, and all the ornaments on the mantelpiece smashed; and not being desirous of a recurrence of that little incident, he decided not to give chase.

"I am not going to hurt you," declared Graft.

"I know you ain't, boss, if I can possibly help it."

"Well, get my tea ready, my lad."

"I don't believe dat teapot will hold hot water."

"I have another one here—a metal one. That wha't got broken, will it?"

"Thought say out, I'm mighty certain, it won't get broken by me, 'cos I ain't coming near it; boss, I ain't coming near you, and dat amounts to de same ting."

"Look here, Venus, I am not going to stand this nonsense." I have told you that the little accident is of no consequence. All I know is that I ain't bodering 'bout da accident at all, but if you think I'm wrong, you may as well say so now as when you get to bed. You can't say I'm wrong if you don't say so now. You can't say I'm wrong if you don't say so now."

"If I wanted to hurt you I could easily do it." "If you might, but does would be a bit of an upset first. 'Bout da table would go there for da start, den I might get hold of a fork to use for pridding purposes. Oh, does would be a lot of things 'bout before you might see, 'cos I should dodge under de table first, and ober de table afterwards, and dat would be almost certain to break some ob your crocks."

"Do you think you can defy me?" demanded Graft, showing his teeth, as his lips twitched with suppressed fury. "I durned, but I'm mighty certain I shall hurt you if you start hurting me. Cyril always says dat's de best way to set wid a bully, and dat boy has got some very good ideas. Yah, yah, yah! Can't be laughin' when I link ob some ob his ideas."

"Are you going to get my tea?" "Nonsense! At least, I ain't going to get any more ob it den I hab done already. You can get de rest ob it yourself."

"Very well!" exclaimed Graft. "If you defy me, you leave me no alternative except to make an example of you, and you will only have yourself to thank for the awful thrashing you will receive. I am not in any hurry, as you can stay where you are; but you have to remember that I will be impossible for you to leave this study until you look de done. Now, then, you other little demoes, I'll make you suffer for what you have done."

"Well, if I hab got to wait here, you ought to give me my tea," growled Venus. "I don't like missing my meals." "You shall have neither tea nor supper to-night. I will keep you here all the evening, and then when I catch you I will give you the worst flogging you have ever had in your life. You have had two or three pretty good ones from me already, but they are nothing to the thrashing I will give you for this. I have a good mind to hurl this poker at your stupid head."

"Dat's a sort ob game dat two can play at," observed Venus. "I don't 'spect plates would hurt as much as a poker; all de same, if you start frowning things about, I shall do de same, and den dere will be some serious breakage come. Yah, yah, yah! It ain't impossible dat you may hurt me before we hab finished de argument, but I'm mighty certain dat I shall hurt your property, and I wouldn't be a bit surprised if I hurt you at de same time. 'Cos I shall fling de plates and tings at your head. I shall uproot de table for de start if you get chasing me."

Graft's fury knew no bounds. As he ate his meal he kept glaring at the daring Venus in a manner that ought to have frightened, but it did not appear to have that effect at all. It made him laugh. The fact is, he knew that his rage was in an awkward position, and had quite made up his mind that he would get hurt; but he was not the sort of fool to worry himself about the future, because he always found something would turn up.

The time passed by, and the unfortunate Venus, who had a prodigious appetite, was feeling very hungry. To see Graft eating hot buttered toast with strawberry jam on it was highly tantalizing; but although Venus made one or two attempts to help himself, Graft was always too quick for him.

At last the bully finished his meal; and then he lighted a cigarette, which was against the rules, but he never bothered himself about rules.

Seating himself in an easy chair, close to the blazing fire, and taking up a novel, Graft commenced to read, while every now and then he glanced up at his prisoner, to make sure that he was not up to any mischief.

Venus remained as patient as he could under the trying circumstances. At eight o'clock the roll would be called, and he quite hoped that Graft would release him by that hour arrived; but such was not the case, and his value was becoming desperate.

No candles were left on the table, or he would certainly have made a bold bid for some of them, and Venus was contemplating making a surrender, when someone tried the door.

"Who is there?" demanded Graft. "Me—Moppe. That busted nigger has been and broke bounds."

"No he hasn't, Moppe," answered Graft; "he is here. I want you to catch him for me, and then we will give him one of the worst lickings that he has ever had in his life. I'll break every bone in the little brute's body. I don't care if I maim him. Only you help me catch him, and then I will show you what sort of revenge we will have on

the little beast. No masters will be about now, and marks don't show on his black hide. Wait till I select the dose."

