

WELL PLAYED! A Tale of Merry

The

GEM

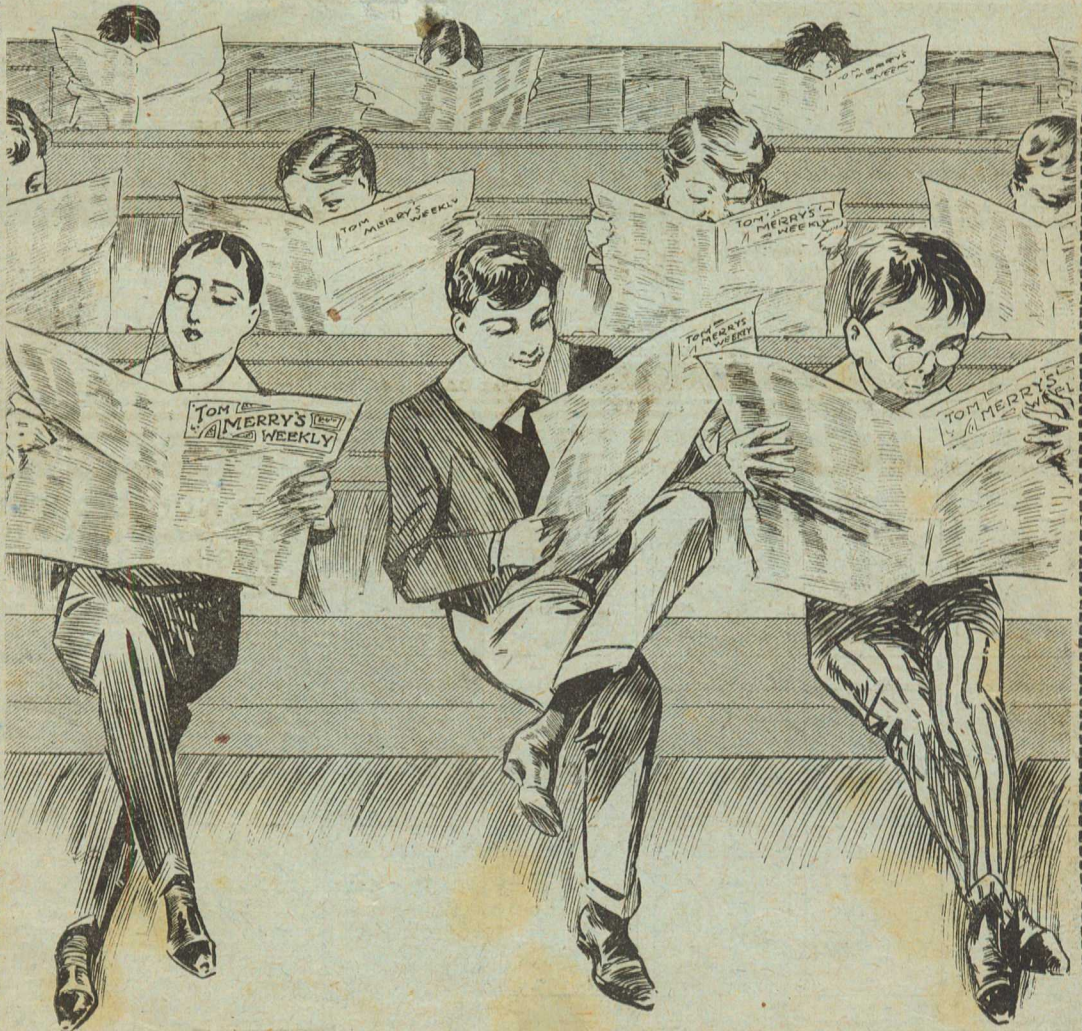
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VOL. 4.

Grand Long
Complete
Tale

A Tale of the Terrible Three.

by
MARTIN
Clifford.



HOW TO EDIT A WEEKLY

By Tom
Merry.

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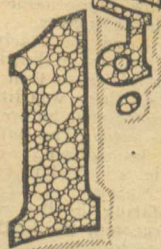
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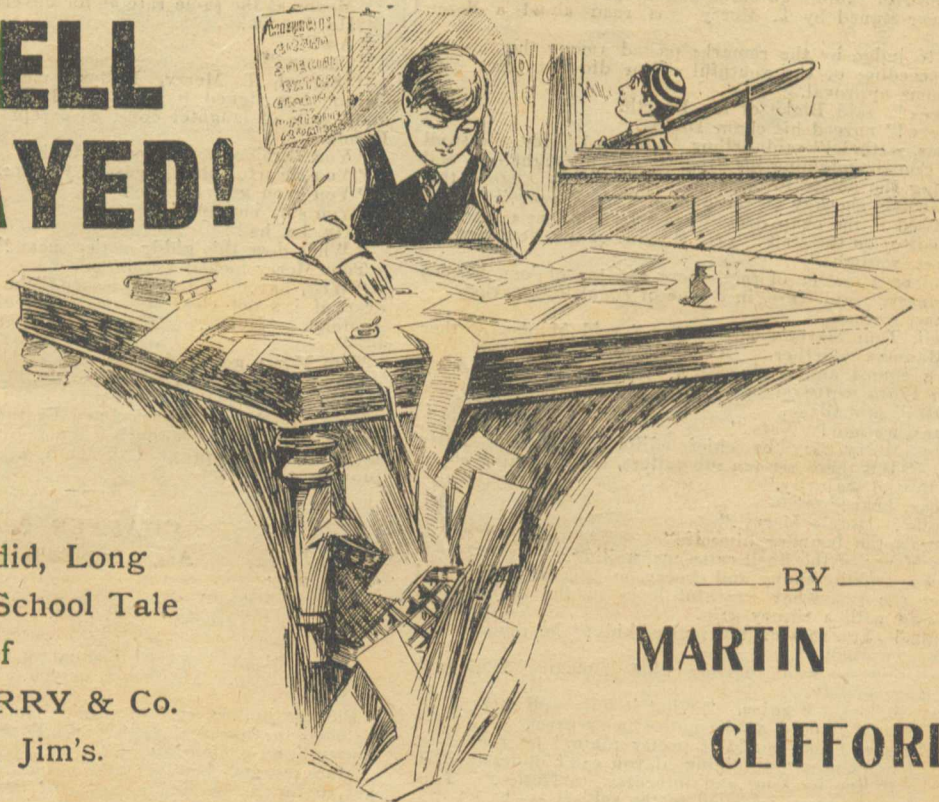
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WELL PLAYED!



A Splendid, Long Complete School Tale of TOM MERRY & Co. at St. Jim's.

— BY —

MARTIN

CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Tom Merry Explains.

"NOTICE!

Grand Special Number of 'Tom Merry's Weekly'! In order to celebrate the success of the Junior Cricket Club of St. Jim's, a Special Number of 'Tom Merry's Weekly' will be issued on Saturday.

Contributions for the Special Number must be taken in not later than Thursday, to the Editorial Office, No. 2 in the School House, ground floor.

Contributions in prose carefully considered by the Editor. Contributions in poetry inserted at usual advertisement rates.

(Signed),
T. MERRY, Editor."

THAT was the notice that greeted the juniors of St. Jim's when they swarmed out of class-rooms after school on Tuesday.

It greeted the eyes of the seniors, too, as a matter of fact, but the seniors only smiled and passed on. A notice put up by a fellow in the Shell was not likely to be read by a senior.

But to the Middle and Lower School it was of great interest.

Nearly all the Shell and the Fourth Form read it through carefully, and most of the Third, as well; both School House and New House fellows.

For although there was keen rivalry, and generally war, between the two Houses at St. Jim's, there was some matters they could unite loyally upon.

Japing the neighbouring Grammar School was one of them, and contributing to "Tom Merry's Weekly" was another.

"Tom Merry's Weekly" was not, as its name would have implied, exactly a weekly journal. It was supposed to be; and in the earliest stages of its existence it had been. But other interests continually interfered with the duties of the youthful editor, who was Form captain of the Shell, skipper of the junior cricket club, and president of the Debating Society, as well as editor of the "Weekly."

And so sometimes two or three weeks had passed without a number of the "Weekly" appearing; but that, as Tom Merry said, only made the fellows more pleased to see it when it did come. On the other hand, Monty Lowther contended that they would be still more pleased if it never came. But that was an exaggeration. Every fellow whose

A DOUBLE-LENGTH TALE OF TOM MERRY NEXT THURSDAY.

contributions were inserted in the "Weekly" was eager to see them in print. Every fellow whose name had appeared in type voted the school journal a success.

The paper had not appeared now for nearly three weeks. Cricket was reigning at St. Jim's, and in the glorious weather fellows had spent most of their leisure time out of doors. The evenings were so long that there was little time to be spent in the studies and common-rooms before bed, and that time was generally devoted to prep. The paper had hardly been missed, save by a few fellows who were anxious to see how their stories and articles looked in type.

But this did not suit Tom Merry.

With manuscripts accumulating in the study, and the paper in danger of being forgotten, the brilliant idea of a special number had occurred to him.

Hence the notice on the board, which Tom Merry had pinned up as he went into class that afternoon, leaving it there to greet the eyes of the Shell and the Fourth when they came out.

A crowd of juniors gathered round the notice-board, and the paper signed by T. Merry was read aloud a dozen times.

And to judge by the remarks passed among the juniors, the proceeding of the youthful editor did not meet with unanimous approval.

"Cheek!" said Blake of the Fourth.

"Nerve!" agreed his chum Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth, jamming his eyeglass into his right eye, and surveying the notice through it. "I certainly regard this as extremely cheeky on the part of Tom Mewwy."

"Blessed if the chap doesn't seem to think he's the only giddy editor on the staff!" said Figgins of the New House.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And as a matter of fact, there are ten of 'em, besides Tom Merry," said Kerr, in a tone of equal indignation.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, Tom Merry's chief editor," said Monty Lowther and Manners together. As Shell fellows, and as Tom Merry's chums and study-mates, they felt bound to keep Fourth Form criticism in check.

"Rats!" said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Wats!"

"Tom Merry may be chief editor," remarked Fatty Wynn. "But there are ten sub-editors, and the thing ought to go by the majority."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hallo! Here's Merry!"

"Here's the bounder himself!"

Tom Merry of the Shell came up, smiling.

He was looking sunny and cheery, as he always did, and he met the somewhat wrathful looks of the majority of the crowd with a cheery grin.

"Hallo! You've seen the notice, kids?" he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And now we want to know what it means," said Jack Blake aggressively.

"Just so," said Figgins. "What it jolly well means."

Tom Merry glanced at the notice in surprise.

"I thought I had made it pretty plain," he remarked.

"Still, I don't mind explaining, if you can't understand it. I'll take it line by line, and interpret. 'Notice.' That means that attention is called to the subject—"

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

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Grand Special Number of Tom Merry's Weekly," went on the youthful editor. "That means that there is a grand, special number of 'Tom Merry's Weekly' coming."

Blake turned red.

"Look here—" he began.

"Yaas, weally—"

"In order to celebrate the success of the Junior Cricket Club," went on Tom Merry imperturbably. "That means that we're going to celebrate the success of the Junior Cricket Club."

"You ass!"

"Dry up!"

"A Special Number will be issued on Saturday.' That means that the special number will be issued on Saturday."

"You uttah ass!"

"Cheese it!" roared Blake. "What I meant is—"

"But you asked me to explain—"

"Ass!"

"And I'm explaining," said Tom Merry, "I want you to understand. 'Contributions for the Special Number must be sent in not later than Thursday.' That means that Thursday is the last day for receiving contributions for the Special Number—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You duffer!" howled Blake. "You frabjous ass! I know that! I meant—"

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"You burbling chump!" said Figgins. "I meant—"
"Then," resumed Tom Merry cheerfully, raising his voice to make it audible, "'Editorial Offices, No. 2 on the ground floor,' means that I've obtained permission to use No. 2 Room on the ground floor as an editorial office."

"Shut up!"

"Ring off!"

"Stop playing the giddy goat, you silly chump!"

"Contributions carefully considered by the editor,' means that the editor will carefully consider contributions—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Biff him if he doesn't shut up!"

"Ring off, you frabjous burbler!"

"Contributions in poetry,' went on Tom Merry calmly, while Manners and Lowther and Kangaroo kept off a rush of the irate Fourth-Formers. "That means that contributions in poetry—"

"Shut up!"

"Accepted at advertisement rates—"

"Cheese it!"

"Means at the same rate as for advertisements."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass!"

"Chump!"

"Signed, T. Merry, Editor,' means that T. Merry, Editor, has signed it," concluded Tom Merry tranquilly amid yells of laughter from all except the excited Fourth-Formers.

"You frabjous ass!" roared Blake.

"You cheerful idiot!" gasped Figgins.

"You—you gramophone!"

"You silly chump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What does this giddy notice mean?" roared Blake.

Tom Merry looked astonished.

"Why, haven't I just explained?" he exclaimed. "However, if it's not clear to you, I'll begin again at the beginning. 'Notice.' That means that attention is called—"

Tom Merry got no further.

There was a roar of rage from the Fourth-Formers, and a terrific rush.

Tom Merry was overwhelmed by that rush, and his explanation of the meaning of the notice was cut suddenly short as he disappeared beneath a sprawling mass of juniors.

CHAPTER 2.

Angry Sub-Editors.

"H!"

"Ow!"

"Yarook!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo, struggling out of the sprawling heap. "Look out, or you'll have a giddy prefect on you."

But the juniors were too excited to look out for prefects, or even for masters. The Fourth-Formers had seized Tom Merry in an avenging grip.

Manners and Lowther and other Shell fellows tried to get to the rescue, but a crowd of the Fourth drove them back.

Tom Merry remained in the hands of Figgins and Blake, and Herries and Digby.

He struggled in their hands, but they had an arm or a leg each, and Tom Merry hadn't very much chance.

"Ow!" he gasped breathlessly. "Leggo, you asses!"

"Bump him!"

"What-ho!"

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying the scene through his monocle. "Bump the expawatin' wottah, deah boys. I wegard him as havin' tweeked the Fourth Form with a want of pwopah respect."

"Bump the duffer!"

"Go it!"

"Ow! Leggo!"

Bump, bump!

The excited juniors had forgotten that they were in the School House hall, and that the doors of masters' and prefects' studies opened within a dozen yards of them.

The din was terrific, and in such a spot it was not likely to pass unnoticed.

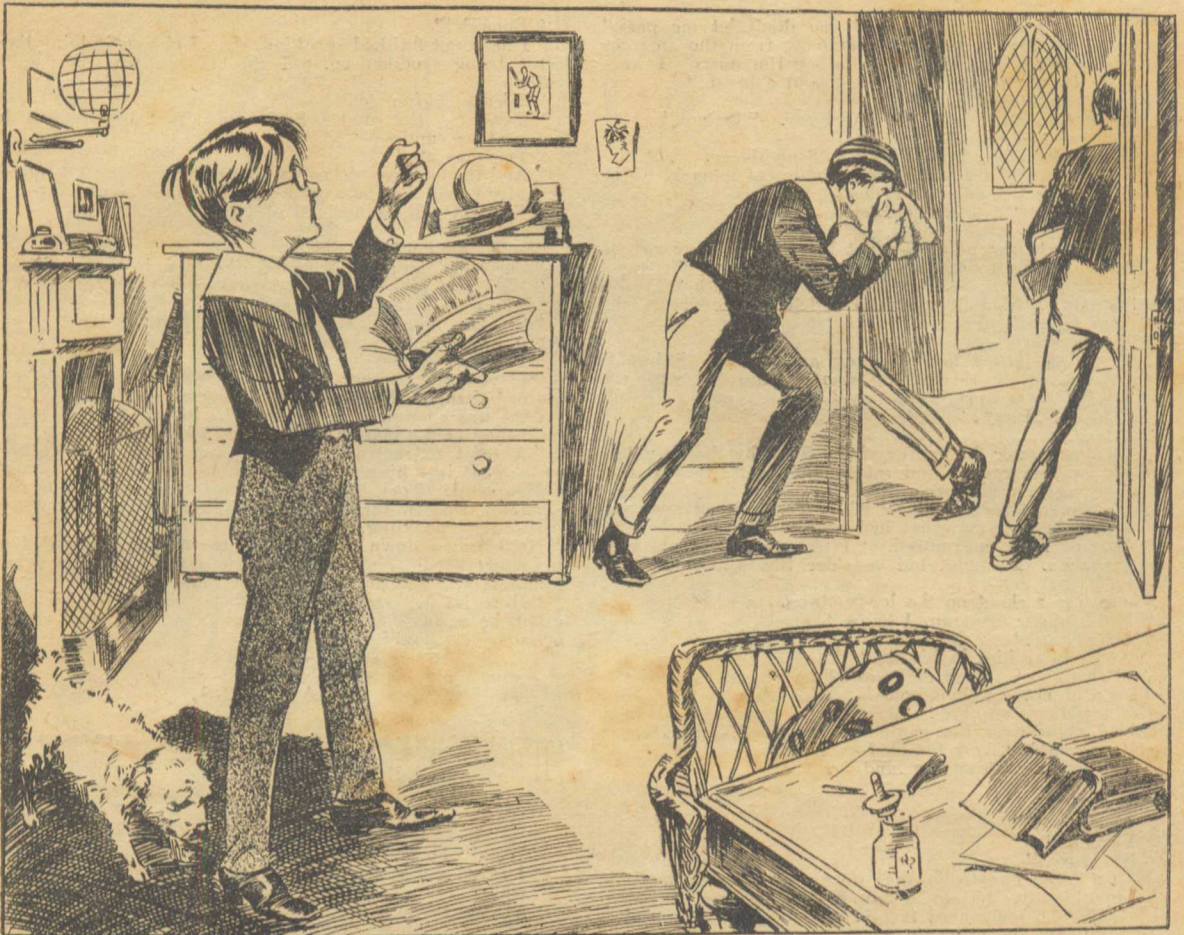
Bump! Scuffle, thud, gasp!

A door was heard to open.

Mr. Railton, the House-master of the School House, stepped out of his study, and stood gazing upon the strange scene for some moments in complete astonishment.

His voice rang out suddenly.

"Boys!"



"Ah, I have touched your hearts, I see!" said Skimpole. Wally & Co. staggered grief-stricken to the doorway of the study, their handkerchiefs to their eyes.

"My hat!" gasped Kangaroo. "Cave!"
 "Look out!"
 "Gwreat Scott!"
 "Run for it!"
 "Wun like anythin', deah boys!"
 The House-master was striding towards the spot with a frowning brow.
 The juniors let Tom Merry go as if he had suddenly become red-hot, and darted off in all directions.
 Most of them poured out into the quadrangle in wild flight.
 "D'Arcy! Figgins! Blake!"
 But the owners of those names were in full flight, and they did not turn their heads, perhaps not hearing.
 "Merry!"
 Tom Merry gasped for breath and stopped.
 "Merry, what is all this disturbance about?"
 The House-master gazed sternly at the hero of the Shell. Tom Merry certainly presented a shocking spectacle.
 His collar and tie were dragged out, his waistcoat had lost half its buttons, and his Eton jacket was split up the back. His clothes were dusty and rumpled, his hair like a mop, his face flushed and dusty too.
 He blinked at the Form-master in a dazed manner.
 "Merry!" rapped out Mr. Railton.
 "Ye-e-es, sir?" gasped Tom Merry.
 "What does this mean?"
 "This—this notice, sir?"
 "No, certainly not: this disturbance, Merry."
 "I—I don't know, sir," gasped Tom Merry. "I—I think I've been bumped, sir."
 "Merry!"
 "Well, sir, it feels like it," said Tom Merry ruefully; "and I—I think I'm a little bit out of order, sir. Don't you notice it?"
 Mr. Railton tried not to smile.

"I certainly do notice it, Merry," he said. "There has been a scene of great disorder here. But you appear to have been the victim. You may go; but mind that it does not occur again."
 "Certainly, sir!" said Tom Merry, glad to get off so cheaply. "Thank you, sir!"
 And Mr. Railton went back into his study, and did not laugh till he had closed the door.
 Tom Merry staggered breathlessly away to the stairs.
 He could not get out in the state he was in, and he wanted to get to the Shell dormitory to change as quickly as possible.
 As he reached the first landing he met a youth with a large head, a pair of thin legs, and a very large pair of spectacles.
 He tried to pass him, but Skimpole, of the Shell, was not so easily passed.
 The brainy-looking youth reached out a bony hand, and seized Tom Merry by one of the few buttons that were left upon his waistcoat.
 "Merry, I have been looking for you."
 "Go on looking, Skimmy, will you?"
 "I've found you."
 "Sorry!"
 "I've read your notice in the hall," said Skimpole, blinking at the hero of the Shell, unregarding of his evident desire to pass. "I see that you are bringing out a special number."
 "Yes. I—"
 "I suppose it will be a double number?"
 "Yes. Let me—"
 "Good! Then there will be a lot of space—plenty of room for a good, rousing article on Socialism," said Skimpole, with much satisfaction.
 "Rats!"
 "I suppose you will find room—"

"You will find a thick ear if you don't let me pass," growled Tom Merry, trying to get loose from the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's. "Can't you see I'm dusty. I want to get to the dorm. and get a wash and a brush."

"Never mind that now."

"But I do mind," shouted Tom Merry. "Leggo!"

"You see—"

"Yes, I see a howling ass," said Tom Merry.

"Really, Merry, I can forgive that absurd remark, which I know is due to your low order of intellect," said Skimpole patiently. "I could explain to you—"

"Don't!"

"To come to the point, I want to put in a long article on Socialism, the most burning topic of the present day."

"I wish your article were burning along with it," said Tom Merry. "You can put the article in the fire in the common-room, if you like."

"Really, Merry—"

Tom Merry jerked himself away and passed. Skimpole caught hold of his sleeve. He was not finished with the editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly" yet.

"Hold on, Merry!"

"Rats!"

Tom Merry took the genius of the Shell by the shoulders and swung him round, and sat him down on the landing with considerable violence.

Skimpole sat there blinking while Tom Merry went upstairs, hardly knowing what had happened to him.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "I feel a pain. I am very much shaken. I cannot but consider this almost rude of Merry."

There was a shout on the lower stairs.

"The bounder went up, I know."

"After him!"

"We'll collar him in his study!"

And there was a rush of Fourth-Formers up the stairs.

They did not see Skimpole—at all events, not till they were treading on him. Blake, who was in advance, tumbled right over the genius of the Shell, and Herries and Digby and D'Arcy tumbled over him.

There was a roar on the landing.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"What is it?"

"Yaroo!"

"Bai Jove!"

Half a dozen Fourth-Formers were rolling on the landing, and on Skimmy. Skimpole gasped for breath.

"Help!" he murmured feebly.

"Yow! I'm hurt!"

"Gerroff my legs!"

"Bai Jove! My clothes will be uttably wuined!"

"Ow!"

"Groo!"

"It's Skimmy!" roared Blake. "He was sitting there to trip us up. I—"

"I—I—"

"Roll him down!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a deep voice from below.

"Boys!"

Blake started.

"My hat! There's Railton again! What rotten luck!"

"Absolutely wotten, deah boy!"

"Boys!"

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"Come down at once!"

There was no help for it.

Mr. Railton stood at the bottom of the staircase, and his face was very stern. It was the second time he had been called out of his study by a disturbance, and he was angry this time.

The Fourth-Formers descended the stairs meekly. Skimpole followed them, gasping for breath and blinking.

"You have been making a disturbance again," said Mr. Railton.

"If—if you please, sir—"

"Yaas, wathah, sir, we—"

"We—we fell over Skimpole, sir," said Blake diffidently. "He was taking a rest on the landing, sir."

"Really, Blake—"

"You will take twenty lines each, and keep quiet," said Mr. Railton.

"Oh, sir!"

"You heard what I said."

And the House-master frowned.

"Yes, sir," said the juniors resignedly. But Skimpole was not satisfied.

"If you please, Mr. Railton—" he began

"That will do, Skimpole."

"Yes, sir, but—"

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"Enough!"

"I have not finished speaking, sir. I object to doing lines after being trodden on. I do not see why we should not—"

"Silence, Skimpole!"

"Yes, sir. But under Socialism all staircases will be nationalised, and—"

"You may go."

"And then we can do as we like on them, sir. Of course, Socialism may not be established for some weeks yet—"

"Take fifty lines, instead of twenty, Skimpole."

"Oh, sir!"

"And now go."

"Certainly, sir; but I should like to point out—"

"Will you go, Skimpole?" said Mr. Railton, his eyes beginning to gleam.

"Oh, yes, sir; but I should like to point—"

"A hundred lines, Skimpole."

"Yes, sir; but—"

"If you say another word I will cane you!" exclaimed the exasperated House-master of the School House.

That was enough even for Herbert Skimpole. He blinked in dismay at the master, and trotted away.

"A most extraordinary boy!" murmured Mr Railton, as he went into his study.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry, safe now from pursuit by the vengeful Fourth-Formers, went quietly up to the Shell dormitory, chucking.

He brushed down and washed there, and descended to his study in the Shell passage, where he found his chums Manners and Lowther waiting for him.

"Here he is," said Lowther, "clothed and in his right mind, or as near as he ever gets. Now, then, you cheeky bounder, explain."

CHAPTER 3.

Not Required.

TOM MERRY sat down to the tea-table, and helped himself from the dish of buttered toast. Manners and Lowther gazed at him.

"Well?" said Lowther.

"Well?" said Manners.

Tom Merry looked at them innocently over the toast.

"Well?" he said innocently.

"I asked you to explain," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh!"

"Of course, we backed you up against those Fourth Form kids," remarked Manners, "but now you've got to explain to us."

"Explain what?"

"That blessed notice."

"But you heard me explain to Blake," expostulated Tom Merry.

"Look here, don't you be funny," roared Manners. "One's enough in one study, and Lowther's funny business is enough to drive a chap distracted, without you starting."

"Oh, is it?" said Lowther warmly.

"Yes, it is. Now—"

"You're an ass, Manners."

"Look here, Lowther—"

"I tell you—"

"Peace," said Tom Merry soothingly. "Peace, and pass the toast. I'm hungry."

"Are you going to explain that notice?" yelled Lowther.

"Certainly," said Tom Merry, with his mouth full.

"Notice—that means that attention is called to the matter—"

His chums stared at him aghast for a moment.

"My only hat!" shouted Lowther. "If he isn't working off the same wheeze again."

"Stop him!"

"Grand Special Number—that means—"

"Collar him!"

"Bung the jam on him!"

Lowther caught Tom Merry round the neck, and Manners brandished the jam dish. The hero of the Shell surrendered at once. He had had to wash and change already, and he didn't want to have to repeat the performance.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "Pax! It's all right!"

"Then explain. What do you mean by sticking up that notice without consulting the staff?" said Lowther excitedly.

"What does it mean, anyway?"

"Yes, that's the question," said Manners.

Tom Merry put his collar straight and started on the toast again.

"You see," he explained, "the editor's decision is final. The idea came into my head, and as editor-in-chief, I carried it out. I explain to the staff afterwards."

"Cheeky ass!"

"Impertinent bounder!"



"You asses!" gasped Tom Merry. "I didn't write that piffle. It's been shoved into the paper since I left it."

"Those expressions will be barred in a properly-regulated staff," said Tom Merry severely. "A sub-editor who called his chief a cheeky ass would get the order of the boot, jolly sharp."

"Look here——"

"Besides, isn't it a good idea? We've let the 'Weekly' drop for two or three weeks—it had to hang over while we were in France, and then there was the cricket as soon as we came back. Nobody had any articles ready, except Skimpole, who had a long article on comets——"

The chums of the Shell chuckled at the recollection of Skimpole's comet.

"I mean, none of the staff," said Tom Merry. "There were heaps of outside contributions; the study's crammed with them."

"That's so," remarked Lowther. "I've wiped out the frying-pan this very afternoon with a 'Thrilling Romance of Life in the Far West.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So, you see, with contributions choking up the place, and the paper in danger of being forgotten, the only thing was to produce a Special Double Number," said Tom Merry. "The special number will have the effect of reminding all St. Jim's that there is such a paper as 'Tom Merry's

Weekly.' The double number will have room in it for the contributions that have accumulated, and we can get rid of them. See?"

"Yes, I see. But——"

"Then all you chaps will have something to put in, too; so we shall need double the space. I thought it was a good wheeze."

"Well, it wasn't a bad one, but——"

"As for consulting the staff, I'll do that after putting the notice up, instead of before," said Tom Merry. "I don't see that it makes any difference."

"Cheeky ass!"

"What do you mean by changing the editorial offices, too?" demanded Manners. "Wasn't this study good enough?"

"Quite good enough, my son; but hardly big enough," said Tom Merry. "When all the staff get in here, there isn't room for a snail to trim his whiskers, if he had any. No. 2 room on the ground floor is much more—er—commodious."

"Well, there's something in that; but it was like your cheek all the same," said Lowther.

"Granted," said Tom Merry. "If I admit that it was

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NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE SCALLAWAG OF THE THIRD."

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

like my cheek, I suppose that settles it? Good. Now pass the toast."

"Blessed if I see it's a good time for bringing out a double number, too," said Manners. "There's the cricket match with the Grammar School to-morrow afternoon."

"My dear kid, all the better; we can put a report of the victory in the paper—it's to be a cricket number, you know."

"Yes; but suppose it's a Grammarians victory?"

"Oh, don't croak!"

"I know Gordon Gay and his team are in splendid fettle, and they gave Greyfriars a jolly good tussle. D'Arcy was over there and saw it."

"Well, I hope they'll give us a good tussle, too; but I think we shall beat them. Anyway, a report of the match goes in. I—"

The study door opened, and Skimpole blinked in.

"Ah! You are here, Tom Merry! I looked in to ask you—"

"Shut the door!"

"Really—"

"But go out first."

"I looked in to ask you if you would care for me to play in the match to-morrow afternoon," said Skimpole, with a benevolent blink at the chums of the Shell. "I hear it will be a tough match, and you want to make the side as strong as possible."

The Terrible Three roared.

Skimpole in his time had played many parts, and each a funny one; but Skimpole as a cricketer was really a vision of joy.

Tom Merry wiped his eyes.

"Oh, Skimmy!" he moaned.

"Oh, my ribs!" murmured Lowther. And Manners collapsed into the armchair, too weak for words.

Skimpole blinked at the chums of the Shell in surprise. He did not see anything comic in asking to be included in the side that was to play one of the toughest matches of the season for the juniors.

"I really see no cause for laughter," he remarked. "I shall be very glad to play for St. Jim's, Tom Merry."

"St. Jim's will be glad, too—I don't think!" murmured Lowther.

"Skimmy, old man, you're too funny to live," said Tom Merry.

"Really, Merry—"

"The side's made up," explained Tom Merry patiently. "I'm playing us three, and the four chaps in Study No. 6, and Figgins & Co., and Kangaroo. It's the same as the footer side, but it can't be improved in the junior Forms."

"I think I could improve it, Tom Merry."

"You're welcome to go on thinking," remarked Manners; "but would you mind doing your thinking in the passage with the door shut?"

"Ah! Perhaps you have some doubt about my play, as I have never practised?" suggested Skimpole, with a patient smile.

"Well, yes; I think I have some faint sort of haunting doubt," Tom Merry confessed.

"That is all right. It is true that I have had no practice, but as the mind is always able to master matter, I shall be able to play splendidly on purely scientific principles."

"Go hon!"

"You see that a ball, when hurled by the hand, is like a bullet fired from a gun; it is bound to follow a certain trajectory. By calculation I can make quite certain of taking a wicket with every ball."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That would surely be a great help in a match with so strong a side as the Grammarians," urged Skimpole.

Tom Merry almost wept.

"We—we want to give them a chance for their lives, Skimmy," he stammered. "We want to give them a run for their money. It wouldn't be fair on Gordon Gay to let a terror like you loose on them."

"There is perhaps something in that," admitted Skimpole. "Still, the object of playing is to win, I believe."

"Well, yes, there's something of an idea of that kind."

"Then you should certainly play me."

"We might play him as a wicket," suggested Monty Lowther, taking up a cricket ball. "Stand quite still, Skimmy, and I will see if I can knock your glasses off—it being understood that your spectacles answer the purpose of balls."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole backed away in alarm.

"Really, Lowther—"

"Here goes!"

Monty Lowther's arm swept over, and the cricket ball sped, and crashed upon the wall a couple of feet from Skimpole's head.

It bounced from the wall, and Manners caught it, and sent it back to Lowther.

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Skimpole gasped.

"Lowther—Lowther—really—oh!"

"Missed!" said Lowther. "Never mind, I'll have him this time!"

His arm swept up again.

Skimpole did not wait for him to bowl.

He rushed out of the study and slammed the door behind him. The cricket-ball crashed on the door with a bang the next moment, and Skimpole went down the passage as fast as his thin, weedy legs could carry him.

In the study the Terrible Three yelled with mirth.

CHAPTER 4.

The Sad Fate of a Great Work of Fiction.

THERE was a knock at the door a few minutes later, as the roars of laughter died away in Tom Merry's study. Monty Lowther stepped quickly towards the door.

He had no doubt that it was Skimpole returning, and he had grabbed up a somewhat ancient jam tart from the table, and with it poised in his hand, he stood waiting for the door to open.

The door opened.

"How's that?" shouted Lowther, jamming the tart down upon the nose of the new-comer.

Tom Merry gave a hysterical gasp.

"Out!" he shrieked. "It's not Skimmy."

"Phew!"

"Faith, and phwat are ye at?" roared Reilly, of the Fourth, staggering back with a coating of jam and jumbled tart on his nose and round it. "Phwat do yez mane, intirely?"

"My hat! I thought it was Skimmy."

"Ye—ye omadhaun—"

"I—I'm sorry— Ha, ha, ha! I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But the boy from Belfast did not laugh. He rushed at Monty Lowther, and got his head into chancery, and began to pommel.

"Faith, and take that, ye gossoon! Take that, ye spalpeen—"

"Ow! Rescue!"

Tom Merry and Manners dragged the excited Irish junior off. Monty Lowther mopped his nose with his handkerchief.

"Ow!" he gurgled. "The silly duffer! By dose is bleedig!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, and I—"

"It was a mistake," said Tom Merry, almost weeping.

"Lowther was waiting for Skimpole."

"Sure, he had better look next time before he's so free with his jam-tarts!" said Reilly, grinning through the jam.

"I looked in to tell you that I've got a poem for the Special Number—but, faith, I'll go and get a wash now!"

And Reilly went.

"The blessed dangerous lunatic!" growled Monty Lowther, mopping his nose.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle!"

The door opened again. Lowther glared at it wrathfully. But it was Kerruish, the Manx lad, who came in. He nodded to the chums of the Shell.

"It's going to be double the usual size, isn't it?" he asked.

Tom Merry looked at Lowther's nose, which was certainly swelling.

"Looks like it!" he remarked.

"Good—"

"Oh, good is it?" exclaimed Lowther wrathfully. "I'll jolly soon show you whether it's good or not, you ass!"

Kerruish retreated in alarm.

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"What's the matter?" he exclaimed. "Here, keep off! Why shouldn't I say it was good? If it's double the size, there's room for my serial to go in!"

"Eh!"

"I say that if the 'Weekly' is double the usual size—"

"Oh, the 'Weekly'!" mumbled Lowther. "I thought you were referring to my nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Manners, and Kerruish grinned.

"I was speaking of the 'Weekly,'" he said. "You've got my serial here, Tom Merry; I suppose you'll be able to put the first chapters into the Special Number?"

"I don't know. We've got such a jolly lot of stuff on hand," said Tom Merry. "I don't know whether I can put my hand on your stuff now, either. There's been an awful accumulation of rubbish in this study while we've been away."

"Accumulation of what?"

"I—er—I—I mean contributions!" said Tom Merry hastily. "What's the title of your serial? Perhaps I can remember it."

"'Red Ralph, a Romance of Life in the Far West,'" said Kerruish, with a blush.

Monty Lowther started, and left off rubbing his nose for a moment.

"What did you say the title was?" he asked.

"'Red Ralph.'"

"And the rest?"

"'A Thrilling Romance of Life in the Far West.'"

"Phew!"

"What's the matter?" asked Kerruish anxiously. "I suppose it's all right. Of course, I know that the subject has been written upon before."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners. "I think it has!"

"Still, it's a jolly good subject, and very thrilling. I'll bet you won't sleep at night after you've read the account of the attack on the wagon train."

"Well, that's an incentive to read it, I must say."

"It will simply make your flesh creep!" said Kerruish. "The part where Red Ralph massacres the palefaces is the most thrilling. You see, they call him Red Ralph because he's shed so much blood."

"Ugh!"

"Well, you see, it's a Wild West story, and there's bound to be some bloodshed," said Kerruish. "Red Ralph simply rolls in it."

"How nice!"

"I don't think."

"I'll read you out the part about the massacre of the emigrants—"

"Please don't!"

"Yes, just hand over the manuscript, and—"

"I—I'm afraid it's mislaid just now."

"Well, I could repeat that part from memory," said Kerruish cheerfully. "Listen: 'With a yell of ferocity the redskins hurled themselves upon the sleeping emigrants.'"

"They must have been jolly fast asleep, if they slept while the giddy redskins were yelling," said Manners, with a shake of the head.

"Ass! The yell woke them up."

"Oh, I see!"

"'In the twinkling of an eye,'" continued Kerruish, "the corral was red—"

"Coral is pink as a rule."

"Oh, there's red coral," said Lowther.

"You chumps!" shrieked Kerruish. "A corral is a place where you back up against the Indians—you shove your waggon round and stick behind them, and shoot—"

"For goal?"

"Ass!"

"Well, I was only asking a question," said Lowther. "Go on; it's getting interesting."

"'In the twinkling of an eye the corral was red with blood. Blood was everywhere—'"

"Ugh!"

"'It flowed on the waggon, and on the grass, and on the heaps and heaps of dead and dying. The groans were fearful. Red Ralph brandished his tomahawk—'"

"Phew!"

"'And at every blow a paleface fell beneath his weapon, and rolled on the grass in convulsions of agony.'"

"Go it, kid! Is this the thrilling part?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Good! I'm thrilling! Are you thrilling, Manners?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Are you thrilling, Tom Merry?"

"Lots!"

"Good! Go it, Kerruish—we're all thrilling—the whole study's up to concert pitch," said Monty Lowther.

"Look here—"

"Go ahead—we're interested in Pink Peter—"

"Red Ralph, you dummy!"

"My mistake—go ahead! What happened after everybody was killed?"

"Everybody wasn't killed!" snorted Kerruish. "A single scout escaped—"

"Sure he wasn't married?"

"Idiot! A single scout escaped to tell the tale—"

"Then it won't do," said Lowther, shaking his head. "You sent the tale in under your own name, and if it's been told already by somebody else, you're a giddy plagiarist. No room for plagiarism in 'Tom Merry's Weekly.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" said Kerruish. "A single scout escaped to tell the tale, and he tracks down Red Ralph in the second chapter."

"More blood, I suppose?"

"Yes; the redskins are massacred by the scouts."

"And who massacres the scouts?"

"They aren't massacred at all, ass!"

"Oh, come! Isn't there any bloodshed in the third chapter?"

"Well, no; only about fifty Indians are shot."

"What happens to Red Robert?"

"Red Ralph!" roared Kerruish.

"Ahem! I mean Red Ralph. By the way, why Red Ralph? Crimson Ralph would seem more imposing," said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ass! The title has to be—what do you call it when the words begin with the same letter—"

"Alliterative," said Manners.

"Yes, that sounds like the word. The names of the characters in Wild West stories have to be all-all-alliterative," said Kerruish. "Like Deadwood Dick, and Blood-dabbled Ben, and Snorting Sam!"

"Oh, I see! It's a ripping good story!" said Lowther.

"What a misfortune that—"

"Look here, you've got room for the first instalment!"

"Ahem—"

"You see, it's a thrilling story of life in the Far West, and—"

"Ahem! More like a thrilling story of death in the Far West—"

"Look here—"

"It's awfully unfortunate," said Lowther, "but there has been an accident in the editorial office. Somebody used your serial to clean out a frying-pan—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What?" yelled Kerruish.

"It's awfully unfortunate. You see, I remember now seeing Red Ralph as I was rubbing the frying-pan—"

"You?"

"Ahem, yes! I remember being thrilled at the time. I caught sight of a massacre as I was crumpling up the manuscript—"

"You—you ass—"

"But we shouldn't have had room for it," said Tom Merry. "Besides, bloodshed is barred in the 'Weekly,' you know."

"How on earth can you have an Indian massacre without bloodshed?" demanded Kerruish.

"Well, we can dispense with the massacre, you know."

"I'll jolly well send that story in to a London publisher!" exclaimed Kerruish. "I've no doubt I shall get a hundred guineas or so for it, and then I'll start a school magazine myself. Hand over the manuscript."

"Sorry—you see—"

"Look here, you're only rotting about the frying-pan—"

"Unfortunately—"

"You don't mean to say that my 'Romance of Life in the Far West' is really done in?"

"Sorry—"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Try again, and leave out the gore, and—"

"You—you dummy!" gasped Kerruish. "I—I—"

Words failed the indignant author.

He rushed at Monty Lowther, and closed with him. His fist came with a crash upon Monty's nose, just where Reilly had been pommelling.

Lowther struggled and roared.

"Ow! Drag him off!"

He pommelled in his turn, and Kerruish pommelled, and they staggered round the study, struggling and punching desperately. Tom Merry and Manners roared with laughter. They were too doubled up with merriment to think of interfering.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Lowther!"

"Go it, Kerruish!"

"Ow!"