Now this was extremely awkward for the unfortunate Venus. He had already had several tastes of Graft's brutality, and was determined to take no more of them, if it could possibly be avoided.

He crept to the window and unlocked it, as Graft was withdrawing the dose. Then Venus sang that window up and commenced to scramble out; but Graft had already got the door open, though it gave without the saying that Venus's movements had been very rapid.

The bully, who had his case in his hand, sprang across the study, and seized Venus by the middle, while Moppe seized the other one, and if ever a nigger boy was in an unfortunate position, it was Venus. They dragged him slightly back, and then the case descended, while Venus's voice awoke the echoes.

Moppe received a kick in his waistcoat that caused him to release his hold, and on the floor and burn blue in the face. Venus received a few more strokes from the case, then the boot on his released foot caught the bully in the stomach, and hurt him so much that he released his hold. Venus gave a forward plunge and dropped on his head on the stone; but that did not trouble him. He was on his feet in an instant, and darted away into the darkness of the night.

"You must have been an idiot to let him go like that!" scolded Graft, dabbing his lips with his handkerchief, and examining the result.

"But me! Talk about letting him—go—ho! Uh! He's kicked me in the stomach!"

The information gave Graft pure pleasure. He liked to know that he was not the only one who was hurt. But he skillfully concealed his pleasure.

"Look here, Moppe," he said; "we will get our own back before—"

"Oh, my stomach!"

"Never mind that."

"Uh! Not mind it! I'd like to know how I can help minding it. Oh dear—oh dear! I don't believe I shall survive this 'ere. Oh, my stomach!"

"We will pay him."

"He's paid my stomach."

"Den't you think you had better get off the floor! It would look rather ridiculous if a master entered the place, and judging by the row that little demoe made, I would not be surprised if a master came to see what was the matter. I caught him one or two, Moppe, and—"

"He caught me one. Oh, my stomach!"

"We that can't be beat; but you have the consolation of knowing that he had given you the worst flogging he has ever had in his life, and he has had some bad ones. I know, because I gave them to him. Now, you be off, and leave the black top to me."

Moppe waddled from the room, and the last words Graft heard him utter were:

"Oh, my stomach!"

"Golly! Dat was what you might call a lucky escape!" growled Venus. "I wish it had been made before den. Signs had descended, but den you can't hab eberthing you wish, dough I got two free tings more den I wished dat journey. Golly! Ain't I hungry, and dere ain't no de slightest chance ob getting anything to eat to-day. I wish dere was a new boy with a cane who was fond ob niggers; but den dere ain't. Nonsense! I wish I shall hab to wait till morning, and then I'm going to do dat I durned. I like my meals out ob regular. Must find Cyril, and see if he can tink ob something to get ober de difficulty. He's a wonderful boy to tink. When I had better go to de dormitory, dough I ain't at all likely to find him dere so soon as den. He always comes up last."

It so happened that on this occasion Cyril came up first. When Venus did not answer he came at roll-call, the master had long for Moppe, and questioned him. That worthy, who hated the very sight of Venus, declared that he had broken bounds, and he explained the matter from his point of view by saying that the doctor had rung his bell, and that Venus must have broken bounds in his absence. Now, although the master thought this quite likely, knowing the playful ways of Venus, Cyril did not, for a simple reason that if his owner had intended to break bounds, he would certainly have informed Cyril of the fact. Thus he went to look for Venus, and not finding him about the college, entered the dormitory, and was the first in it, which was quite a record for him.

"Well, my snow-white lip," exclaimed Cyril, "where did you get to for roll-call?"

"I wasn't dere, Cyril."

"So I noticed, and it grieved me greatly, though not as much as it grieved the master, and Billy has got a hundred lines for answering to your name. He excused himself by

(Continued)



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saying that he knew you were not far, and thought it better for that reason to notify that you were present. The voice did it, and when Billy was questioned as to how he knew you, was not far, he answered that you were generally knocking around. This did not satisfy the master, neither did it satisfy Billy, because he got a hundred lines for kindness. Where have you been, you extremely tiresome boy?"

Then Venus told his story, and Cyril listened calmly. He would have listened quite as calmly had Venus told a much more exciting tale, because Cyril was never anything else than calm.

"Well, it does not matter," he observed.
"Golly! You don't view de matter from de proper point of view," grumbled Venus. "I ain't had anything to eat except a brandyball since dinner."