"Ow! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two combatants staggered through the doorway. There Lowther managed to disengage himself, and he hurled the Fourth-Former into the passage, and slammed the door.

His nose was streaming red as he turned gasping towards his chums.

"Ow!" he gasped. "Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling asses——"

"Ha, ha, ha! You look as if you've been understudying Red Ralph!" shrieked Manners. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo! My nose is bleeding again!"

"Looks like it! Ha, ha, ha!"

But Monty Lowther did not laugh. He mopped his nose and grunted, while Tom Merry and Manners yelled.

CHAPTER 5.

Story No. 6 Think it is a Good Idea.

"BAI JOVE! Here's the wottah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that remark as the Terrible Three came out of the School House after tea.

The three chums of the Shell were in their cricketing flannels, and had their bats under their arms. Lowther's nose was looking a little red and swollen.

Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were on the School House steps. They looked decidedly warlike as the Shell fellows came out.

Tom Merry held up his hand.

"Pax!" he exclaimed.

"That's all very well!" exclaimed Blake wrathfully. "Look here——"

"What do you mean——"

"By that rotten notice——"

"And that rotten Special Number——"

"We're all sub-editors——"

"And ought to have been consulted, bai Jove!"

"Oh, I've been through all that with Manners and Lowther," said Tom Merry pathetically. "You see, a Special Number is a ripping good idea——"

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wats!"

"Because it will be double the usual size——"

"Rot!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wot!"

"And so I shall be able to shove in an extra instalment of Blake's serial——"

"Well, there's something in that," said Blake candidly. "Of course, every paper ought to have a special double number every now and then."

"Wats!"

"Look here, Gussy——"

"I wegard it as wot——"

"And I was going to ask D'Arcy to give us a special article on fashions on the Riviera and in Paris——"

"Bai Jove! That's a wippin' good ideah!"

"Stuff!" said Digby and Herries.

"I thought Herries would be able to put in an article on feeding dogs."

"Now you're talking!" exclaimed Herries heartily. "I believe in having some sense, even in a school magazine."

"Oh, piffle!" said Digby.

"I was thinking that Digby might shove in an extra column on cricket matters."

"Good!" said Digby.

"Still, if you chaps don't like the idea of a special double number——"

"Oh, I do!" said Blake. "I think the idea's very good indeed. I'll jaw these fellows over, too. They don't know what's what till I tell them."

"Weally, Blake——"

"Cheese it, Gussy! I'm not going to have you running down Tom Merry's splendid idea of a double number."

"But I wasn't goin' to win it down, deah boy. I wegard it as a weally first-chop ideah, and I shall be vewy happy to contribute an article——"

"I was thinking the same," said Digby. "There's never been room enough in the previous numbers to treat the subject of cricket properly. Now that we're in the thick of the cricket season, too——"

"The subject of feeding dogs is more important," Herries remarked. "I've had a lot of experience in that line. You see, my dog Towser——"

"Then you're all agreed on the scheme?" asked Tom Merry, with a lurking glimmer of fun in his eyes.

"Yes, we are!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Good! Then you can turn up in No. 2 Room to help, after dusk. We'll make the most of the light we've got, as we're playing Gordon Gay and his lot to-morrow."

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"Yaas, wathah! Upon the whole, deah boys, I considah that we can let Tom Mewwy off the feahful thwashin' we were goin' to give him."

"Gussy!" gasped Tom Merry. "You don't mean it!"

"Yaas, I do, deah boy."

"Noble Gussy!" said Tom Merry, with a sob. "How can I thank thee?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"I must embrace thee——"

"Weally—— Keep off, you ass! Yow!"

Tom Merry threw his arms round D'Arcy's neck in a most affectionate embrace.

Unfortunately, he overlooked the fact that he had his cricket bat under his arm.

You cannot throw your arms round anybody's neck, and expect a cricket-bat to stay in its place if you are carrying it under your arm. Tom Merry's bat did not stay in its place.

It fell, and clumped upon Arthur Augustus's elegant boot.

There was a wild howl from the swell of St. Jim's.

"Yawwooh!"

"Gussy, my dear——"

"Yoop!"

"I must embrace thee——"

"Gewwooh! My foot!"

"What's the matter with your foot?"

"Gewwoop! It's cwushed!"

"Really——"

"Yow-yoop-yawwooh!"

D'Arcy tore himself loose, and stood on one foot, clasping the other with both hands. The juniors yelled as they looked at him.

"Like a giddy crane, isn't he?" exclaimed Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How long can you stand like that, Gussy?"

"He's practised it, of course."

"It's a new gymnastic exercise."

"Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy lowered his foot to the ground, and jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed the Terrible Three with scornful dignity.

"I wegard you as wottahs!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope your toe isn't really hurt, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "You see, I forgot all about the blessed bat being under my arm, and——"

"My toe was considewably hurt, Tom Mewwy, but what I was thinkin' of most was the boot; you have buisied the leathah howwibly——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you ass——"

The Terrible Three walked off, still laughing.

D'Arcy gazed after them through his monocle, evidently in doubt whether to pursue them and call them to account.

"Come on, old dear," said Blake, slipping his arm through D'Arcy's. "Get into your things, and come and play cricket."

"I don't know whethah I ought to thwash those boundahs——"

"Come on!"

"It's a question of personal dig., you see."

"Rats!"

"Weally, Blake——"

But D'Arcy was rushed off to change his things before he could say more; and by the time he appeared on the cricket-field, he had forgotten all about Tom Merry's offence. The swell of St. Jim's never remembered offences long.

CHAPTER 6.

King Cricket.

TOM MERRY had all his team out on the cricket ground for practice.

The days were long, and the light was good, and the heroes of the Lower School were making the most of it.

Cricket was the great topic at St. Jim's now.

The senior eleven was playing nearly every holiday, and Kildare and his men were winning laurels for the school at the grand old game.

But to the juniors, of course, the junior matches were of infinitely more importance than the biggest fixtures of the First Eleven.

Both the Houses at St. Jim's had junior teams, which frequently met in House matches; but when the juniors met a foreign foe, the House teams united for the purpose, and an eleven was picked of the best on both sides.

On such occasions, all House rivalry was forgotten, and



"I say, Fatty, old man, what's the matter?" said Figgins anxiously. "Are you ill?" "N-n-n-no, not exactly!" said Fatty Wynn; "but I've g-g-got a pain!"

the fellows backed one another up heartily for the old school.

Figgins & Co., of the New House, were already on the ground when Tom Merry and his chums arrived, and Study No. 6 soon joined them there.

Tom Merry was junior cricket captain, and he had his team in good order. The practice was hard, and every fellow took his turn at the wickets to face the bowling of Fatty Wynn, who was the demon bowler of the Lower School.

Fatty Wynn was a bowler who could have made many of the seniors tremble for their sticks, if he had ever been played in a First Eleven game.

A fellow who could stand up to his bowling was likely to make a good show against the Grammar School—though Gordon Gay's team was known to be in very fine fettle.

Fatty Wynn was in better form than ever to-day.

Tom Merry stood up to his bowling for one over, and the sixth ball brought his bails down.

Figgins and Kerr clapped their hands and yelled.

Tom Merry was one of the finest batsmen in the Lower School, and if Fatty Wynn could take his wicket, he could take anything.

Tom Merry was surprised himself when the sticks went down; but he grinned approval too. There was no vain glory about the hero of the Shell.

He was only too glad to see the fat Fourth-Former in such good form.

"Bravo, Wynn!" he called out.

Figgins rushed up to his plump chum and gave him a sounding slap on the back. Fatty Wynn gasped.

"Hold on, you ass!"

"It's splendid, Fatty!"

Wynn rubbed his shoulder.

"Well, you needn't use me as a punching-ball, if it is."

"Ha, ha! You'll walk over the giddy Grammarians to-morrow," said Figgins, with conviction.

Fatty Wynn grinned.

"I'm feeling specially fit now," he remarked. "It's because we had a good tea. You see, there were sausages and poached eggs—"

"Ready there!"

"And cheese-cakes and jam-puffs—"

"Field that ball!"

"And ham—"

"Wake that fat duffer up!"

"And meringues—"

"Get off, Figgins!"

"That's why I feel so fit," said Fatty Wynn, beaming.

"I'm not at all hungry now. Hallo! Were you calling to me, Blake?"

"Yes, ass!" roared Blake. "Are you going to bowl, or are you going to stand there jabbering away like an insane gramophone?"

"Where's the ball?" said Wynn, recalled to his surroundings.

"Here it is, ass—catch!"

"Yoop!" roared Fatty Wynn.

He caught the ball—with his chest. He was inclined to send it back the same way, but he restrained himself, and bowled instead.

Kangaroo was at the wicket, and it was not easy to take Harry Noble's wicket. But Fatty Wynn accomplished it.

The ball came down with a spin on it that a billiard-player might have envied, and it broke in a most unexpected manner.

Click!

"How's that?" roared Figgins.

And Kangaroo grunted.

"Out!"

"Jolly good," said Kildare, of the Sixth, stopping to look on. "You've got a good bowler there, Merry."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry heartily. "We wouldn't part with Fatty Wynn for his weight in gold—though a ton of gold would be worth something, too."

"Ha, ha!"

"Yes, it's not so bad," said Knox, the prefect, with a patronising smile. "The juniors are looking up. But, of course, junior batting isn't quite so hard to get over as some batting, eh?"

"Would you like a turn at the wicket, Knox," suggested Kildare, with a smile, "just to show the kids how that bowling should be stopped?"

Knox nodded.

"Oh, I'll take a ball or two."

Tom Merry handed Knox his bat. The senior swung it lightly in his hand, and stepped to the wicket.

"Play!"

Fatty Wynn exchanged a wink with Figgins.

He knew that Knox was not a good batsman, though the prefect had a very great opinion of his own powers in that line.

Knox meant to show off, and take the champion junior bowler down a peg or two; but Fatty Wynn was of opinion that it mightn't work out exactly like that.

The ball came down like a four-point-seven shell, and before Knox knew where he was, his bails were on the ground.

The juniors roared.

"How's that?"

"Out!" grinned Kildare.

"Have another ball, Knox?" asked Tom Merry demurely.

The prefect dropped the bat and stepped off. His face was very pink.

"Er—no," he remarked, "that bat doesn't suit me, of course. I couldn't—er—expect to bat with it."

And he strolled away with Kildare, who was smiling broadly.

The juniors chuckled.

"I rather think the bat suits him better than the bowling does," murmured Kerr.

And there was a laugh.

CHAPTER 7.

A Valuable Recruit.

SKIMPOLE, of the Shell, came down to the cricket-field while the practice was still going on. Skimpole had a bat under his arm, and a cricket-cap perched on his large head. The head was large, but the cap was small. Skimpole was not in flannels. He did not play cricket, as a rule. He spent most of his time when he was at leisure in poring over dry books, and thinking out such important and interesting subjects as Determinism and Evolution. But Skimpole was nothing if not scientific. The idea was in his head now that it was possible to play cricket on scientific principles, and if it could be done, of course, Herbert Skimpole was the fellow to do it. That went without saying. And Herbert Skimpole meant to try. Partly from a desire to vindicate the wonders of science in the eyes of unbelievers; partly from a benevolent wish to strengthen the St. Jim's team in the coming struggle with the Grammar School.

Like most great geniuses, Skimpole was never understood, and never appreciated. Wisdom, it is said, cries out in the streets, and no man regards it—and Skimpole, too, was unregarded.

He called out to Tom Merry as soon as he arrived on the

cricket-ground, but the hero of the Shell had no time to spare for Skimpole then.

A cricket captain, when practice is on, is likely to be too busy, as a rule, to discuss abstruse questions; and Tom Merry never cared a rap at any time for any of Skimpole's "isms." Skimpole had pointed out, almost with tears in his eyes, the immense importance of knowing for certain whether the human race originated in a speck of jelly floating in a primeval sea, or in a fragment of over-ripe fruit on the bank of a tropical river. Whether the one or the other was the case—or wasn't—and whether it happened fifteen million years ago, or fifty million, Tom Merry did not care in the least. And Skimpole said that it was surprising that a chap of Tom Merry's intelligence should pass over matters of such immense importance, for the purpose of spending his time on childish games.

Whereat Tom Merry laughed, but did not give up cricket.

"Merry!" called out Skimpole, for the twentieth time, dodging round the ropes as Tom Merry shifted his position.

But Tom Merry did not answer.

"Merry! Tom Merry! Tom! Tom Merry!"

"Sheer off," said Bernard Glyn, who was looking on at the play. "No time for Determinism now, Skimmy."

Skimpole blinked at him.

"I'm not going to discuss Determinism now with Tom Merry, Glyn," he said.

The Liverpool lad chuckled.

"No, you're jolly well not—nor evolution either."

"I am going to play cricket," said Skimpole.

"To which?"

"Play cricket."

"My only hat!"

"What an absurd ejaculation, Glyn. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I say, Dane, Skimmy is going to play cricket."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Clifton Dane.

"Really, Dane—"

"This is a chance that Tom Merry oughtn't to miss," grinned Bernard Glyn. "I jolly well sha'n't miss it, if Skimmy starts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Merry! Tom Merry!"

"Don't be an ass, Skimmy! Where are you going?" exclaimed Gore.

"I'm going to speak to Tom Merry," said Skimpole, stepping over the rope.

"You ass! Come back!"

"Nonsense, Gore. It will not be light much longer, and I must speak to Merry."

And Skimpole hurried across the grass towards the hero of the Shell.

Lowther had just batted, and the ball was coming into the slips. Manners ran for it for a catch, and shouldered Skimpole, who was in the way.

The ball dropped into the grass.

"You ass!" roared Manners. "What are you doing here?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Glyn. "He's sitting down."

He certainly was. Skimpole was sitting down, looking very dazed and bewildered. He groped for his spectacles, and put them straight.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "Somebody ran into me."

"Where's that ball?"

"Field that ball."

"Hurry up, there!"

"Going to sleep, Manners?"

"I can't see it!" yelled Manners. "I've just run into a dangerous lunatic. Get off the ground, Skimmy."

"Really, Manners—"

Tom Merry ran up.

"Get up, Skimmy. Clear out. Where's that blessed ball?"

"There is some very hard and uncomfortable substance beneath us," said Skimpole, blinking up at them. "It is possible the ball—"

"You ass—"

"Gerroff!"

They rolled Skimpole away, and, sure enough, there was the cricket-ball. Manners picked it up, looking daggers at the amateur Determinist of St. Jim's.

"Get off the ground," said Tom Merry.

"But I want to speak to you—"

"Later."

"But I want—"

"Clear out."

"Yes, but—"

Tom Merry had no more patience left. He took Skimpole by the collar, ran him to the ropes, and rolled him out of the field of play.

Skimpole sat down among a crowd of legs, looking very dazed and bewildered.

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"Dear me!" he gasped. "I think that is really almost rude of Merry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can see no cause for laughter."

"I can!" chuckled Glyn. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole picked himself up, and gathered up his bat and his cap. He blinked at the grinning juniors, and then blinked at the game.

Even Skimpole understood that he had better not venture upon the field of play again.

The summer sunset was deepening into dusk when the cricketers came off at last, very well satisfied with themselves and with the practice they had had.

Tom Merry was captured as he came off, a bony finger and thumb fastening upon him, in the objectionable way Skimpole had.

"Tom Merry——"

"Skimmy! Yes, old man," said Tom Merry, resigning himself to his fate.

"I tried to point out to you——"

"We've got cocoa in our study, if you Shell chaps care for it," said Blake.

"Good."

"That I could play a really startling game of cricket on purely scientific principles."

"Come and have some cocoa instead, Skimmy."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Skimpole shook his head.

"It will be a great advantage for the side if I am played against the Grammarians to-morrow," he remarked.

"The team's full up, kid," said Tom Merry feebly.

"I have no doubt that D'Arcy would stand out to make room for me."

"Bai Jove!"

"Or Digby. Digby is not very much use."

"My hat! Are you looking for a thick ear, Skimmy?"

"I did not intend to offend you, Digby, by a plain statement of the facts. I have observed your play, and I cannot praise it."

"What's the matter with it?" demanded Digby wrathfully.

"Well, I observed that you allowed Wynn to knock your wicket down when you could easily have stopped the ball with your foot."

"Oh, I see!" grinned Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"However, to resume," said Skimpole, blinking at the chuckling juniors. "I have noticed that Wynn bowls pretty well——"

"Pretty well!" snorted Fatty Wynn.

"Yes. But I have not the slightest doubt that I could bowl better."

"Had much practice?" asked Figgins.

"None at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, I should bowl on purely scientific principles," explained Skimpole. "The mind governs matter, as you know. I should will the ball to follow a certain trajectory, and the arm would obey the impulse of the mind, and the ball would go in the desired direction. Do you see?"

"Ripping," said Blake. "Did you fellows say you were coming?"

"Yes, rather."

"Pray, stop a minute, Tom Merry. As captain of the junior cricket team, it is your duty to test every recruit possible for the sake of the team."

"Skimmy, old man——"

"I am certainly entitled to a trial!"

"Oh, give him a trial!" said Monty Lowther. "It will be as good as a comic opera, anyway! All we really want is a cinematograph machine to take it down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Lowther——"

"Bai Jove, it will be funnay, anyway! Bettah give Skimpole a twial, Tom Mewwy, and pewwaps he will leave off talkin' for a little while!"

"That's too much to expect," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "However, we'll give him a trial. Stick those stumps in again, Reilly!"

"Very good!" said Skimpole. "Give me the ball!"

"Here you are!"

"Please put your strongest batsman at the wicket, Tom Merry. I have not the slightest doubt that I shall perform what I think you call the cap trick!"

"The hat trick! Ha, ha!"

And Skimpole grasped the round, red ball, and went down to bowl.

CHAPTER 8.

Skimpole the Bowler.

THE juniors crowded round the ground, and some seniors, too, who saw what was toward. They had never seen cricket played on scientific principles such as Skimpole's before, and they were curious to see it.

There was no doubt that Skimpole's performance would be worth watching, though perhaps not from a cricketing point of view.

Figgins took his bat and went to the wicket. He did not expect to have anything to do there. Skimpole's bowling was not likely to come anywhere near the stumps.

Skimpole blinked along the pitch at the batsman. The scientific junior was very short-sighted, and that alone was a very great handicap, for Figgins's form was very dim to him at the end of the pitch.

Figgins grinned and waited. The juniors looking on chuckled and waited, too.

Skimpole grasped the ball, but he did not take a run. He appeared to be making a calculation. He was to bowl from the pavilion end, and the grinning juniors in front of the pavilion were not far from him.

"Go it!" called out Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Pulverise him, Skimmy!"

"Look out, Figgins!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole paid no attention whatever to the exclamations or the laughter. His mighty brain was deep in calculations.

"It will have to be a three-day match if Skimmy plays in it," Monty Lowther remarked, "if he's going to take all this time over each ball!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Skimpole stood with corrugated brows.

Suddenly his right hand shot up, the ball in it. His hand swept round his head as if he were waving his cap, and the ball left his fingers.

Crash!

"Hallo!"

"What's that?"

"Ha, ha! The window!"

"The pav, window!"

The yells of laughter drowned the tinkling of falling glass. Skimpole blinked round at the yelling juniors.

"Where is the ball?" he asked.

"Goodness knows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins's wicket does not appear to have been struck," said Skimpole, blinking along the pitch with an expression of great astonishment.

He evidently had expected to see Figgy's wicket a wreck.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You frajious ass!" roared Gore. "You've bowled round the back of your head, and bust the window behind you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Impossible!"

"Look at the window!"

Skimpole blinked.

"Dear me! I must have let the ball go too soon—or too late! A slight miscalculation, that is all, which really does not affect the matter in any way."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were almost in hysterics. Skimpole's first essay at bowling had been even richer than they had anticipated.

"Please give me the ball!" said Skimpole.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold me, somebody!"

"I wish you would give me the ball! It is getting darker, and it will soon be too dark to play!" said Skimpole patiently.

"Field the ball, somebody!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ball was found, and tossed back to Skimpole. He let it slip through his fingers, of course, and groped in the grass for it.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Latham, the master of the Shell, stopping to look on, and blinking at Skimpole through his glasses. "Are you still at practice, my boys, in this light?"

"Only Skimmy, sir," said Tom Merry. "He's showing us something in bowling, sir. It's too good to be missed!"

"Dear me! I did not know that Skimpole was a cricketer," said the master of the Fourth.

"He isn't, sir!"

"That's the best of it!"

"He's playin' on purely scientific pwinciples, sir. It is wathah funnay!"

ANSWERS

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"THE SCALLAWAG OF THE THIRD."

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By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Dear me!"

Mr. Lathom looked on with interest as Skimpole bowled again. The Fourth Form-master had been out, and he was wearing a coat and silk hat. He had reason soon to wish that he had not brought that silk hat so dangerously close to the scientific bowler of the Shell.

Skimpole's hand, clutching the ball, performed some mysterious gyrations round his head, and the ball flew again.

"Look out for the windows!" murmured Blake.

Biff!

"What is it?"

"Where is it?"

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Lathom.

There was a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Goal!"

"Bravo, Skimmy!"

Mr. Lathom clutched his silk hat as he staggered back. The side of it was completely smashed in. The Fourth Form-master gasped.

"Dear me! Bless my soul! Really——"

"Is Figgins's wicket down?" asked Skimpole, blinking round.

"Ha, ha! No!"

"No, Skimmy; but Mr. Lathom's hat is!"

"Boy!" exclaimed Mr. Lathom. "How dare you throw that cricket-ball at my hat?"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Skimpole, in alarm. "I, sir! The cricket-ball, sir! Your hat, sir!"

"Yes!" thundered Mr. Lathom. "It cannot have been an accident! I was standing almost directly behind you!"

"I—I must have made a slight miscalculation, sir!" stammered Skimpole. "The ball was certainly intended for Figgins's wicket!"

"What! Figgins is yonder, and the ball came here!"

Skimpole rubbed his bumpy forehead thoughtfully.

"I cannot understand it, sir. My calculations were based upon pure science, and I do not see how a mistake can have occurred. Are you sure the ball touched your hat?"

"What! What! Look at the hat, boy!"

"It certainly appears to be damaged," said Skimpole thoughtfully. "But you may have knocked it against something, sir——"

"Boy, you are stupid! I felt the ball knock the hat off my head!"

"That may have been due to the imagination, sir! People often imagine things happen, and come to believe in them firmly!"

"Skimpole!"

"And it is well known, sir, that the imagination is most powerfully developed in beings of a low intellectual order——"

"Boy!" said the Fourth Form-master, almost choking. "You will take a hundred lines!"

"Oh, sir!"

Mr. Lathom walked away with his battered hat. Skimpole blinked after him, and then blinked at the convulsed juniors.

"Mr. Lathom seems to be annoyed about something," he remarked.

"Oh, carry me home to die!" murmured Kangaroo weakly.

"Oh! Ha, ha!"

"Where is the ball?"

"You've had enough of the ball; it's your last dance, Skimmy! You might brain one of us next!"

"Impossible!"

"Why, what do you mean, you ass?"

"I mean that the ball cannot come in your direction, owing to my calculations."

"Let him have one more try, and keep a safe distance," said Tom Merry.

"Right-ho!"

"Yaas, watah!" said Arthur Augustus, dodging round the corner of the pavilion. "I do not intend to trust my person too near to Skimmy!"

"Here's the ball, Skimmy!"

"Go it!"

Skimpole took the ball, and the juniors crowded away. Skimpole made more careful calculations this time, and Figgins grinned at him along the pitch.

But Figgins did not wear that grin many seconds.

Skimpole bowled.

Figgins was seen to drop his bat, and jump into the air, clear of the ground, and come down with both hands pressed to his ear.

Skimpole blinked at him.

"Is the wicket down, Merry?" he asked.

"Ha, ha!" yelled Tom Merry. "No, the wicket isn't; Figgys is!"

"Ow!" roared Figgins. "The villain! The dangerous lunatic! He's brained me! Ow!"

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"What has happened?" asked Skimpole.

Blake threw himself in the grass and kicked up his heels in hysterics. The juniors roared with glee.

Figgins roared with rage.

He had stopped that ball with his left ear, and it was fortunate that it was only thrown with the force that dwelt in Skimpole's thin, weedy arm.

Figgins clasped his ear and roared, and the juniors shrieked.

"The ass!" howled Figgins. "Here, let me get at him!"

He picked up his bat and made a wild rush at Skimpole.

"Really, Figgins——"

Tom Merry grasped the scientific bowler by the arm, and dragged him off the pitch. He could hardly speak for laughing, but he managed to gasp a warning.

"Run, you ass! Figgins is going to slay you!"

"Run, you chump!"

"Wun like anythin'!"

"But I haven't batted yet!"

"Run, you ass!"

"Besides, I am sure that the ball cannot have struck Figgins! If he thinks that it has, it is a pure effect of the imagination!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Run, you duffer!"

It was too late.

The vengeful Figgins was on the spot. He jammed the end of the bat at Skimpole, and Skimpole roared.

"Ow! Leave off! Yaroooh! Stop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Take that!" bawled Figgins. "And that! You've brained me! And that! You've knocked my ear off! And that! I'm stunned! And that! My ear's singing! And that! And that!"

"Yaroooh! Yow! Yoop!"

Skimpole staggered away as the bat lunged at him again and again, every lunge ringing on his bony limbs.

He ran at last—rather late; but it was better late than never. He broke into a wild trot, and dashed off the cricket field, and Figgins dashed after him, still prodding at him furiously.

They disappeared together.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

The juniors yelled and shrieked till they were quite winded. They were weeping with mirth as they moved off after Figgins and Skimpole.

"Oh, dear!" said Blake, wiping his eyes. "Skimmy is good as a Determinist, and good as a giddy Evolutionist, but I think it's as a cricketer that he fairly brings down the house!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And we haven't seen him bat," said Monty Lowther regretfully. "It would be a sight to see Skimpole bat—a sight for gods and men and little fishes!"

And they wept once more at the idea as they went in.

A gasping heap of humanity was discovered on the School House stairs. The glimmer of a big pair of spectacles showed that it was Skimpole.

"Feeling all right?" asked Blake cheerily.

"Oh! Ow! No. I am not feeling all right, Blake. I am feeling very sore indeed," said Skimpole. "Figgins chased me all the way to the School House, prodding me from behind with his bat in the most brutal manner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can see nothing whatever amusing in it. I am considerably hurt."

"Imagination, my boy," said Blake blandly. "The effects of the imagination are wonderful. I don't suppose you're feeling any pain at all."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Blake——"

"For instance, if I were to jump on you now——"

Skimpole squirmed off the stair, and beat a hurried retreat. And the chums of the School House, with a fresh yell of laughter, went off to their studies.

CHAPTER 9.

The Collaborators.

"DON'T you kids make a row——"

"Look here, Wally——"

"You're beginning already——"

"Look here——"

"Oh, do shut up, Gatty. We've got to put it gently to the Fourth Form dufers," said D'Arcy minor. "Don't you jaw."

"I'll——"

"Ring off! Here we are! Don't you jaw either, Gibby!"

"I'll——"

"That's right, shut up!" said Wally D'Arcy. "Here we are."

The chums of the Third Form stopped at the door of Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage. Jameson and Gibson were looking a little wrathful. Wally was their acknowledged leader, but at the same time they couldn't help regarding him as rather autocratic.

Wally tapped at the door of Study No. 6 with great respect. That alone showed that he had some favour to seek in Blake's study.

He opened the door.

"Better keep that rotten mongrel out," murmured Jameson, as Pongo sniffed in at the heels of his master.

Wally turned a freezing glare upon his chum.

"That what?" he asked.

"That mongrel," said Jameson.

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

"Who's opening that blessed door?" came Blake's voice. "Whoever it is, come in or stay out; and shut the door after you!"

"Right you are, Blake."

Wally came in, followed by Pongo and Jameson and Curly Gibson. There were quite a crowd of fellows in Study No. 6.

The four chums of the Fourth were there, doing the honours to the Terrible Three and Kangaroo, all the juniors drinking cocoa and eating biscuits.

The crockery was of the most surprising variety, not one cup resembling another in pattern, and few resembling the saucers.

But the cocoa was good, and that, after all, was the chief thing.

"Hallo!" said Tom Merry, looking round at the Third-Formers. "What the dickens are these inky kids here for? Guests of yours, Blake?"

Jack Blake snorted.

"Rather not!"

"What do you want, Wally?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon his hopeful young brother.

"A word or two," said Wally. "I've seen a notice up in the hall about a Special Number of the school paper."

"Oh, dear! And you've got contributions, of course!" groaned Tom Merry.

"We've come to talk on that subject," said Wally. "I—Down, Pongo!"

"Kick that beast out!" roared Blake.

Pongo was pulling at the tablecloth with his teeth, to the great danger of the crockery that reposed upon it.

"Oh, Pongo's all right!" said Wally cheerfully. "Now, we were thinking that the school paper has been rather running to seed lately——"

"Were you weally, deah-boy?"

"Yes; and we thought that some real strong contributions from a new source would be just the thing to buck it up."

"Go hon!"

"So we've decided that the double number will give us a good chance to do the paper a good turn," said Wally. "Haven't we, kids?"

"That's it," said Jameson.

"Just so," agreed Gibson.

"We're thinking of coll—coll—coll—— What the dickens is the word?"

"Collaborating," said Jameson.

"That's it—collaborating, over a ripping serial," said Wally. "The three of us are going into it together, and it will be a jolly good thing."

"Ripping!"

"Spiffing!"

"So we're willing to let you have it," said Wally. "We sha'n't expect payment."

"Go hon!"

"It will be worth anything to the paper, you know. You must have noticed how dry and rotten the 'Weekly' has been for some time."

"Weally, Wally——"

"What with Blake's poetic serials, and Gussy's fashion articles——"

"Why, you young bounder——"

"You cheeky young wascal——"

"And Herries's awful piffle on the subject of feeding dogs——"

"You young ass!"

"And Digby's dreary stuff about cricket. Fat lot he knows about cricket——"

"My hat!" ejaculated Digby. "I—I——"

"And Manners's awful photography stuff——"

"Why, you——"

"And Lowther's comic column. 'Nuff to make a tomb-stone weep——"

"You impudent young rascal!"

"And Tom Merry's leading articles! Awful stuff——"

"Why——"

"And Figgins's piffle, and Kerr's rot, and Fatty Wynn's bosh, the paper is coming to a pretty pass," said Wally.

The juniors who were responsible for the editorial management of "Tom Merry's Weekly," glared in silence at their cheerful critic.

"Go it, Wally!" said Jameson.

"On the ball!" chuckled Curly Gibson.

"Well, we thought we'd buck the paper up for you," said Wally. "What do you say to the offer, Tom Merry?"

"Rats!"

"Eh?"

"Rats! R-A-T-S! Rats!" said Tom Merry.

"Look here——"

"'Nuff contributions in hand already for two double numbers," said Tom Merry. "We can't have the regular staff crowded altogether out by outside contributors. And I really don't think that Third Form stuff would improve the paper very much."

"That's your fatheadedness, of course."

"Thanks!"

"Not at all. Now, that serial I was speaking of is a ripping one. It deals with life in the coal-mines in Yorkshire——"

"What ever do you know about the coal-mines in my county?" demanded Blake.

Wally sniffed.

"Not much, of course. I suppose an author isn't supposed to know everything."

"Have you ever been down a coal-mine?"

"Of course I haven't. You might as well ask a chap if he's been up in an aeroplane, when he writes an aeroplane story. Jules Verne wrote a ripping good story about some chaps going to the moon. Do you think he'd ever been there himself?"

"Got you there!" grinned Jameson.

"Besides, the paper will circulate among the fellows here, and how many of them have been down a coal-mine?" demanded Wally.

Blake grinned.

"Well, I'm sorry," said Tom Merry. "The paper's full up, and there's no room for the coal-mine—I mean the serial. Good-evening!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But look here," urged Wally. "As editor, you ought to be looking out for a chance to improve the tone of the paper."

"Ha, ha! That's what I'm doing."

"What you want on the staff is young blood, you know."

"Ha, ha!"

"Our serial will wake things up—especially the realistic description of the flooding of the mine when the North Sea breaks in, and they pump it out——"

"My hat! They'd want a lot of pumping!"

"They don't pump out the whole North Sea, fathead! They——"

"Pity we haven't room."

"Look here, you could make room by leaving out some of the rot."

"Good wheeze!" said Monty Lowther. "What do you say, Blake?"

"I say you're an ass!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Can't leave out anything without permission of the whole staff, kid. Look here, if you can get some contributor to agree to his stuff standing out, we'll try to shove you in instead."

"H'm!"

"Try Skimpole!" suggested Manners.

Wally looked at the editorial staff grimly. But there was evidently nothing to be got by argument; Tom Merry & Co. were simply blind to the great advantage of having that splendid coal-mining serial in the school paper.

"Oh, all right!" said Wally, with a grunt. "I'll talk to Skimpole. Come on, you kids. Pongo! Pongo! Where's that blessed dog?"

"Gnawing the curtains," grinned Jameson.

"My only Aunt Jane! So he is! Pongo! Pongo!"

And Wally whistled shrilly to his dog. Jack Blake jumped up and grasped a cricket stump. Pongo probably guessed what that meant, for he left off worrying the curtains and scuttled out of Study No. 6 after his master.

And the chums of the Third went along to Skimpole's study, to persuade the genius of the Shell to let them have some of his space in the special number; and they left the editorial staff chuckling. Tom Merry & Co. knew how likely Skimpole was to leave out any of his valuable lucubrations for the sake of the Third Form serial.

CHAPTER 10.

Very Touching.

SKIMPOLE was in his study. He had come in feeling considerably sore after his cricket experiences, and he had asked Gore, who shared his study, if he would like to rub him with embrocation. Gore had replied in language more forcible than polite.

Skimpole shook his head sadly at Gore.

"I am afraid that the great truths of Socialism will never penetrate your thick head, Gore," he said. "No, don't look angry—I do not reproach you with having a thick head—it is wholly due to your heredity and environment. Some millions of years ago, a floating speck of jelly in a primeval sea—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Gore.

"In a primeval sea was responsible for the eventual outcome of—"

"Ring off!"

"Really, Gore—"

"For goodness' sake stop that rot!" said Gore impatiently. "I can stand Socialism in small quantities, but not Evolution or Determinism. I draw the line there. Chuck it!"

"Well, I was digressing. If you could be converted to the glorious truths of Socialism, you would understand that it is right to oblige a fellow-creature. The Boy Scouts, for instance, undertake to do a good turn to someone every day. That is practically the first lesson in Socialism. Now, if you rubbed me with embrocation—"

"Why can't you rub yourself, you dummy?"

"I have to get on with my article for the 'Weekly.'"

"You ass! Get on with it, then, and shut up!"

"Really, Gore—"

"Shut up!" roared Gore, who was reading, or trying to read. It was not an easy thing to read when Skimpole was within range.

"Well, have you seen my volume of Determinism?" asked Skimpole. "I have to consult it for my article. The great book of Professor Loosetop, I mean."

"It's in the coal-locker."

"In the—the what?"

"The coal-locker. I shoved it there."

"Really, Gore—"

Skimpole fished out the great volume. It was looking somewhat black, and he cast a reproachful blink at Gore.

"Gore, I think I ought to explain to you that—"

Gore rose to his feet.

"Blessed if I don't ask Railton to change me into some other study," he exclaimed. "You're enough to try the temper of a saint."

And Gore went out and banged the door. Skimpole blinked after him with an expression of mild surprise.

"Gore seems to be annoyed about something," he murmured. "He has lost a most valuable exposition of the principles of Determinism by leaving the study so suddenly. The loss is his, however. Now—"

The door opened.

"Ah, Gore, I see— Ah, is it you, D'Arcy minor?"

Wally entered the study, followed by his chums. Pongo scrambled in, and immediately proceeded to worry the cushion on the armchair. Pongo was a restive dog, and generally found some occupation for his teeth when he was not on the chain.

"Called in to see you, Skimmy," said Wally, with an affability which would have put anybody more suspicious than Skimpole on his guard at once. But the amateur Socialist of St. Jim's only beamed upon him.

"Very good, D'Arcy minor. I suppose you would like to investigate the subject of Determinism?" said Skimpole. "You could not have come to a better place. I was about to start on my article for the double number of the 'Weekly'; but if you like I will leave it for a time, and read you some of Professor Loosetop's lucubrations."

"Good!" said Wally. "Suppose we stand it for half an hour."

"Really, D'Arcy minor—"

"Then will you give us one of your pages in the double number?"

"Eh?"

"You see, we want to shove in the first chapters of a great serial, which we've written in confederation."

"Collaboration," said Jameson.

"I mean collaboration. Tom Merry says we can have some space if you leave out some of your piffle—I mean some of your splendid articles."

"Really—"

"Suppose you spout to us instead of writing the article, and let us have the space," Wally suggested. "We can stand it."

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Skimpole blinked at him.

"I am sorry I could not let you have any of my space," he said. "I am very much restricted as it is. However, I shall be glad to give you half an hour's exposition of the great principles of Determinism."

"That you jolly well won't, unless you give us the space in the 'Weekly' too," said Jameson warmly.

"Rather not!" said Curly Gibson, with emphasis.

"It will improve your minds and uplift your outlook," said Skimpole, unheeding, as he opened his volume.

"Determinism proves the injustice of all punishment. It clearly shows that everything in existence being either heredity or environment, heredity and environment are the cause of themselves and everything else, and hence—"

"That's the word," said Jameson. "We'll get hence."

"I did not mean that; I meant—"

"Do you mean to let us have the space in the 'Weekly'?"

"Certainly not. But—"

"Now, be reasonable, Skimmy."

"I am willing to take any amount of trouble to improve your minds, and open up what small intellectual faculties you may possess," said Skimpole. "Now, man is formed of the elements of which he is composed."

"Go hon!"

"Were you aware of that, D'Arcy minor?"

Wally chuckled.

"Well, I fancy I had a faint idea that something of the sort was the case," he remarked sarcastically.

"Then you have already learned one of the greatest truths of Determinism," said Skimpole impressively.

"Man is formed of the elements of which he is composed. These elements are either inherited from his ancestors—that's heredity—or drawn from his surroundings—that's environment. Hence it is said that man is the creature of heredity and environment."

"That is to say that man is man, and what is, is," remarked Wally.

"That would be a common way of putting it, but—"

"But a Determinist can put it into longer words."

"Well, yes, perhaps that is the chief difference," admitted Skimpole. "But, as I was saying, man being the creature of heredity and environment, evidently receives his criminal instincts along with his other instincts, and hence, is it fair to punish a criminal for his crime? Being the slave of circumstances, can he do wrong? And if he does do wrong, should he be punished? That is the great claim of Determinism—that there is no wrong, and therefore it is wrong to punish the wrongdoer."

"How can it be wrong if there is no wrong?" asked Wally.

"Ahem! I—I mean—"

"Besides the chap who punishes him is egged on by his heredity and environment, too, so it can't be helped, anyway," argued Wally.

"Ahem! You see—"

"Now I've proved that Determinism is all rot, you will be willing to give us the room in the 'Weekly,' won't you?"

"You are quite mistaken. It is a common and very erroneous idea that Determinism is all rot, and only suitable for weak brains. Take the case of the unhappy victim of heredity and environment who, say, has committed a murder."

"Ugh!"

"Shall he be punished? My dear friends," said Skimpole, pounding the book with one hand, and addressing an imaginary audience—"my dear friends, certainly not. If you want to punish justly, you must go back to a speck of jelly floating in a primeval sea, and punish that. Yes, my friends. Consider the sad case of a murderer who—"

"Boo-hoo!" said Wally.

The scamp of the Third dabbed his eyes with his handkerchief. Jameson and Gibson took the cue from him, and began to weep too.

Skimpole blinked at them.

"Ah, I have touched your hearts, I see!" he remarked.

"P-p-poor m-murderer!" sobbed Wally.

"P-p-poor chap!" groaned Jameson.

"Consider," said Skimpole, "the unhappy murderer, who, under the influence of heredity and environment—that is to say, being what he is, has done what he has done—"

"Boo-hoo!"

"Ow!"

Wally staggered grief-stricken to the doorway of the study, and Jameson and Gibson followed, their handkerchiefs to their eyes. Weeping copiously, they passed out into the passage.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "I did not guess that these unruly young persons were imbued with such deep feeling. It is very touching. Ow!"

He uttered the last exclamation, and jumped violently,



Tom Merry was seen to run like the wind, and then to back slowly to the ropes that confined the field of play. Then, leaning back, he put out his hand for the catch.

as teeth closed on the leg of his trousers behind, and he sprang away, with Pongo clinging to him.

The great volume of Professor Loosetop went with a crash to the floor.

"Ow! Oh!" howled Skimpole. "D'Arcy minor—ow!—this horrible, dangerous dog! Yow! Help!"

Pongo let go Skimpole's trouser-leg, and fastened upon the open volume. Perhaps he had a fancy for Determinism, or perhaps he wanted to worry something. At all events, he crunched up the pages between his teeth, and darted out of the study with the volume in his jaws.

Skimpole rushed after him.
"Stop him! Oh, stop, Pongo!—My book! My volume! Oh!"

But Pongo had vanished, and with him had vanished Professor Loosetop's invaluable volume.

CHAPTER 11. All Offers Refused.

TOM MERRY was down early the next morning. Between the Special Double Number of the "Weekly" and the coming cricket match with the Grammarians he had plenty to think of. It was a bright, cheery summer's morning, and all nature

seemed to call out to Tom Merry to take his bat and go down to the cricket-ground.

But he nobly resisted the call. He had his duties as an editor to think of.