"Well, you will get breakfast to-morrow."
"I know dat, Cyril—I know it quite well. And if I am anything like lucky I shall get dinner free weeks farther on dan dat; but, don't you see, I don't want to wait without foot till dat dinner free weeks later is making its appearance, and it seems to me dat a mighty good food is de only ting dat would do de child any good."

"Well, that is rather funny," observed Cyril. "It so happens that to-morrow is my mother's birthday, and I was thinking of sending the shape a supper in honour of the occasion. Now, I was going to stand it to-morrow night, and of course not tell them the reason. See? They would chaff a bit, and I am not going to allow my mother's name to be brought into any chaff at my mother's expense. So don't mention the cause. But, seeing that it makes no difference whether we keep the party to-night or to-morrow night, why, we will have the supper to-night. Of course, we shall have to break bounds to get it. Do you mind that?"

"Not a bit, so long as de masters don't mind."
"Well, of course they would mind if they found out—so would we—but, then, we are not going to let them find out, if we can help it. We will break bounds this very night, and on that same occasion we will have one of the most sumptuous suppers that were ever brought into this college. I have the rope to enable us to draw the hamper over the wall, and I have the tin to buy the supper with, so that the rest is comparatively easy. All you have got to do is to get to bed, and say that you could not come to roll-call because you were on fagging duty with Graft. He will confirm that, if he is not an ass, and there the matter will end, unless we get caught to-night, a thing that I particularly wish to avoid, for obvious reasons."

"Will risk all dat if I can get some supper," declared Venus.

"Well, get to bed. You had better attend, in case of accidents, but keep your clothes handy. I have my lantern, but we don't want to use that till less we are compelled."

The boys soon came trooping up, and they were greatly surprised to find the chums in bed, seeing that they were invariably the last. Cyril explained matters by murmuring the magic word: "Supper!"

That did it. A more orderly dormitory than that one on that particular night there was not in the great college. Every boy appeared to be doing his level best to get to sleep, and there was not a single boy who was not quite determined to keep awake. When Cyril gave a promise, they knew that he would keep it, if it were at all possible. Even

Snigg, who hated Cyril and Venus intensely, determined to have his share of that supper, even if he inadvertently let out on the following morning that his deadly foe had broken bounds.

A monitor came round to see lights out, and he wondered at the quietness at the dormitory. Perhaps he made a guess, for he could remember the time when he was a small boy himself at that college. At any rate, he said nothing, being an easy-going, good-natured sort of a fellow.

"Now is the witching hour!" murmured Cyril, getting out of bed and hurrying on his clothes, an example that Venus quickly followed.

They had to pass Mopps' door, and although it was open, with a view to watching for such fugitives, they hoped they had got past without being seen.

To scale the wall was an easy matter; it was more difficult to get back again, but that was a matter for future consideration.

"I don't think de man saw us," observed Venus.
"There's no telling," answered Cyril, who knew Mopps' playful ways. "He is quite capable of letting us past out, and catching us when we come back, so that he can have the pleasure of getting us a licking."

"Well, I'm in dat state ob hunger dat I would rader hab supper to-night and a licking to-morrow dan no supper to-night and no licking to-morrow."

"Very well; we are certain of the supper now."
"Unless de hamper gets confiscated."

"My dear Venus; I said we—meaning you and I. We take all the risks, and find the money, so that we are entitled to the supper. Of course, we shall try to let the other fellows participate, but we shall eat our supper at the back shop."

This favourite establishment was comparatively close to the college, and Mrs. Jones, the widow who kept it, did a roaring trade. Cyril was decidedly her best customer, because he always had plenty of money, and invariably paid cash.

"Oh, you had boys, to break bounds!" she exclaimed, smiling at them.

Venus is simply starving. Mrs. Jones: he has had nothing to eat since his dinner. You notice how thin and white the poor little brute looks."

"Why, you couldn't have come in at a better moment," exclaimed the old lady. "It just happens that I have got to-morrow's baking in the oven, and the things are due to a turn. Come into the kitchen. What do you say to hot veal-and-ham pie, to commence with?"

"Golly, golly," exclaimed Venus, "I dunno when I felt so happy!"

"Start him on a down or so," exclaimed Cyril. "You might start me also, because he will like to be kept company; and have some yourself, to show us there is nothing injurious in them."

"So I will, Master Cyril, and it's like your usual kindness."

"Eh! Oh, that's all right! We shall want a lot of ginger-pop. You see, we are going to have a supper to-night, only Mopps has got a habit of what he calls confederating the grub, and so we are going to have our supper here."