He went into No. 2 Room on the ground floor before breakfast, while the other fellows were going down to early cricket or an early swim in the rising sunlight.

Monty Lowther and Manners looked in at the door as he took his seat at the editorial table, which was covered with papers and cuttings of all sorts.

"Coming out?" asked Manners.
"You haven't forgotten the match this afternoon, I suppose?" added Lowther.

Tom Merry shook his head.
"Better come and have a knock at the ball," said Lowther persuasively.

"Can't be did."

"Why not?"

"I've got to get the paper ready."

"Rats!"

"Blow the paper!"

The special double number's coming out on Saturday, and it will have to be in the printer's hands on Thursday, at the latest. To-day's Wednesday.

"Yes, but——"

"It's a lovely morning."

"Can't be helped. Buzz off, unless you like to wire in here."

"No fear!"

And Monty Lowther and Manners buzzed off. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked in a few minutes later.

"Comin' down to the cwicket, Tom Mewwy?"

"No."

"There's the Gwammawian match this aftahnoon, you know."

"I know."

"Bettah come and get a little pwactice. I'll bowl to you, so that you will have a weally tough job to keep the sjicks up."

"Thanks. But I'm an editor this morning, and a cricketer this afternoon. Can't do everything at once."

"Yaas, that's vewy twue. If you like, Tom Mewwy, I will captain the side against the Gwammah School this aftahnoon, and you can devote the whole day to your editowial labahs."

"Thank you for nothing."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"You're too generous, Gussy," said Tom Merry gravely.

"I couldn't possibly take advantage of it, you know."

"Yaas, but——"

"So buzz off! You're the third duffer that's interrupted me!"

"Undah the circs.——"

"Shut the door!"

And Tom Merry began to write. D'Arcy gave him an expressive look through his monocle, and went out, and shut the door with unnecessary vigour.

"Hallo, kid!"

Five minutes had passed, and the cheerful halloo through the open window rang through the editorial room, and Tom Merry started and dropped a blot.

He glared at the window.

"Hallo, ass! What are you yelling about?"

Jack Blake grinned in at the window.

He had a cricketing cap and blazer on, and a bat in his hand. He glanced at the table littered with papers.

"Hard at work?" he asked.

"Yes, ass!"

"Well, go it! It's the early worm that's caught by the bird, as the proverb says. By the way, the Grammarian match is this afternoon."

"I know that, ass!"

"You might need a little practice."

"I shall have a go at it presently."

"If you like. I suppose you're pretty busy——"

"Awfully."

"Heaps to do, to get the paper in to the printer before Thursday night?"

"Heaps. No time to waste in talk, you know."

"Ha, ha! Well, I don't mind if I help you——"

"All right. Come and do some of this copying out. I always have to copy out Dig's fist for the printer. I——"

"I don't mean that," said Blake hastily. "I mean that if you like I'll take the trouble of the match off your shoulders this afternoon. I'll captain the side against the Grammar School."

"Thanks."

"You accept?"

"Not much."

"It would save you a lot of trouble," said Blake persuasively. "You could stand out of the match entirely, and I'd find another chap for eleventh man."

"Go hon!"

"It's a good offer."

"Rats!"

"Well, I'm off."

"You must be, to think that you could captain a side against Gordon Gay & Co.," Tom Merry remarked cheerfully. "Off your rocker!"

"Why, you ass——"

"Oh, get along!"

"You chump——"

"I'm busy."

Jack Blake grinned, and marched away with his bat across his shoulder. Tom Merry turned to his editorial labours again.

Kangaroo passed the window and looked in.

"Hallo!" he called in.

Tom Merry looked up with a tired expression.

"Hallo!" he said. "Another duffer!"

"Hard at work, hey?"

"Yes——no time for jaw."

"Ha, ha, ha! I hear that you'll have a big job getting that paper into the printer's hands by Thursday night?"

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"Yes——especially if chumps come and talk to me while I'm at work!"

"Ha, ha! Well, look here, if you'd like a chap to captain the team this afternoon, and save your time——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't mind if I oblige you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Kangaroo.

"You're the third chump who's made the offer!"

"Oh!"

"And I haven't accepted——"

"Oh!"

"And I'm not going to!"

"Rats!"

"If you meet any other duffer coming along with a generous offer like that, tell him to pass the window without poking his head in, will you?"

Noble laughed.

"All right. But, look here, you could take your innings, you know. I'd make you last man in. I wouldn't leave you out of the side."

"You're too good, old chap. But I'm not going to impose on your kindness. Good-bye!"

Kangaroo laughed, and walked on.

Tom Merry resumed his work. He was allowed ten minutes in peace, and then the door opened, and a bumpy forehead and a pair of big spectacles glimmered in.

Tom Merry groaned. It was Skimpole of the Shell, and he had the beaming smile of benevolence upon his face, which showed that he was going to do a good deed, and would be quite impossible to get rid of.

"Ah, I thought I should find you here, Tom Merry!" he said, blinking at the worried editor. "I hear you will be very busy to-day."

"Yes," groaned Tom Merry.

"And as there is the Rylcombe cricket match this afternoon, I have come to make you an offer——"

"Stop!" roared Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

"Shut up!"

"But I've come to make you——"

"Get out!"

"An offer——"

"Travel!"

"To save your time——"

"Outside!"

"Really, Tom Merry——"

Tom Merry jumped up and seized the inkpot.

"Now, then, are you going?"

"Yes, certainly. But——"

"Go, then!"

"But——"

Tom Merry's hand swept up with the inkpot in it. Skimpole dodged out of the door, and closed it behind him hurriedly. He went along the passage blinking in great amazement, and gasped as Gore met him and grasped him by the shoulder.

"Anything up, Skimmy?" asked Gore.

"Yes. Oh, I am quite——really quite astounded! Do you think Tom Merry is quite right in his head, Gore?"

"Ha, ha! What's happened?"

"Why, as he was so busy with the paper, and has a match on this afternoon, I went in to offer to help him copying out the sheets, and——"

"And——"

"And he would not even listen to me, but compelled me to retire hastily——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He has a lot of copying to do, and I thought he would be glad of my assistance," said Skimpole, blinking. "It is very strange, is it not?"

"Ha, ha! I expect there's some mistake."

"I'm afraid Tom Merry is not quite right in his head," said Skimpole sadly. "He has shown weakness in that direction before. He thinks Determinism is all piffle; and he walked away yesterday when I began to explain—— Oh, really, Gore——"

But Gore was walking away too.

CHAPTER 12.

Skimpole Proves Things.

TOM MERRY was looking cheerful enough when he turned up in the Shell class-room that morning for first lesson.

He had worked hard, and the Special Number was well on its way.

Tom Merry had no doubt that he would be able to get it into the printer's hands on Thursday, if he stuck to the work, and made his staff stick to it.

But for the present he dismissed it from his mind.

The cricket match with Rylcombe Grammar School was the next important item on the programme, and Tom Merry gave his thoughts to that—somewhat to the detriment of his lessons, it is to be feared.

The Shell were glad when the welcome signal of dismissal came at last, and they were free for the rest of the day, with the exception of calling-over and evening prep.

They poured out into the quadrangle in a happy crowd. The weather was perfect for cricket, and they fully expected to beat the Grammarians hollow.

"We always have licked 'em!" Monty Lowther remarked. "Except—except on the occasions when they have licked us, of course."

"Hardly worth mentioning," said Manners. "Only they've got a stronger team now than of old," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "The Three Wallabies—Gordon Gay and the two Woottons—are terrors!"

"They are," remarked Kangaroo. "Australians play cricket just as ducks take to the water—you've seen me do it." "Is it cricket you play?" asked Monty Lowther, with an air of polite interest.

"Eh?" "When you're at the wicket, I've sometimes fancied it was a new kind of Indian club drill you were doing."

"Why, you ass—"

"Peace!" said Tom Merry, pushing his arm between the two juniors, for Kangaroo was looking decidedly warlike. "Order! Shut up!"

"The silly ass said—"

"Ring off!"

"But look here—"

"Silence in court. You can jaw after the match."

"Yaas, wathah, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Pway keep the peace now, you know. I wegard you as a pair of asses! I—"

"Tom Merry—"

It was Skimpole. The hero of the Shell nodded to him with a sickly grin. There were times when Skimpole seemed, as Blake remarked, altogether too much and too many.

"Hallo, Skimmy! Hadn't you better go and finish your article for the Special Number?"

"I have finished it."

"Suppose you go and plan out another for the next number?"

"Ahem! I was going to make you an offer—"

"Thanks! I've had all the offers I want."

"But as you have a cricket match on hand—"

"Go and eat coke, Skimmy!"

"I only want to be obliging—"

"Do you really want to do me a favour, Skimmy?"

"Certainly!"

"You don't mind taking a little trouble?"

"Not at all?"

"Or spending all the time between now and dinner on the matter?"

"No. As a sincere Socialist, I am always willing to oblige."

"Then—but it would be asking too much—"

"Not at all—"

"Then—will you walk round the School House—"

"Yes—"

"Till you come to the chapel railings—"

"Yes."

"And sit on the top rail—"

"Sit on the top rail?"

"Yes."

"Very well; and what then?" asked Skimpole, in surprise.

"Stay there!"

"Eh?"

"Till the dinner-bell goes."

"But—"

"That's all—"

"Really, Tom Merry—"

"Thank you very much, Skimmy! I'll never forget this," said Tom Merry gravely, and he walked away with Manners and Lowther towards the junior cricket-ground.

Skimpole blinked in a dazed way at the other fellows. They were all grinning, but the amateur Determinist of St. Jim's could not see anything to grin at.

"I have had fears for Tom Merry's sanity before," he remarked. "This seems to be a clear proof that he is not right in his head."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is no laughing matter, my dear friends," said Skimpole, with a shake of the head. "Of course, we cannot blame Tom Merry for his insanity. It is wholly due to his heredity and environment. Doubtless far back among the monkey-like progenitors of the human race, there was some apelike creature that had a strain of madness in its brain, and that taint has been transmitted to Tom Merry during the count-

less millions of years which have passed during the development of the human race. We should pity Tom Merry—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And regard his case as another proof of the wonderful truths of Determinism. That man derives his descent from an inferior creature—"

"Well, that's a nice way to speak of your governor, Skimmy, I must say!" remarked Blake, with a grave wag of the head.

"I was not speaking of one's immediate parents, Blake, but of the remote ancestors from whom we all derive our descent. That man is the outcome of the evolution of a monkeylike creature, is proved by his very appearance. Take me—"

"Not at a gift!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did not mean in that sense, Blake. Take me as an example, I mean. Cannot you trace in my form, in my features, a strong resemblance to the monkey tribe?" demanded Skimpole enthusiastically. "My dear friends, the truths of evolution glare at you from my eyes, and speak to you with my lips. Cannot you see the very slight modifications that have taken place since I—"

"Now you speak of it, I can," said Blake, while the others roared. "It's often struck me that you bear a great resemblance to a monkey—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And a considerable resemblance to a donkey—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And some likeness to a parrot—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, it's evolution," said Blake. "As Skimpole's evolution isn't very far advanced, you can actually see the process going on. It's marvellous!"

"Really, Blake—"

"The only question is, whether Skimmy oughtn't to be kept in a cage," said Blake. "Is he far advanced enough to be let out loose?"

"Really—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look at him," continued Blake enthusiastically. "How can anyone believe that the great discoveries of science are all rot, when here's Skimpole as a living proof? Look at his features—pure monkey! Listen to his jabber—pure parrot! Remark his brains—pure donkey! Why—"

"I refuse to continue an absurd discussion," said Skimpole, with dignity. "Your inferior intellects are not capable of realising the great truths of evolution and Determinism. I decline—"

"My dear Skimmy, you've converted us!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The Link is no longer Missing," said Blake. "Here we have him, gentlemen—Skimmy is the living proof! Observe his features—"

But Skimpole did not wait for his features to be observed. He walked away, followed by a roar of laughter from the juniors.

CHAPTER 13.

Gordon Gay's Eleven.

GORDON GAY, of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School, jumped out of the brake, before the School House at St. Jim's. Gordon Gay was looking in fine form, and so were all his men—Jack Wootton, and Harry Wootton, Jasper Weird, and Carpenter, Frank Monk, and Lane, and Carboy, and the rest. But there was no doubt that the three Wallabies were the strength of the team, though Frank Monk & Co. were very good seconds. Gordon Gay was a marvel for a junior cricketer, and none was more ready to admit the fact than Frank Monk, his rival in the Grammar School, or Tom Merry, his rival at St. Jim's. Tom Merry shook hands with the Grammarians junior skipper cordially.

"Glad to see you!" he said. "You're looking fit."

"Feeling fit, too!" grinned Gordon Gay. "Lovely weather—good team—great game! What more could a chap want?"

"Nothing."

"Bai Jove, you're quite wight, Gay, deah boy! I twust you will put up a wippin' game, as you did the othah day when I watched you playin' Gweyfwahs!"

"We'll do our best, D'Arcy," said Gordon Gay gravely. "But, of course, you mustn't expect too much of us this time. You see, we're playing against you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And then we had only Harry Wharton and his lot against us."

"Quite wight."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, deah boy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Gay— Oh, so you were wottin'—eh? I wegard you—"

"Gussy," said Jack Blake solemnly, "I hope you are not going to be rude to a visitor."

"Bai Jove!"

"You must excuse him, you Grammar chaps," said Blake. "It's the fault of his training—or else his heredity and environment, as Skimpole would say."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Hallo, here you are!" exclaimed Figgins of the New House, coming up with Kerr and Wynn, in shining white. "Glad to see you. What ripping weather for a game!"

"You are intewwuptin' mé, Figgins!"

"Good! I suppose it's time to start—"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"I've seen to the arrangements about tea," said Fatty Wynn, with a cheerful smile. "It will be a very decent spread!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Undah the circs—"

"Come on, you fellows!"

Arthur Augustus had simply no chance to finish his remarks. Skimpole dodged up to Tom Merry as the latter reached the cricket-pavilion with Gordon Gay.

"Buzz off now, Skimmy, old man! I'm busy!"

"But I was going—"

"Go, then."

"I mean, I was going to offer—"

"Bunk!"

"To offer—"

Blake and Herries seized Skimpole before he could say any more, and ran him forcibly off the ground. They rushed him round the pavilion, and left him in a heap on the grass, blinking and gasping for breath, in a state of great astonishment.

A crowd of juniors was gathering round the field.

Among them the Third Form was very strongly represented. Wally & Co. came up to the pavilion arm-in-arm, with the nerve and assurance of Fifth-Formers at least, Pongo running at his master's heels.

"Tom Merry, old man!" said Wally.

Tom Merry glared at the cheerful fag with all the dignity of a member of the Shell, and junior cricket captain.

"Don't bother, kid!"

"I want to speak to you."

"Buzz off!"

"It's important!"

"Oh, rats! What is it—quick?"

"Skimpole refused to let us have any of his space in the 'Weekly'—"

"Bother the 'Weekly.'"

"But we feel that the Third Form ought to be represented in the Double Number—"

"Hang the Double Number!"

"So if you like," continued Wally imperturbably—"if you like, I'll do a special article describing the cricket match."

"Bosh!"

"I can sling it out all right, you know, and we'll fill up, say, a page with it. I'll sit in the pavilion and take notes for the purpose."

"Oh, rats!"

"You don't refuse?"

"My dear kid, the 'Weekly' is crammed from end to end. And the Third Form aren't admitted anyway. Can't have kids scribbling all sorts of rot in a serious school paper."

Wally turned pink.

"Well, you cheeky ass—"

"Now, buzz off, Wally, and don't bother—we're going to play cricket!"

"Look here—"

"Travel, you fags!" yelled half a dozen voices.

Wally cast a look of defiance round.

"Go and eat coke!" he said. "Look here, we're going to have space—and a fair amount of space—in that Double Number."

"Full up, kid!"

"Then leave out some of the bosh!"

"Buzz off! Bunk! Get! Absquatulate!"

"Poof!"

"Kick them out!" said Manners.

And half a dozen sturdy cricketers helped Wally & Co. off the scene. Somewhat hustled and bustling, the heroes of the Third stopped at a safe distance, and looked wrathfully at one another.

"What do you think of that for cheek?" demanded Wally, adjusting his collar, which was even less tidy than usual.

"Rotten!" said Jameson.

"Are we going to stand it?"

"No fear!"

"Are we going to be left out of that Double Number?"

"No!"

"Blessed if I see how we're to get into it," said Curly

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Gibson. "Tom Merry will make it up for press himself, and send it to the printer. We can't get into it without his permission, I suppose."

Wally snorted.

"You leave it to me."

"But how—"

"I'm going to have an article on this cricket match in the number," said Wally determinedly, "and if they won't take it, then instead of a flattering article, they can have a slating one."

"Ha, ha! But how—"

"Blessed if I can see how, either," said Jameson.

"That's because you've not got my brains, my son," said Wally patronisingly. "Come along, and let's watch the match, and I'll explain."

The match was beginning now.

Tom Merry had won the toss, and the St. Jim's Juniors were to bat first. Jack Blake and Monty Lowther went out to open the innings, and Gordon Gay led his merry men out to field.

The crowd was thickening round the ropes now.

There was certain to be a good game of cricket between two teams like Tom Merry's and Gordon Gay's, and it would be well worth watching. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, strolled down with Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, to see the St. Jim's innings open.

It opened well for St. Jim's.

Blake and Lowther made the runs fast, and the score was at twenty when Lowther was caught out by Gordon Gay. Figgins took his place, and went on scoring.

Most of the home batsmen were in good form, and most of them knocked up a goodly number of runs. Fatty Wynn had the misfortune to be dismissed for a duck's egg; but then Fatty was excellent as a bowler, and it was not as a bat that Tom Merry relied on him. Fatty's turn would come in the Grammarian innings, when his comrades were looking to him for many wickets.

Gordon Gay played up well as a bowler. Besides dismissing Fatty Wynn for a blank, he sent out Kerr for 8, and Manners for 2.

But the runs mounted up at a fair average speed, till Tom Merry came in, and joined Figgins at the wicket.

Between them the two juniors made the fur fly.

The score topped the hundred, and still they went on batting merrily.

"Jolly good!" said Fatty Wynn, looking on, to Kerr.

"Figgy is playing a grand game this afternoon, Kerr, old chap."

"Grand!" agreed Kerr.

"It will make a good item for the article in the 'Weekly.'"

"Jolly good!"

"Looks as if the innings will be a jolly long one," Fatty Wynn remarked. "We're going to have tea after the first innings."

"Just so!"

"Looks like being protracted, I think."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Kerr, whose eyes never left the players.

"I think perhaps I ought to go and have something—"

"Rot!"

"Just a tart or two—"

"Bosh!"

"I'm feeling awfully peckish. I get very hungry at this time of the year," said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "I really think I ought to go over to the tuckshop, and—"

Kerr took a firm grasp on his plump chum's arm.

"You jolly well won't, Fatty!"

"Now, look here—"

"Rats!"

"I'm hungry."

"Wait for tea."

"You'll make me wish that Gordon Gay will take Tom Merry's wicket, Kerr."

"Poof!"

"I'd better have a snack, or I sha'n't be in condition to bowl," argued Fatty Wynn.

"You're not going to have any snacks," said Kerr mercifully. "You're going to wait for tea. Then you're going to have some stale brown bread-and-butter and weak tea, and nothing else."

"Look here, Kerr—"

"We're not going to chuck the game away for you to feed on tarts, Fatty. You can have all the tarts you want after the match."

"Yes, but—"

"That's settled."

"Leggo my arm, old chap."

"Sha'n't!"

"I—I want to take a little stroll," urged Fatty Wynn.

Kerr chuckled.

"Yes—towards the tuckshop!"

"Well, you see—"

"You can stay here."

Fatty Wynn grunted. He glanced at the game, and he glanced towards the distant shop. He grunted again, and tried to jerk his arm away. But the Scottish junior held him fast.

"I say, Kerr, old man, leggo."

"Rubbish!"

"Look here, I'm going—"

"You're not," said Kerr calmly.

"Leggo, my arm."

"I won't!"

"Look here, I—I'll jolly well punch your head if you don't let go."

"Punch away!" said Kerr cheerfully. "I'm not going to let go!"

And Fatty Wynn resigned himself to his fate.

CHAPTER 14.

Fatty Wynn is Looked After.

FIGGINS and Tom Merry were putting in a great innings.

The Grammarians had plenty of leather-hunting to do, and some of them were looking very red and panting as the innings continued.

The score stood at 120, and still the merry batsmen played on, and the ball made its long journeys, and the fieldsmen panted after it.

"My hat!" said Gordon Gay. "This won't do!"

"Rotten!" Frank Monk agreed. "Why don't you bowl them out?"

Gay sniffed.

"It's not so easy."

"Oh, go it, old fellow!"

"Well, I'll try another over," said Gordon Gay, and his lips set determinedly.

Gordon Gay put all he knew into that over.

But the wicket did not fall to his bowling—it was to the fielding of Frank Monk that Tom Merry's stumps went down.

Monk made a difficult catch in the slips, and there was a cheer. The St. Jim's crowd were quite keen enough sportsmen to cheer a successful enemy.

"How's that?" roared the Grammarians.

"Out!"

Tom Merry carried out his bat. An ovation greeted him when he returned to the pavilion. He had put forty runs on the score himself, and his comrades were proud of him.

"Next man in," said Tom Merry. "You're the chap, Kangy."

Kangaroo went to the wicket.

The Cornstalk junior began to bat in a way that showed that he was in earnest. Two boundaries, a 2 and a 3, started the innings for him, giving him 13 for the over.

"Another of 'em!" said Gordon Gay.

And Kangaroo put 20 on the score before he was stumped.

"Last man in!"

The innings was drawing to its end.

But it was not finished yet, as Figgins and the last man in continued the fight in good style, and added run after run.

"Bravo!" roared Kerr, as Figgins put on 3.

"Hurrah!" said Fatty Wynn. "I say, Kerr, I'm jolly hungry."

"Bravo!"

"Hip-pip!"

"We shall have a jolly late tea—"

"Blow tea! Hurrah!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "There's the last!"

The wicket had gone down to a smart return from Jack Wootton, and St. Jim's were all down. But it was not Figgins's wicket. Figgins was "not out."

Kerr let go Fatty Wynn, to slap his long-legged chum on the back as he came off the field. Figgins was looking flushed and pleased.

"Ripping, Figgy!" said Kerr. "Real ripping!"

"Jolly good!"

"Good old Figgy!"

"Good old New House!"

"Well, haven't you got anything to say, Fatty?" demanded Kerr, turning his head. "What—why—where is Fatty? He was here a moment ago."

"Ha, ha! He was hungry, you know," grinned Lowther.

"The bouncer! He's after the tarts."

And Kerr dashed off in the direction of Dame Taggles's little tuckshop behind the elms. Figgins, laughing, followed him. They were determined that Fatty Wynn should uphold the honour of the New House that day, and that he should not risk spoiling his form by cramming pastries, till the match was well over.

Fatty Wynn had reached the door of the tuckshop when his two chums overtook him. He saw them coming, and whipped into the shop like lightning.

As Figgins and Kerr dashed in, Fatty had caught up a jam tart from a dish on the counter, and was raising it whole to his mouth.

Kerr reached out and grabbed at it, and knocked Fatty's hand violently, and the tart was dabbed upon his nose instead of into his mouth.

"Groo!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

The jam was plastering all over his nose and mouth.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Figgins.

"Ow! Groo!"

"You fat duffer! Come out!"

"How can I—groo!—come out when—groo!—I'm smothered with—groo!—groo!—jam?" demanded Fatty Wynn.

"We'll wash you at the fountain."

"Look here, I'm hungry. I—"

"We're going to have tea now."

"Yes, but I want a good tea. Before bowling, a chap ought to lay a solid foundation. Without laying a solid foundation, you can't expect to do anything."

"Are you coming?"

"No. You see—"

"Collar him!"

"Look here, you dummies—"

Kerr paid for the ruined tart, and then the two chums seized Fatty Wynn, one by each arm, and he was rushed out of the tuckshop.

He resisted wildly.

"Stop it, you duffers!" he gasped. "I—I simply must have a few tarts, and—and a pie—"

"Anything else?" grinned Figgins.

"Well, some ham and beef, and eggs, and doughnuts—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And some cake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, look here, Figgins, do be reasonable—"

"I'm going to be—and so are you. Come on!"

"Don't be a beast! I—"

"Help him along, Kerr!"

"What-ho!"

"Ow! I'll go!"

And Fatty Wynn went; and the sight of his jammy face caused a yell of laughter to go up among the cricketers.

CHAPTER 15.

The Grammarian Innings.

FATTY WYNN washed the jam off his face, and came to the tea-party. Figgins and Kerr were always his inseparable chums; but they were more inseparable than ever now. They meant to look after Fatty Wynn. If he were once given his head, as Blake expressed it in his horsey way, he would never stop, and he would be more fit to be carried home to bed than to bowl against fellows like the Grammarians. It was necessary to watch him; and Figgins and Kerr performed that duty with noble fidelity.

They almost counted the mouthfuls that Fatty Wynn ate, and they saw that he had no pastry, cake, and no new bread. Fatty Wynn grunted and remonstrated in vain. His chums were simply determined to keep him fit.

"Wait till after the match, my son," said Figgins, in a fatherly way. "You shall clear out Mrs. Taggles's shop then, if you like."

"How am I to bowl if I don't lay a solid foundation—"

"How are you to bowl if you do?"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Figgy!"

"I'm not going to be," chuckled Figgins. "I'm going to look after you. You're not going to gorge, my son. You're going to keep fit."

Fatty Wynn eyed the tables, piled up with good things, almost tearfully.

And he received no sympathy, either. The fellows were all grinning.

"Look here, Figgins," said Fatty. "We've been friends for a long time—"

"Of course we have."

"I thought at one time that it would last all our lives, after we'd left school," said Fatty Wynn pathetically.

"Well, won't it?" said Figgins.

"I don't see how I can keep up your friendship if you treat me like this. It's—it's not chummy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"I'm looking—I'm watching you eat," grinned Figgins.

"Beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're a beast, too, Kerr."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Kerr.

Fatty Wynn gave it up. His chums were evidently past reasoning with.

It was a merry tea-party, and the Grammarians and the Saints alike enjoyed it.

The St. Jim's score had stopped at 160, which was as good a score as a junior side could hope to put up.

Their business now was to prevent the Grammar School from exceeding it; as there was one innings to each side in the match.

There was not likely to be time for more; indeed, the time would probably be very close as it was, if the Grammarians held out well.

And they meant to do so.

Wally cheerfully joined the cricketers at tea, seating himself beside his major, who turned a glance upon him through his eyeglass.

"What are you doin' here, Wally?" he asked.

"Sitting down," said D'Arcy minor cheerfully.

"I mean, what are you doin', you ass?"

"Eating chocolate cake."

"Weally, Wally—"

"I knew you'd be glad to see me here," said Wally.

"That's the best of having a real, nice, brotherly chap for a major, Gussy."

"H'm—"

"What's that blessed fag doing here?" asked Kangaroo.

"Hop it, young 'un!"

"I'm Gussy's guest."

"Rats!"

"Ask Gussy."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pway don't be wude to my guest, Kangaroo. Weally, Wally, you need not eat all the cake!"

"Wasn't it put here to be eaten?" said Wally. "Besides, I'm not eating it all; I'm putting some away in my pockets for Jameson and Curly."

"Weally, deah boy—"

"That's all right, Gus; don't you worry. Pass the biscuits."

And D'Arcy, quite overcome by his minor's coolness, passed the biscuits.

Tea over, the Grammarians prepared for their innings.

"We've got to get one hundred and sixty-one," Gordon Gay remarked to his comrades. "Of course, we're going to get it. But buck up, and do your level best."

"What-ho!" said Jack Wootton.

And Jack Wootton and Frank Monk went on to open the innings.

Tom Merry put his men to field, and tossed the ball to Fatty Wynn.

"Now then, Fatty!" he remarked.

Fatty Wynn grinned as his hand closed over the round, red ball.

When he had a cricket ball in his hand, Fatty was all himself, and he forgot even the fact that he was hungry.

He trotted to his place cheerfully.

"Now look out for something good," said Pratt of the New House gleefully.

And Fatty Wynn did not belie the expectations of his comrades.

He took his little run, and turned himself half over, and the ball came down the pitch like a shell.

Frank Monk was a second too late.

The ball curled in under his bat, and there was a click of a falling wicket. The bails were on the ground.

Monk gave a low whistle.

"How's that?" yelled all St. Jim's, in delight.

"Out!"

"Good old Fatty!"

"Go it!"

"Man in!" said Gordon Gay, unmoved.

And Harry Wootton went in to join his brother.

Harry was feeling and looking very fit, and he stood up at the wicket as if he meant to stay there for a considerable time. He did mean to, as a matter of fact, but it did not work out like that.

Harry Wootton proposed, and Fatty Wynn disposed, so to speak. The Welsh junior took his little run, and swept himself over like a catherine-wheel, and—

Clack!

Wootton stared blankly at a wrecked wicket.

"Hurrah!" roared St. Jim's.

And a ripple of hand clapping went round the field. Harry Wootton carried out his bat with a long face he vainly tried to keep unconcerned.

Third man in was Carpenter. He came down to the wicket with something of a swagger, being of a rather swanking sort. He meant to show both St. Jim's and the Grammar School that batting was batting, when he batted.

He swaggered to the wicket, and took up his stand, and occupied it for exactly the length of time that it took Fatty Wynn to deliver the third ball of the over. Then—

Crash!

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Two stumps were down, and the bails, and Carpenter turned crimson, and bit his lip. The crowd did not need the umpire's laconic "out."

They roared.

"Bravo, Wynn!"

"Hurrah!"

"The hat trick, by George!"

"Good old Fatty!"

"Gallant little Wales!"

Figgins left his place in the long field, and rushed up to Fatty Wynn, and slapped him on the shoulder with unbounded enthusiasm. The fat Fourth-Former roared.

"Ow! Chuck it! What are you up to?"

"Bravo! Rippling! Gorgeous!" gasped Figgins.

"Ow! You ass!"

"Fatty, old man, you shall have as many tarts as you can eat after the match," said Figgins, in the warmth of his enthusiasm.

Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened.

"Good! I'll remind you of that, Figgy!"

"Get back, Figgy!" called out Tom Merry.

And Figgins went back to his place. The next man was coming in, and he was Gordon Gay. Gay had intended to come in later, but he decided to appear sooner, to stop the rot in the Grammarian batting, if he could.

"It's Gay next," said Monty Lowther, from short slip.

Tom Merry nodded, and waved his men away deep. He knew the kind of hitting he might expect from the Cornstalk.

And he was not disappointed. Gordon Gay stood up to Fatty Wynn's bowling, and began to score off it, too.

The over finished with six runs to the credit of Gordon Gay, and the Grammarians breathed again. They had begun to fear that the innings was to be a walk over for the St. Jim's bowlers.

Jack Blake bowled the second over, and Wootton was caught out in the slips, Monty Lowther accounting for the ball.

Four down for four.

The Grammarians looked blue.

But a change came over the spirit of their dream, when Gordon Gay had a fair chance with the bowling. While Fatty Wynn was bowling, Gay was very careful; but he was too strong for the other bowlers, and he hit out mightily.

He sent the leather here, there, and everywhere, and the St. Jim's fieldsmen began to take more exercise than they liked.

Lane had joined the Cornstalk at the wickets, and Lane could be relied upon to put in any amount of steady stonewalling when necessary, and to play a wholly unselfish game for the sake of the side.

And that was what Lane did now.

He backed up Gordon Gay splendidly, stealing a run every now and then, but leaving most of the run getting to the Wallaby.

The Grammarian score, which had started so badly, jumped up to fifty by the time Lane was caught out by Figgins. Gordon Gay was still at the wicket, batting away as well as ever.

CHAPTER 16.

Well Caught.

THE St. Jim's bowlers had exhausted themselves against Gordon Gay's wicket, without being able to damage it. The Australian junior batted wonderfully. Even Fatty Wynn could make no impression upon him.

Fatty Wynn was beginning to look a little grim.

The affair had resolved itself into a duel between him and Gordon Gay, for it was abundantly clear by this time that no other bowler in the St. Jim's ranks could dream of touching the wicket, and Gay gave no chances to the fieldsmen.

Even Kerr, who was one of the most alert fellows in the field, quick as lightning, and never missing a chance, seemed to have no chance with Gordon Gay.

The score crept up steadily.

Whenever it was possible, Tom Merry put Fatty Wynn on to bowl against Gay's wicket; but the wicket did not fall. Fatty Wynn's bowling gave the batsman plenty of trouble, and his scoring off the Welsh junior was slight, however. But when he was dealing with the other bowlers, Gordon Gay made the fur fly.

One hundred runs for six wickets—that was the total now, and Gordon Gay was still at the sticks, batting away as cheerfully as ever.

His comrades cheered and clapped him loudly from the pavilion, and so did the St. Jim's crowd, for that matter.

It really looked as if he would never be moved, and would remain at the wickets to be not out at the finish.

Carboy came in to join him.

Carboy was a rather slim youth, and affected an elegant

attitude at the wicket. But he had his eyes open, and was on the watch for chances.

He knocked up ten runs for himself before he was stumped.

Then Hanks came in, and kept his end up pretty well, while Gordon Gay did the scoring. Run after run was added.

One hundred and twenty, 130, 140 for seven wickets, 150 for eight.

And Gordon Gay was not gone yet.

Tom Merry whistled softly.

"Tough beast, Tom Merry," said Fatty Wynn, as the field crossed over, with a nod towards Gordon Gay, who was looking as cool as a cucumber. "I don't believe I can shift him."

"You've done jolly well, anyway, Fatty."

"He's good," said Fatty Wynn; "but I think we'll clear the others out, and leave him not out with less than 160."

"By Jove! I hope so."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This is gettin' decidedly excitin'. They only want eleven wuns to win."

"They sha'n't get them."

Jasper Weird came in to join Gordon Gay. Fatty Wynn was bowling to his wicket, and at the third ball that wicket fell for a duck's egg.

Weird went out, and the word ran through the crowd—"Last man in."

The last Grammarian batsman came in to join Gordon Gay.

The excitement was intense now.

The Grammar School wanted ten to tie, eleven to win, and if Gordon Gay once had the bowling, there wasn't much doubt that they would get them.

But five more balls of the over remained to be delivered against O'Donnell, and though O'Donnell was a good bat, he was not anything like a match for Fatty Wynn. Fatty Wynn understood how much depended upon that over, and he put all he knew into the bowling.

Gordon Gay composed his face, with a fervent, inward longing that O'Donnell would prove equal to the strain. If O'Donnell's wicket fell, Rylcombe School's last chance was gone. Gordon Gay would be "not out," but that would be a poor comfort.

Nicky O'Donnell understood how much depended on him, too, and he looked a little flustered as he stood at his wicket to receive Fatty Wynn's bowling.

But he was well on his guard. Fatty Wynn sent down a lightning ball, and more by luck than anything else, O'Donnell saved his stumps, the ball glancing off his bat, and very nearly giving short ship a catch.

Then O'Donnell pulled himself together.

He set himself doggedly to defend his wicket, and save himself through the over, without a thought of scoring runs.

That could safely be left to Gordon Gay, if he succeeded in keeping the game alive till the Australian had a chance to score.

Fatty Wynn sent down ball after ball.

He had performed the hat-trick at the beginning of the innings against three batsmen as strong as O'Donnell, or stronger. But he could not take O'Donnell's wicket now. The Irish lad defended himself gallantly, and stopped every ball in turn. There was a breathless hush as Fatty Wynn delivered the last ball of the over. But O'Donnell stopped it dead on the crease; and there was a gasp of relief from the Grammarians.

"We're saved," said Frank Monk.

"Splendid," said Jack Wootton, rubbing his hand. "Just you bouncers wait till Gay begins to score, that's all."

The field crossed over.

The bowling was to Gordon Gay now, and Jack Blake went on to bowl. Blake was good, though not up to Fatty Wynn's form, but for that over, at least, Fatty Wynn was off. Blake did his best, and so did Gordon Gay. The first ball from Blake was cut away to the boundary, and it gave the batsmen four without the trouble of moving from their wickets.

"Hurray!" roared the Grammarians.

They had cause to rejoice.

Only seven more wanted to win, and Gordon Gay batting. The Grammarians had all made up their minds that the game was over but shouting.

Tom Merry's lips were set hard.

He did not expect the bowling to take Gordon Gay's wicket, but he was on the alert for the slightest chance of a catch.

Down came the ball again, and away it went, and another boundary was scored for Gordon Gay, bringing the Grammar School score up to a total of 158.

Three wanted to win!

"Bravo, Gay!"

"Go it!"

"Hurray for the Grammar School!"

Gordon Gay stood quietly and composedly at the wicket. He meant to get those other three. He knew that O'Donnell would never live through another over at the wicket. He had

only survived by luck, as it was. If Gay did not score the runs that were wanted, they would never be scored.

Gay waited for the ball to come down.

Blake, with a grim face, bowled—what he felt would be the last ball. Gay stood ready to swipe, and he swiped.

Click!

Bat met ball, and away went the leather—away—away—where? The batsmen were running, running at top speed.

Where was the ball? Was it a boundary?

There was a roar.

"Merry! Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry was seen to run like the wind, then to stop, then to turn, then to back away, slowly—slowly—his eyes on a round dot in the air.

Back—and back—to the ropes that confined the field of play—till they were touching him, and he had to lean back to put up his hand for the catch—back, his hand in the air, and then—

Click!

The ball was in his palm!

There was a wild roar from St. Jim's.

"Caught!"

"Oh, well caught!"

Tom Merry's eyes sparkled. He sent up the ball, straight as a die, and caught it again in his palm as it came down.

"Hurray!"

"Well caught, Merry! St. Jim's wins!"

St. Jim's had won!

On the verge of victory, Gordon Gay had been caught out, and it was O'Donnell who was "not out." It was a stroke of good fortune—and good play—for St. Jim's, and the hardest of luck for the Grammarians.

But Gordon Gay took it well.

"That was a jolly good catch, Tom Merry," he said.

"And a lucky one for us," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I must congratulate you on your innings, Gay. It was weally wippin'."

An opinion with which the rest of St. Jim's cordially agreed.

CHAPTER 17.

Fatty Wynn Has Enough.

"GOOD-BYE, Gay! Good-bye, Monkey!"

"Good-bye!"

"See you again soon!"

"Yes, we'll lick you next time!"

And the Grammarian brake rolled off, crammed with Gordon Gay & Co., in the summer dusk, and the St. Jim's fellows, crowded at the gates, waved their caps after their friendly foes.

The brake rolled down the road with a ringing cheer after it, and vanished in the dusk of the summer evening, and Tom Merry & Co. turned back to the school.

They were in high spirits.

The victory over the Grammar School had been a very close one, but it was a victory, and the Saints rejoiced in it.

School House and New House were on the best of terms for once.

Tom Merry had certainly snatched victory from the jaws of defeat by that splendid catch at the finish; but without Fatty Wynn's bowling, the Grammarians would have been too far ahead for a single catch to decide the fate of the match.

So it was admitted on all hands that honours were equally divided between the two houses, and they rejoiced in concert.

The new state of perfect peace was very fortunate, considering that the two sides had to collaborate to get out the Special Double Number of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

Tom Merry had ordained that most of the remaining editorial work was to be done that evening without fail, as the complete copy was to be sent over to the printer after morning lessons the next day.

But Fatty Wynn, for once, was thinking of something infinitely more important to him—than the Special Number.

He tapped Figgins on the arm, as the crowd of juniors turned in after bidding good-bye to the departing Grammarians.

The long-limbed Figgins looked down at his plump chum with a genial grin.

"Well, Fatty?"

"I'm ready," said Wynn.

"Eh?"

"I'm ready."

Figgins looked puzzled.

"Ready for what?"

"Surely you haven't forgotten?" exclaimed Fatty, in astonishment.

"Forgotten what?"

"Well, I'm blessed if I thought a thing like that could slip anybody's mind," said Fatty Wynn.

"A thing like that! Like what? What on earth are you talking about?"

"What you said on the cricket-field."

Figgins wrinkled his brows in perplexed thought.

"Did I say anything on the cricket-field?"

"Oh, come now, Figgy—"

"I said Bravo, and Hurray, and Buck-up," said Figgins.

"I don't remember saying anything else in particular."

Fatty Wynn looked at him reproachfully.

"You said it after the hat-trick—don't you remember?—that I was to have as many tarts as I could eat."

"My hat! Yes. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm ready."

"So you shall, Fatty!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We're all in this, eh, you fellows?"

"Yaas, wathah! I considah that Wynn's bowlin' has as much to do with lickin' the Gwammawians as my battin'."

"Go hon!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Quite right," said Jack Blake. "The honours of the match are with Tom Merry and Fatty Wynn, and it's our treat."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, stuff!" said Tom Merry.

"No false modesty, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "It's quite wight. Even my battin' wasn't up to your form."

"Gussy, you're growing too modest," said Monty Lowther.

"Not at all, deah boy. I'm quite sewious."

"This way to the tuckshop," said Fatty Wynn.

And he led the way without waste of time.

Dame Taggles smiled a smile of welcome as the little crowd of cricketers poured into the tuckshop.

"Go ahead, you two," said Figgins. "Order what you like."

"Yaas, wathah! It's our twent."

"Go it!"

"Well, a ginger-pop will do for me," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"I'll have a ginger-pop, too," said Fatty Wynn. "I'll start with a few tarts; I don't think I shall eat very much after my exertions. Give me a dozen twopenny ones, please, Mrs. Taggles."