Mrs. Jones was a good business woman. She knew that Cyril was accustomed to having everything very nice, and so she laid her table with a snowy cloth, washed by her own hands, and smelling of fresh air. Then she placed a real silver fork and teaspoon, both rather the worse for wear, at the head of the table. The teaspoons were for show, although Cyril had often seen it before. Steel forks had to serve for herself and Venus, but that worthy was in such a state of hunger that he only needed his ivory.

The pies were delicious, the stone ginger-beer excellent; and as the chums were very hungry—especially Venus—the hot meat-pies quickly disappeared. Then hot jam-puffs were served up, and it is unnecessary to say that the supper was enjoyed.

(Another long instalment next Thursday.)



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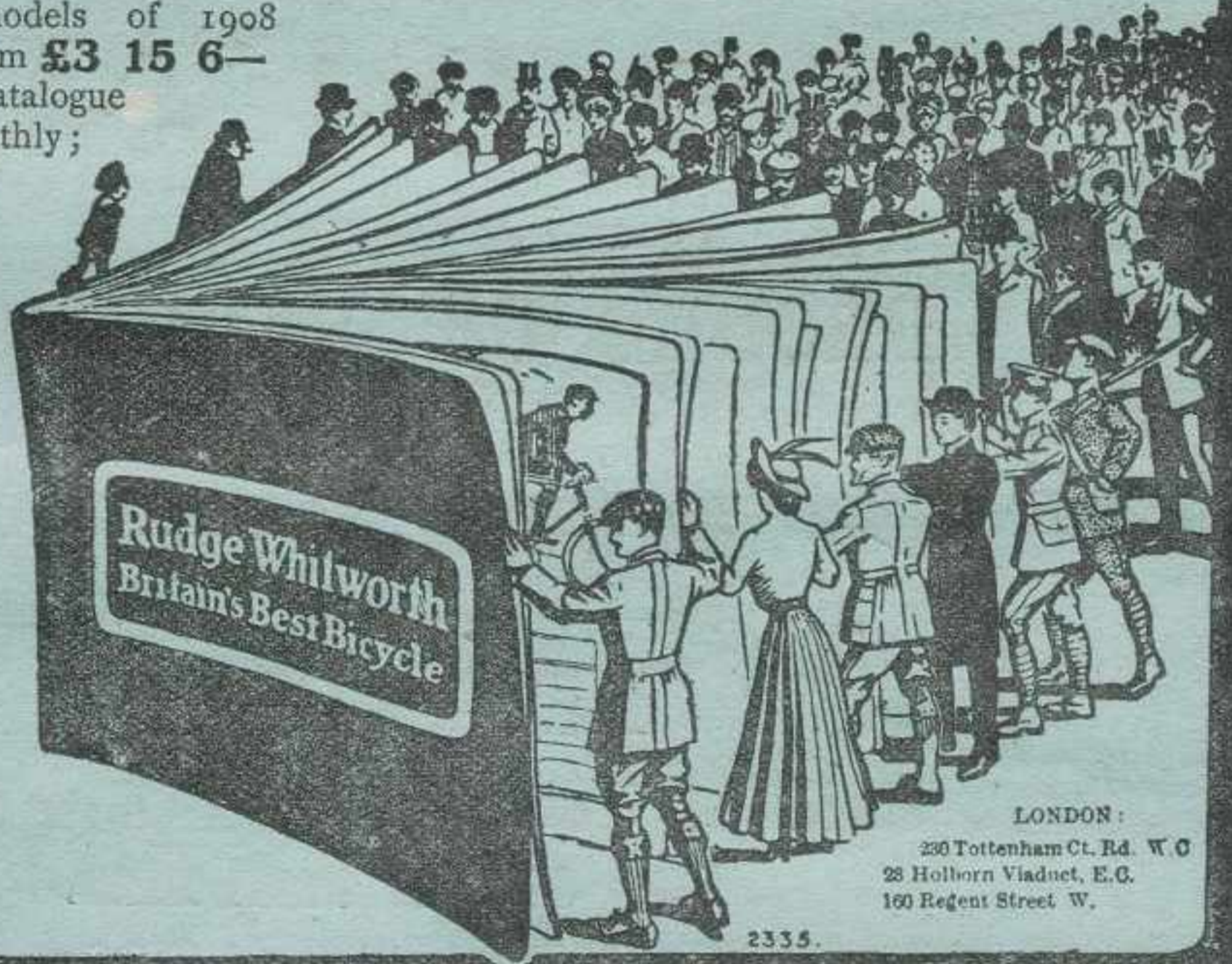
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