"Certainly, Master Wynn!"

Dame Taggles pushed over the dish of tarts, and Fatty Wynn started.

Fatty Wynn's unearthly appetite was a subject for endless jokes among his schoolfellows, as a rule; but under the peculiar circumstances, they could not very well grin now. He was their guest, and that altered the case. If he ate tarts without ever stopping, they could not very well venture upon a smile.

Fatty Wynn went slowly and steadily through the dish of tarts.

"These are prime!" he said.

"Glad you like them," said Figgins heartily.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Have some more," said Monty Lowther.

"I'll try some more, please, Mrs. Taggles."

Six more jam-tarts vanished in three minutes.

Fatty Wynn rubbed his hands.

"I like 'em," he said. "Upon the whole, I think I'll have some."

The juniors could not help gasping a little.

Fatty Wynn evidently regarded the number he had eaten simply as a taste, and now he had decided to have some.

He had some.

Mrs. Taggles, with growing wonder in her face—though she knew Fatty Wynn, too—pushed over plate after plate of jam-tarts.

Fatty Wynn did not waste time in words.

He hardly looked round him.

All his attention was centred on the luscious tarts.

One after another they disappeared.

The other juniors disposed of various refreshments, but they were soon finished, and then they had no occupation but to watch Fatty Wynn.

They watched him!

With growing wonder and admiration they watched him.

With the same serious and earnest attention that he gave to taking wickets when he was on the cricket-field, Fatty Wynn devoted himself to eating tarts.

The juniors soon lost count of the number, and probably Fatty Wynn did so also. Dame Taggles was keeping count, however, for business reasons.

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn, breaking a long silence.

"Like 'em?" murmured Figgins.

"Yes!"

"Have some—some more?"

"With pleasure, old chap!"

"Shove 'em over, Mrs. Taggles!"

"Certainly, Master Figgins."

"Half-time," murmured Monty Lowther. "Look out for the restart. I hope there won't be any casualties."

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Tom Merry gave his humorous chum a warning glance.

Fatty Wynn was the guest of the party, and humour was out of place.

Dame Taggles brought out more and more tarts, and Fatty Wynn went steadily on.

His fat face was growing fatter and shinier, and his active jaws worked with less vigour than at first.

But he kept it up gallantly.

He paused for a moment as a fresh dish was cleared.

"I say, this will be running you fellows into something," he remarked.

"Not at all, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus. "Go it!"

"The agreement was as many as you could eat," said Figgins, with a grin. "Keep it up. It's a pleasure to watch you."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Well, I don't mind," said Fatty Wynn affably. "It's a pleasure to me, too. I'll have a dozen more, Mrs. Taggles."

And he recommenced.

Tom Merry looked a little alarmed. He really began to think that the fat Fourth-Former would be ill. But he did not feel that anything could be said. None of the juniors wished to appear mean, or to be placing any restriction upon the appetite of a guest.

But when the new dozen had vanished, and Fatty Wynn signed to Dame Taggles to hand over more, Figgins gave him a gentle tap on the shoulder.

"I—I say, Fatty," he murmured. "I don't want to stop you, you know, but—but do you think your inside will stand it?"

"Oh, that's all right, Figgy!"

"You see, you might be ill."

"Oh, no! It's a good way to keep fit, to lay a solid foundation."

"Yes, but—"

"Thank you, Mrs. Taggles! These are prime!"

And Fatty Wynn went on.

But his efforts perceptibly slackened as he progressed through the new dozen.

At the eleventh tart he paused, hesitated, and then slowly ate.

A sight very seldom seen at St. Jim's was presented to the eyes of the juniors—Fatty Wynn had had enough.

The twelfth tart vanished still more slowly, and some of it was left on the plate.

Fatty Wynn looked round with a sickly smile.

"They're good," he said.

"Had enough?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, thanks!"

"Won't you try another dozen?"

Fatty Wynn almost shuddered.

"Thanks, no!"

"Have some ices?" suggested Monty Lowther.

"Ow! No!"

"What about one of those nice, fat pork-pies?"

"Groo! No!"

"Or some fat bacon?"

"I—I think I'll go," murmured Fatty Wynn. "Thank you fellows so m-m-much!"

And he moved with slow and heavy steps out of the tuckshop. Near the door he paused, and made a grip at the wall. Figgins and Kerr hurried to him.

"I—I feel rather queer," murmured Fatty Wynn. "A touch of—of sunstroke, I suppose; it was awfully sunny this afternoon."

Figgins and Kerr grinned, and without a word they helped their fat chum across the quad, to the New House. Tom Merry settled up the bill—which was a large one—leaving the shares round to be collected afterwards. He glanced after Figgins & Co. as he left the tuckshop.

"Poor old Fatty!" he murmured.

And the School House juniors chuckled softly.

In the darkness of the night, in the Fourth Form dormitory of the New House, Figgins woke up suddenly.

He did not know what had awakened him, and he sat up in bed, certain that he had heard something, but not quite knowing what.

"Any of the fellows awake?" he said softly.

"Oh!"

"Eh!"

"Ow!"

"Who's that?"

"Ow! It's me!"

"Fatty!"

"Yow! Yes! Yah!"

"What's the matter?"

"N-n-nothing!"

"Then what are you making a row for in the middle of the night?" demanded Figgins warmly.

"Ow!"

Figgins blinked at him. As his eyes became used to the darkness, he made out the form of Fatty Wynn, sitting up in bed, with the clothes huddled round him.

"I say, Fatty old man, what's the matter?" said Figgins anxiously. "Are you ill?"

"N-n-n-no, not exactly!"

"Then what is it?"

"I've g-g-got a pain!"

"A pain?"

"Well, n-n-not exactly a pain—an ache."

"An ache!"

"Ow! Yes!"

"Where?"

"Tummy," said Fatty Wynn, with significant brevity.

Figgins did his best to suppress a chuckle, but it would come out. He chuckled, and Fatty Wynn grunted.

"Ow! Oh! Groo!"

"Poor old Fatty! It was the tarts."

"Bosh! It was the—the sun this afternoon. Sunstroke takes effect on chaps in all sorts of ways. Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groo!"

"I'm awfully sorry, Fatty! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroo!"

"Poor old Fatty! Don't go for them again so much at once. Take it easy next time."

"It was the sun, you ass!"

Figgins chuckled again and closed his eyes. He was soon asleep; but there was little sleep for the Falstaff of the New House that night. For once Fatty Wynn had overdone it, and he was paying the penalty.

CHAPTER 18.

Wally's Dodge.

WALLY was looking out for Tom Merry when the Shell came down the next morning. Tom Merry made straight for the editorial room, and the hero of the Third followed him there.

"I've got something to say to you, Tom Merry," he remarked.

"Buck up, then," said the editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly," briefly. "I've got to get the Special Number ready."

"I've sketched out an article describing the cricket match yesterday—"

"Good! Now you can burn it."

"Can't you find room in the paper?"

"Sorry, kid—no room."

"It will only take a page."

"Sorry—no room."

"Leave out Skimpole's bosh!"

"Can't be did!"

"Or Blake's rubbish."

"Impossible!"

"Or your own piffle—"

"Look here—"

"Mind, my article's going in."

Tom Merry laughed.

"I don't think," he remarked. And he went into the editorial room and closed the door.

Wally bestowed a sounding kick on the door, and went away in wrath.

Jameson and Gibson met him at the end of the passage.

"Well, what luck?" demanded Jameson.

"He's as obstinate as a mule," grunted Wally.

"No room for the article?"

"That's it."

"Well, it was his last chance," said Jameson darkly.

"He's only got himself to thank for the consequences."

Wally nodded.

"Yes, rather! If all St. Jim's giggle at him and his Special Number, it's his own fault. I've done my best for him."

And the heroes of the Third departed whispering. There was evidently some dark plot toward among the fags.

Tom Merry laboured at his editorial task, and several fellows looked in at the window and wished him luck. Skimpole, of the Shell, came into the room by the door, and blinked at him benevolently.

"Still hard at work, Merry?" he remarked.

"Yes," grunted Tom Merry.

"Perhaps I can help you."

"You could—if you wouldn't talk all the time!"

"Really, Merry—"

"Cheese it!"

"I am quite willing to repeat my offer of yesterday," said Skimpole.

Tom Merry stared at him.

"Eh? The Rylcombe match is played, ass, and your giddy offer to captain the side is rather too late this morning!"

Skimpole returned his stare with an amazed blink.

"I do not understand you, Merry. I came here yesterday to offer to help you with the copying and preparing for the press, and you acted in an unaccountable violent manner—"

Tom Merry burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I really see no cause for laughter, Merry!"

"You see, ass, I had just had a heap of offers to take the captaincy of the cricket team off my shoulders, and I thought you were another of the duffers!"

"Really—"

"Never mind! Shut up, and wire in!"

And Skimpole wired in, and what was still more obliging, shut up. His aid was very useful, too, and they got ahead at a good speed.

Tom Merry was very satisfied when they knocked off for breakfast.

"How goes the Special Number, kid?" asked Monty Lowther, as he met his chum going towards the dining-room.

"Finished."

"Good! I was thinking of coming to lend a hand."

Tom Merry sniffed.

"Well, you're too jolly late! It's done—quite ready for the press, and we shall get it into the printer's hands to-day. As it's so late, there won't be time for us to have the proofs to correct, but that won't matter. Mr. Tipe is a careful printer, and we can rely on him. Besides, it would be no joke to have to read over the proofs of a Special Double Number, as a matter of fact, especially as I get such a jolly lot of assistance from the staff!"

"Tom Merry!"

It was Wally again. Tom Merry looked at him with a smile.

"Well, kid, what do you want?"

"I'll take the Special Number down to the printer's for you, if you like," said Wally affably. "I'm going down to Mother Murphy's after morning lessons."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Thanks, Wally, but there might be an accident!"

"I should be awfully careful, of course!"

"Still, we won't bother you!"

"Cheeky young rascal!" said Monty Lowther, as Wally walked away with his hands in his pockets. "More likely than not to play some jape with the copy."

"Exactly what I was thinking. The Third Form have collaborated in an article for the 'Weekly,' and I haven't been able to find room for it," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Better keep an eye on the stuff, then," said Lowther.

"It's all right. I've locked the door of the room, and I've got the key in my pocket."

And the chums of the Shell went in to breakfast.

When the bell rang for the first lesson, Wally went into the Third Form-room with a thoughtful frown on his face.

He glanced several times at Mr. Selby, the Form-master. The master of the Third was not a nice-tempered man; and Wally did not quite know how to tackle him. The hero of the Third had to get out of the Form-room during lessons, to carry out his plan, and Mr. Selby had to be managed somehow.

"How are you going to work it, Wally?" whispered Jameson.

"Oh, I'll manage it all right!"

"But—"

"Shut up! Selby's looking this way!"

"D'Arcy minor," said the Form-master, with his unpleasant, rasping tone, "I think you were speaking to Jameson?"

"Ye-es, sir!" said Wally.

"You will take fifty lines, D'Arcy minor!"

"Fifty lines, sir?"

"Yes!" snapped Mr. Selby.

"What for, sir?"

"For talking in class!"

"If you please, sir—"

"Silence, D'Arcy minor!"

"Certainly, sir! But, if you please—"

"Silence!"

"Oh, rather, sir!" said Wally, with perfect coolness.

"But I say—"

"Another word," said Mr. Selby, as the class began to grin—"another word, D'Arcy minor, and I will send you in to the Head to be caned for impertinence!"

"Yes, sir! But, really—"

"Come out here!" thundered Mr. Selby.

"I, sir?"

"Yes; at once!"

With well-feigned reluctance, Wally stepped out before the class. Mr. Selby wrote a note at his desk with a hand that trembled with anger. Jameson and Gibson watched their chum in silent admiration.

They knew that Wally had deliberately "cheeked" Mr.

Selby, in order to be sent in to the Head, braving a caning for the purpose of carrying out his scheme.

Mr. Selby had no suspicion of anything of the sort. He handed the note to Wally, with a brow like thunder.

"You will present that to the Head!" he exclaimed.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"And I trust that the caning you will receive will make you more amenable to discipline in class, D'Arcy minor!"

"I hope so, sir," said Wally demurely.

Mr. Selby almost choked. He waved his hand towards the door.

"Go! Go at once!"

"Yes, sir."

And Wally left the class-room. He did not proceed in the direction of the Sixth Form-room, where the Head was, however. After a glance round, he scuttled away swiftly and cautiously towards No. 2 Room—the editorial office of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

He reached the door, and tried it, and snorted softly as he found that it was locked.

"Rotters!" he murmured.

Then he grinned. It was really hardly to be expected that Tom Merry would leave the valuable copy of the "Weekly" at the mercy of any marauder.

But Wally was not easily beaten.

He scuttled out of the School House, and in a couple of minutes he was outside the window of the editorial-room.

The window was closed, and the catch was fastened; but a simple catch like that was nothing to the ingenious scamp of the Third. He climbed on the window-sill, thrust the blade of his pocket-knife between the loose sashes, and forced back the catch.

Then he threw up the lower sash and jumped in.

"My only Aunt Jane!" he murmured. "What would Tom Merry say if he knew?"

Fortunately for the enterprising Wally, Tom Merry did not know.

On the table lay a packet nicely wrapped up in brown paper, and tied with string—the "copy" of the "Weekly" Special Number, all ready to be taken down to the local printer's.

Wally grinned as he approached it. His nimble fingers were soon busy with the string. He untied it quickly, and in a couple of minutes the parcel was open, and the copy of the Special Number was at his mercy.

Wally opened it carefully, and came to the page upon which the leading article appeared. That article, naturally, was chiefly occupied with cricket, and with the match that had been played at St. Jim's the day before.

Wally grinned as he read the beginning of Tom Merry's leader.

"Our readers may congratulate themselves upon the success which has attended the Junior Cricket Club this season. Yesterday a glorious victory was added to the long list of successes. The honours were with Wynn, of the New House, whose bowling contributed mainly to the victory

And so it ran on.

Wally calmly detached the page, and inserted in its place a page in his own writing. He made a few corrections with pencil, with his eye on Tom Merry's article, and then refastened the pages together.

Then he wrapped up the precious copy, and left the parcel exactly as it was before he entered the room. Tom Merry's leader page he crumpled up in his pocket.

Then he left the room by the window. He was unable to fasten the catch after him, but he did not suppose that that would be noticed. He closed the window tight, and jumped to the ground.

The most unpleasant part of the business remained to be done—he had to present Mr. Selby's note to the Head, and face the music.

But Wally did not shirk it. He made his way to the Sixth Form-room, where the Head was busy with the Sixth, and none too well pleased at being interrupted.

Dr. Holmes glanced at Mr. Selby's note, and caned D'Arcy minor, and the scamp of the Third endured it like a Spartan.

Jameson and Curly Gibson looked at him eagerly when he re-entered the Form-room. As soon as Mr. Selby's eye was off them, Jameson whispered eagerly.

"Is it all right?"

And Wally grinned gleefully as he replied:

"Right as rain!"

CHAPTER 19.

The Special Number—And a Surprise.

WALLY'S going to take the copy down to the printer's?" asked Tom Merry, when the Shell came out of the class-room.

"Chief editor!" replied Monty Lowther promptly.

"Rats! One of the subs can do that!"

"Well, better give it to Gussy!"

The chums of the Shell joined the Fourth-Formers. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy turned his monocle inquiringly upon Tom Merry.

"Is the copy weedy?" he asked.

"Quite ready!"

"Then you had better buzz off with it, deah boy!"

"That's the duty of the sub-editors—and there's enough of them, goodness knows! Can't trust Gussy with it, though!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"You remember once you took the copy down, Gussy, and the Grammarians waylaid you, and took it, and inserted some rot in it, which got printed?"

"Yaas, but—"

"Can't risk that a second time! Blake had better take it!"

"I'm going down to the cricket!" said Blake.

"All of you had better go," said Tom Merry, "then it will be safe! I order it, as chief editor! Scat! I have spoken!"

"Rats!"

"Come on, and I'll give you the copy!"

"Tom Mewwy is wight, Blake, deah boy. We had better take it. There may be some bungle if we leave it to these Shell wottahs."

"Oh, all right!" grunted Blake.

And the chums of No. 6 accompanied Tom Merry to the editorial room, and the packet was duly handed over to their keeping.

"Now, be careful with it!" said Tom Merry impressively. "If there's any accident I shall hold you responsible."

To which Blake's reply was the ancient and monosyllabic one:

"Rats!"

Wally met the chums of the Fourth as they came down the School House steps. He glanced at the bulky package under Jack Blake's arm.

"I'll take that for you, if you like," he remarked.

"That is weally vewy obligin' of you, Wally," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a nod of approval. "I am vewy glad to see you becomin' so obligin' and wespectful to your eldahs."

Jack Blake chuckled.

"All the same, I don't think we'll trust the packet to Wally," he remarked. "He's a little too obliging. I'm not used to it."

And the chums of the Fourth walked on.

Wally looked after them with a grin.

It was half an hour later when Blake and his chums returned to the school, and Blake informed Tom Merry that the packet had been delivered safely into the hands of Mr. Tipte, the printer and publisher of the "Rylcombe Gazette."

"Good!" said Tom Merry.

"And they're to be delivered Saturday morning," added Blake.

"Jolly good!"

And the editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly," having the trouble of the Special Number off his mind, breathed more freely.

He could afford to devote himself to cricket practice now, his editorial duties being well over for the time. Most of the juniors were waiting anxiously for Saturday, however.

A much larger number of contributors than usual had appeared in print, owing to the double size of the number, and this caused the interest to be more widespread than usual.

The interest manifested in the Special Number was very flattering to the youthful editor.

Saturday morning arrived at last, and the juniors were looking forward to the afternoon with almost as much eagerness as if a big cricket match had been on.

Fortunately it was a Special Number of the "Weekly," and not a cricket match, that signalled the day, for it began to rain towards noon.

Some of the juniors who had intended to walk down and meet the carrier on the road gave up the idea as soon as they came out after morning lessons, and found the raindrops dashing down on the steps of the School House.

"No cricket to-day!" said Blake, with a grunt.

"Bai Jove! Wathah not!"

"Lucky we've got the Double Number to read," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "It couldn't come at a more opportune time."

"Yaas, wathah."

"See what it is to have a really capable editor," Tom Merry remarked modestly.

"Why, you ass, you never foresaw that it would rain to-day!"

"Never mind what I foresaw. The Double Number is the right thing at the right moment, and I take the credit of it."

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wats!"

"My friends," said Skimpole, coming up with his benevolent blink, "it is raining."

"Go hon!"

"Amazin', deah boy. How did you discovah that?"

"Pray be serious. It is impossible to play any of your rough and absurd games in the rain, so I suggest that you should all gather in the Form-room, and I will give you a lecture on the subject of Determinism."

"Oh, ring off!"

"I think it is a really excellent idea."

"Let's go in," said Monty Lowther. "May as well rag Skimmy while we're waiting for the 'Weekly.'"

"Really, Lowther—"

"Good!" said Figgins. "Come on! Lead the way, Skimmy!"

"Very well. Upon the whole, if you are all coming, we may as well go into the lecture-room," said Skimpole, beaming. "That is really more appropriate, and there will be accommodation for the Fourth as well as the Shell."

"Hear, hear!"

"Lead on, Macduff!"

And the juniors crowded into the lecture-room. They spread themselves about the seats, and Skimpole extracted a volume from his pocket, consulted it, and began:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My dear friends, this is an excellent opportunity for you to learn the first principles of the great science of Determinism. Know, then, that a human being is a being exactly as he bees—I mean, exactly as he is. He—he—he—"

Skimpole paused.

"He, he, he!" repeated Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience.

"Is this a comic recitation, Skimmy?" asked Manners.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He—he is therefore exactly as he is," said Skimpole. "A being being a being—"

"How jolly lucid."

"A being being a being, and, therefore, being—"

"Hallo, there's Taggy at the door!"

"He's got a parcel."

"It's the 'Weekly.'"

"Really, my friends, I hope you are not going to allow the arrival of that absurd book to interrupt a lecture on so important a subject as Determinism," said Skimpole.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lectures are off, Skimmy."

"A being being a being—"

"Cheese it!"

"Chuck it!"

"Hence it is clear that a being—"

"Order!"

"Ring off!"

The juniors crowded round Taggles. Tom Merry tossed the porter a shilling, and then cut the string of the bulky parcel.

"Here you are!" exclaimed Tom Merry, as he tore away the paper, and the finished copies of the "Weekly" came in sight.

"Good!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

There lay the Special Number—a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, as Blake remarked. Tom Merry handed out the copies.

"Really, my friends," urged Skimpole, "a being being a being—"

"Here's a copy of the 'Weekly,' Skimmy."

"Yes. But a being—"

"Read it, my son. There's your own article in it, you know."

"Dear me, yes. I must certainly look at that. In the last number there was a misprint in my article, and in one place, instead of 'Professor Loosetop is a great chief among modern thinkers, it read—'Professor Loosetop is a great thief among modern tinkers.' Of course, that completely altered the sense of the thing. It was not at all what I meant to say."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors were soon in possession of their copies of the "Weekly."

They sat down to read.

Then there was more silence and order in the lecture-room than there generally was when it was so well filled; for every fellow was eager to look through the paper, and to read, especially, his own performance over.

Tom Merry turned to the leading article.

Wally, Jameson, and Gibson were standing just inside the

door of the lecture-room. They had followed Taggles there, when they saw him with the carrier's parcel, and they were waiting for results.

They were ready to dodge.

"Look!" murmured Wally, as he saw an expression of amazement creep over Tom Merry's face. "He's got on to it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were exclamations from various parts of the room.

"What the—"

"How the—"

"Why, what—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Great Scott!"

"Tom Merry, you ass, what have you been putting in this piffle for?"

"I—I—" gasped Tom Merry.

Fatty Wynn jumped up, and thrust his paper under the unhappy editor's nose.

"Look at that!" he roared.

"I—I—"

"Cheek!"

"The impertinent wascal!"

"Cheeky chump!"

"Frajious ass!"

"Bump him!" roared Figgins. "The cheek! Bump him! This is a little editorial joke."

"Hold on! I—"

"Collar him!"

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Blake, who had been reading his own poetic effusions, and had not seen the leader page yet.

"Look here!" roared Figgins.

"What is it? Read it out!"

"Listen, then! Collar that chump first!"

"Hands off!" gasped Tom Merry. "Hold on! I—"

But the angry juniors piled on him, and he was levelled with the floor, and half a dozen of them, deaf to his expostulations, sat on him and kept him there, while Figgins began to read out the offending article.

"Our readers may congratulate themselves upon the success which has attended the efforts of the Junior Cricket Club to play the giddy goat. The honours are chiefly with Fatty Wynn, who devoured enough tarts on Wednesday to open a large emporium, and was ill all the following night, and had to be nursed by Figgins and Kerr."

"It was the sun!" roared Fatty Wynn. "A slight attack of sunstroke!"

"Get on, Figgy!"

Figgins resumed

"But all the rest of the team played up nobly, and there is no doubt that, outside Colney Hatch and Bedlam, such a team was never seen before. Tom Merry, as chief duffer, was superb, and Figgins was a good second. Spectators remarked among other things the splendid development of—ahem—"

"Go on, Figgy."

"Oh, I'll miss that line—it's only rot."

"I'll read it out," said Lowther, jerking the paper from the long-limbed New House junior. "Here goes! Spectators remarked among other things the splendid development of Figgins's calves, which looked like fine specimens of pipe-stems—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it was generally agreed that Gussy's chivvy was worth tenpence a day to scare crows with—"

"Weally, you know—"

"Figgins and Fatty Wynn ran each other close, but it was admitted that Fatty Wynn was as broad as Figgins was long—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It should be mentioned that Lowther—ahem—ahem—"

"Go on."

"It's only rot! I—"

"I'll read it, then," said Blake. "It should be mentioned that Lowther had curled his favourite curl with the curling-tongs, and it looked almost natural—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Herries deserves special mention for his splendid imitation of the motions of a hippopotamus when he was taking runs—"

"What's that?" roared Herries.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's enough! Let's bump the cheeky ass!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hold on!" roared Tom Merry. "I tell you—"

Bump!

"Listen to me—"

Bump!

"I—I—"

Bump!

"Ow!"

Bump!

They released Tom Merry at last, after such a bumping as had seldom been administered. The chief editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly" lay and gasped for breath.

"Now, then!" said Figgins.

"You—you asses!" gasped Tom Merry. "I—I didn't write that piffle. It's been shoved into the paper since I left it. Somebody must have got at it at the printer's."

"Eh?"

"Or else Blake did it as he was going——"

"The packet wasn't opened in our hands," said Blake warmly.

"Then it was got at before you took it!"

"Bai Jove!"

"You—you frabjous asses!" panted Tom Merry. "Can't you see it's a jape! I never wrote a line of that stuff! You chumps! You burbling duffers!"

"Then who——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Wally, unable to contain himself any longer. "Perhaps you wish you'd shoved in my article now, Tom Merry!"

"What?"

"I told you I'd have an article in the 'Weekly.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"What—Wally—collar him!"

The juniors made a rush. They understood now, though they did not know how Wally had managed it.

They rushed at the Third-Formers; but Wally & Co. were already darting from the room.

"After them!" panted Tom Merry.

And the juniors dashed in pursuit. But Wally & Co. had reached the Third Form-room, and the key turned in the lock as the avengers arrived panting. They thumped and kicked and hammered on the door, the assault being answered by yells of derisive laughter from within; and at last they retired, baffled.

In the Third Form-room, Wally and the fags roared with laughter. And even the chums of the Fourth and the Shell had to admit that Wally had scored with Tom Merry's Special Number!

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "The Scallaway of the Third!" by Martin Clifford, next Thursday.)

The First Chapters of a Splendid Serial Story.



READ THIS FIRST!

Oswald Yorke, a youth of eighteen, whom peculiar circumstances have forced to become a highwayman, one night holds up the carriage of Admiral Sir Sampson Eastlake. He is overpowered, however; but the good old admiral offers him a chance of serving the King in the Navy instead of handing him over to justice. Oswald, therefore, joins the frigate *Catapult* as a midshipman, under the name of John Smith. The frigate is wrecked owing to the incapacity of Captain Burgoyne, her drunken commander, and a mere handful of the crew escape in a small boat, which is entirely unprovisioned.

Their sufferings are terrible under the burning sun, and Mr. Fryer—the first lieutenant, and a splendid sailor—dies the first day, and is thrown overboard, his body continuing to drift along by the side of the boat.

(Now go on with the story.)

When night came, Benton was in raving delirium. A thousand times more awful were his ravings than those of poor Mr. Fryer. He had been a good sailor and a good man, as men go, but now he was extraordinary in his delirium. His voice—cracked, shrill, and unnatural—rose to screams of fury. Some wide thought of vengeance seemed to fill his whole mind—vengeance against someone whom he threatened again and again.

All through the long night he raved; while the others, who had fallen into a state of dull apathy, listened.

In the stem, Oswald was sitting up, with Maxwell's head on his knees. Babbington was crouched beside him, weeping weakly and painfully.

"Oh, if I could only c-e-ry!" he muttered. "B-b-but I c-c-can't! The tears won't come!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 121.

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"I wonder if Fryer is still there? He is better off than we are," muttered Maxwell.

Oswald said nothing. His mouth was dry and burning, his lips were parched and cracked, and his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth.

"He is better off than we are," he thought. "He is spared the agony we endure. To-morrow—Heaven, in mercy, send us help to-morrow!"

The brief night had gone. The sun came out yellow and red. It rose like a great ball of fire in the spotless sky, turning the vast waters into a sheet of gold.

Benton, with wide-open, wildly-staring eyes, was struggling feebly to raise himself, in spite of Dr. Telford's efforts to restrain him.

The doctor himself was in a pitiable plight. His good-humoured, happy face had grown drawn and grey, and the flesh had fallen away, showing the cheekbones prominently through the skin. Yet, in spite of the suffering that he endured, he tried to speak a word of comfort and hope to the others when, after their first eager glance, they saw that help was not yet at hand.

And now the strength of madness came to Benton. Breaking away from the doctor's grasp, he leaped to his feet, and stood for a moment glaring about him—tall and gaunt, with wild eyes and dishevelled hair. Then, suddenly, with a fierce, inarticulate murmur, he pulled his clasp-knife from his pocket.

Dr. Telford grasped him by the leg; but, with a fierce kick, the madman freed himself, and darted towards the spot where Captain Burgoyne sat.

A scream of terror broke from the captain's lips. He held up his arm to shield himself, but help for him was at hand.

To reach the object of his hatred, Benton had to pass Lieutenant Armstrong, who had been aroused from his lethargy by the captain's scream of fear.

As he reached the seat on which the lieutenant was sitting, Benton stumbled, and the next moment the young soldier had grasped him by the wrist.

"Pringle, help! For Heaven's sake, help! The man is—"

Just at that moment the boat gave a sickening lurch, and before a hand could be outstretched to save them the two men reeled to starboard, and fell with a heavy splash into the water.

And then, gripped in their deadly embrace, they sank from sight—gone almost before the others could realise what had happened.

Another awful day—the third without water under that burning sun.

Their lips were cracked and blistered; their tongues, swollen and furred, lolled from between them. Their heads were bursting. Their eyes were starting from their sockets.

Even Dr. Telford, whose courage and great spirit had kept him up to the last, lay back in the bottom of the boat, praying for the death that was all too slow in coming.

Babbington had long since ceased to whimper, and lay silently, like a log, beside Oswald.

With his head sunk forward on his breast, Oswald sat in a state bordering on insensibility. He was only conscious of an awful, almost unendurable pain in his head—conscious of that, and wondering how long it would be before the end would come.

Mr. Pringle lay beside Dr. Telford in the bottom of the boat.

In the stern sheets the captain and Mr. Brabazon sat, with their heads lolling forward on their breasts.

Life seemed to have gone out of them all except old Fid. With his thin, bony hands clasped before him as though in prayer, he sat with his eyes gazing fixedly on the west. His clothes, torn and tattered, hung from his attenuated frame. His face was like that of a death's head, covered with parchment-like skin, which scarcely served to hide the formation of the bone beneath.

For hour after hour he sat there, muttering to himself words that were utterly incomprehensible.

Then at last he moved. His bony hand went to a pocket, and brought out a knife. He tried for some time fruitlessly to open the strong blade, for he was reduced to a pitiable state of weakness. He who three days ago had fought for life against the furious waves had not the strength now to open the blade of his own knife. At last, with the aid of his teeth, he succeeded in prising it open, and then, with a ghastly chuckle, he stooped, and commenced laboriously to cut a hole in the planks beneath him.

His object was clear now. He had given up hope, and, better than live and suffer as they were suffering now, he would end it all.

But the planks were thick, and his strength was almost gone. He could only scrape at the tough wood—scrape it away little by little.

He stopped presently to gain fresh strength, and then a fit of fury seemed to come over him at the little progress he had made. Again he stooped over his task, but as he did so a sound attracted his attention. It was not the sound of a voice—at least, it seemed not to him. It was a curious, weak, rasping noise. It was repeated, and Fid, relinquishing his task for a moment, looked up.

Oswald was sitting bolt upright in the stem of the boat, his mouth open, his eyes half starting from his head. He was vainly trying to articulate words that his swollen tongue and shrivelled lips could not form. Slowly he raised his head and pointed—pointed at something behind Fid.

For a few moments the old man sat and looked silently at the boy, then slowly turned his head. As he did so new strength came to him. He leaped to his feet with a hoarse, rattling shout. He tore off his coat, and waved it wildly above his head. He danced and screeched like a maniac. Then, the paroxysm of strength passing away as quickly as it came, he dropped like a stone into the bottom of the boat, and lay there senseless.

Half a mile to the eastward the sun glinted on the white canvas of a ship in full sail. But now the wind had failed her, and the sails hung heavily and motionless from the yards.

With his eyes glued on the distant ship, Oswald sat for minute after minute; then, as he saw it as motionless as they, his head once more sank forward on to his breast. The momentary excitement had flickered out. His interest in the strange sail was gone. He was capable of no interest in anything now.

Ten minutes passed—a quarter of an hour.

A dark speck was lowered from the deck of the ship to the

sea. In time the speck grew larger and larger, and presently took the shape of a boat.

A man in a striped red-and-white shirt and a broad Panama hat sat in the stern sheets and held the tiller ropes. Four brawny, half-naked negroes worked the oars in clumsy, unsailorly fashion.

In strong contrast to the dark skins of his companions, the face of the white man at the tiller was of a peculiar and deathly whiteness, and its extreme pallor was accentuated by his jet-black beard and hair. He was an unusually handsome man, with strong, aquiline features, and a body of the proportions of a Hercules. The shirt, open at the neck, revealed a huge and muscular chest, whereof the skin was surprisingly fair. It was the same with his arms, which were bared to the shoulder. Beneath a soft and white skin the huge muscles swelled up. It was the arm of a giant.

He leaned back, smoking a cigarette, his eyes fixed intently on the boat that he was now approaching.

"I am a fool for my pains!" he muttered, in English. "It is only a boatload of corpses; and, for all I know, a fever-stricken lot!"

Then suddenly a gleam of interest came into his eyes as they caught the glint of the epaulettes on Captain Burgoyne's shoulders.

"Naval officer!" he muttered. Then, turning to his crew: "Move your lazy carcasses, you lubbers, or—"

The blacks, who had been taking it easy, bent to their oars, and in a few minutes more they were near the boat.

"A corpse floating astern—three!" muttered the man with the black beard. "Hallo, there!" he added, raising his voice.

No one from the boat answered his hail.

"All as dead as Queen Anne!" he muttered. "Poor chaps!"

Then, as though annoyed with himself for his momentary pity, he hailed the boat again.

The boat ranged alongside, and the man with the black beard glanced curiously at the insensible bodies that lay strewn about.

"Thirst!" he muttered. "No water!"

He puffed the blue smoke from his cigarette, and glanced from one distorted face to another with calm and callous indifference; then suddenly started, for in the stem of the boat one of the figures moved. It raised its ghastly head, and, with almost superhuman effort, pointed to its gaping mouth and cracked lips.

It was Oswald who had shown this sign of life, but the effort proved too much for him. His head dropped forward again, and his arms fell down by his sides, and so he sat.

The man with the black beard paused for a moment. He seemed undecided whether he should succour these perishing human beings, or leave them to their awful death. Then his eyes caught the glint of Captain Burgoyne's epaulettes again, and the sight seemed to bring decision to him.

Leaning over, he grasped the painter of the other boat, which was hanging in the water, and, with a few turns, made it fast to his own boat.

"Give way! Back to the brig!" he said shortly.

The blacks bent to their oars again, and the two boats began to move slowly towards the distant ship.

Without glancing over his shoulder at the poor creatures in the boat towing behind him, the man leaned back on his seat, and rolled a cigarette with his lithe, supple fingers; then, lighting it from the glowing end of the first, he smoked quietly and with evident enjoyment until they came under the shadow of the hull of the vessel.

She was a brig, with a long, rakish-looking hull painted dead-black, which was relieved by a thin line of red just above the water-line.

Two men on deck—a negro and a yellow-skinned mulatto—looked down.

"Wha' fo' yo' bring back dis trash?" demanded the negro, with an air that seemed to mark him as being one in authority.

"Took a fancy to them," replied the man with the black beard nonchalantly. "Some of them are living yet," he added. "Have both boats swung aboard. Here, you, Manuel, heave a rope-end!"

A rope was flung from the deck down into the boat, and the man with the beard seized it, and in a few moments had climbed up with the agility of a monkey.

A few moments later the boat containing the half-dead remnant of the Catapult's crew was brought up on to the deck.

"Dis boat am belong to one cursed British warship, and dis am British ossifer!" said the negro.

He was a short, stout man, with a repulsive-looking face, thick lips, and yellow eyeballs, and all the attributes of a full-blooded African negro.

The man with the black beard nodded. "I don't need you to tell me that," he said quietly. "Manuel, bring up a keg of water."

Half a dozen negroes and as many dark-skinned whites of various nationalities came crowding curiously round the boat, and looked with none too friendly eyes on the wasted bodies of her occupants.

They were all dressed in somewhat the same style, though the colouring of their raiment varied greatly—wide and loose shirts, some white, some red, some blue, and some striped in different colours; trousers of nankeen and of serge, confined at the waist with silk scarves. In some cases the trousers were stuffed into high boots. Others wore no coverings on their feet.

But though they differed somewhat in the manner of their dress, they were alike in carrying each a small arsenal of arms, stuck conspicuously into their sashes, and even into the tops of their long boots.

The mulatto returned from below with a small water-keg on his shoulder. A dozen more of the crew followed him—as villainous-looking a set of cut-throats as one would wish to avoid.

The man with the black beard gave the order that the men should be lifted out of the boat.

"How yo' know dey ain't got de fever?" demanded the negro.

Black Beard made no answer, but, stooping down, lifted out the body of Captain Burgoyne and laid him on the deck; then he lifted out Brabazon as though he had been a child.

"Give them water," he ordered—"a little; only enough to wet their whistles."

With his own hands he lifted the others out.

All were living but poor Babbington, and he was stiff and cold.

"Dis one am dead gone, fo' stuah!" said the negro.

Black Beard peered into the dead face of the boy.

"Dead!" he said briefly.

Then, taking the poor, stiff, lifeless figure in his arms, he walked to the bulwarks, and dropped it overboard.

Meanwhile, two of the negroes had been administering a little water to each of the survivors, who, so far, showed no signs of returning consciousness; while the negro, who seemed to share the command of the brig with Black Beard, stood by, grumbling loudly, as though he begrudged each tiny drop of water that passed down those parched throats.

"What de dickens you bring dem on board here fo'?" he demanded. "Don't you tink we ain't had enough of dem cursed British ossifers? Why, it am no more'n a week ago dat we had to run fo' it from dat perky little cutter dat come out ob Kingston to chase we!"

Black Beard muttered something in the negro's ear, on hearing which a broad smile slowly spread over the black creature's hideous face.

"Yo' got yo' head screwed on de right way, Kester," he said. "I'd neber hab tought ob dat, not once in more'n a hundred years. Here yo' black trash, yo' treat dese jonlemen careful! Gib dem more water if dey want it. Manuel, yo' go down and sling hammock fo' de jonlemen, and make dem all comfortable and snug!"

The man's aversion to the new-comers seemed to be changed in an instant. He exhibited the utmost anxiety for their comfort, and went down himself to see that the hammocks had been arranged for them; and then told off the mulatto Manuel especially to look after the unexpected guests.

When the negro returned to the deck, the man he had addressed as Kester was leaning carelessly against the bulwarks, rolling another cigarette with his deft, cunning fingers.

"What ship yo' tink dey be long?" asked the negro.

"Her name is on the boat—Catapult. To my knowledge, I don't think we have made her acquaintance. Hallo!"

The speaker paused and listened intently.

From the deck beneath their feet rose a weird and horrible sound—the noise of struggling, of groans, and piteous cries.

The negro ground his heel into the deck with an oath.

"Dey killin' each oder! I tink dat de plague hab broken out!" he said.

The man whom the negro addressed as Kester started.

"What makes you think that?" he asked abruptly.

The negro caught him by the arm, and led him towards the hatch.

"Listen!" he said.

Kester stooped, and put his ear to the deck. From below came a sound that would have filled one not dead to feelings of humanity and pity with horror—the sounds of feeble moans and cries of anguish, mixed with frenzied shoutings and the stamping of feet.

Kester ground out an oath under his breath.

"There is something wrong down there," he said coolly.

"Those black demons are gone mad, and trampling the women and children down. Hang them! Maybe it is the heat!"

"Maybe," answered the negro coolly. "It am hot 'nuff for sartain on deck. What it is like down dere—"

He made a significant gesture.

"If this calm lasts, it's a bad look out for our cargo," said Kester. "It looks like losing a few thousand dollars this voyage, Bimby."

All through the long day the calm lasted, and all through the day the fearful sounds from below deck reached the ears of the callous wretches above.

The crew of the slaver—for such was the occupation of the brig—lunched about on deck, smoking, and playing with dice and cards. Kester and the negro Bimby went down to their cabins to discuss their probable gain or loss on the voyage. They were joint owners and commanders of the brig—as strangely and ill-assorted a couple as one could possibly imagine.

Bimby the negro had once himself formed part of such a cargo as he was now carrying. Perhaps it was the memory of the sufferings he had himself undergone that had brutalised him, and rendered him incapable of commiserating the sufferings of others. A coal-black negro, with a brutish face and bloodshot eyes, that gleamed with cunning avarice and suspicion, whose speech was thick and clumsy, he seemed to have little in common with the white man who shared his fortunes.

Although Kester had dropped into the loose methods of speech of those with whom he was brought into daily contact, although his inhuman trade had hardened and brutalised him, it was easy to tell at the first glance at the man that he was not of the same class as the men with whom he associated. He was a man of education—one who had once had the right to lay claim to the title of gentleman—and so his shame was greater than that of the wretch, more animal than man, beside him.

Kester was looking through some papers that had been taken from Captain Burgoyne's pocket, while the negro, unable to read, sat and watched him attentively.

"The man seems to be, from what I can gather here, Captain Burgoyne, commanding frigate Catapult. That coincides with the name on the boat. I don't think we—"

Kester stopped speaking suddenly, and it seemed to the watcher that his pale face went even a shade paler still.

"What's de matter?" demanded Bimby.

"Nothing," said the other shortly.

The negro rose and leaned forward, the better to see a letter Kester held in his hand, and on which his eyes were riveted; but he could make nothing of it.

(Another long instalment of this thrilling serial will appear next Thursday.)

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