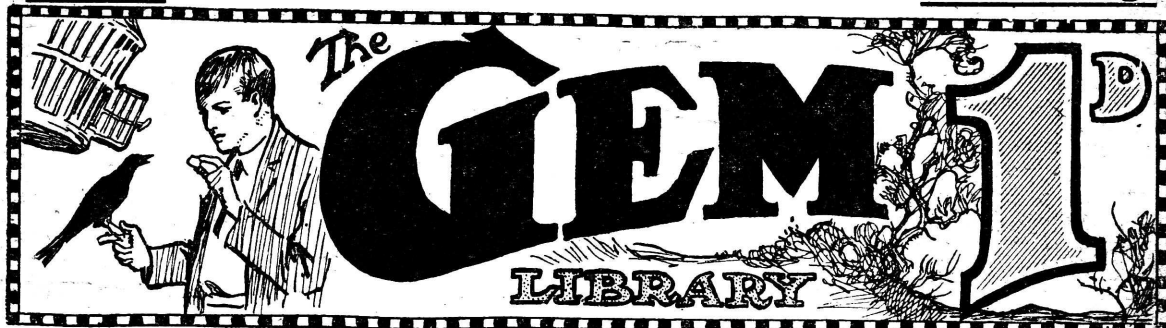


Every

Thursday.



Complete Stories for All and Every Story a Gem

Tom Merry & Co.'s Downfall!



CHAPTER 1.

Check!

"**R**IGHT wheel!"
 Tramp, tramp, tramp!
 "Left!"
 Tramp, tramp!
 "Eyes front! D'Arcy, let that eyeglass alone!"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy—"
 "Silence in the ranks! March!"
 "Weally—"
 "Shut up! March!"
 Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Figgins, of the Fourth, in his study in the New House, uttered an exclamation of annoyance. Figgins was sitting at his study table, trying to write out the whole conjugation, from beginning to end, of a German irregular verb. Herr Schneider, the German master at St. Jim's, had imposed that task upon the unfortunate Figgins. Figgins was not enjoying himself. German regular verbs were bad enough, but when they were irregular, Figgins found them horrible. Figgins would sooner have faced a charge of irregular cavalry than a German irregular verb. And while he was struggling with the hidden mysteries of that wretched verb, it was really too bad of the School House fellows to come parading under the windows of the New House, and kicking up, as Figgins would have expressed it, a dickens of a row.

"Eyes front!"
 "Weally," Tom Mewwy
 Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

"My only hat!" roared Figgins. "The horrid bounders! How am I to verdicate this conge—I

A Splendid, New, Long Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. and their rivals —Figgins & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

mean, conjugate this verb with that row going on? What are they up to, Kerr?"

Kerr and Wynn, Figgys' chums and study mates, were both in the room. They were feeling very sympathetic towards Figgys, for it was no joke to have to spend a considerable portion of a half-holiday in the study, conjugating a disgusting German irregular verb, instead of playing footer or ragging the School House juniors. Kerr and Fatty Wynn were staying in—from choice—to keep Figgys company. Kerr, who had all German verbs and every other kind of verbs at his finger-tips, would willingly have assisted Figgys, but Herr Schneider was certain to ask Figgys if he had done it all by himself, without reference to books or help from anyone else.

Herr Schneider was of a most unpleasantly prying nature. So Kerr looked out of the window, while Fatty Wynn sat in the armchair and thought of tea-time. Figgys, with all kinds of uncouth German syllables buzzing in his head, was already in a state bordering on frenzy, when the tramping and shouting in the quadrangle broke upon the peaceful serenity of the study.

Kerr grinned a little. "It's Tom Merry drilling the School House duffers," he replied.

"Oh, the ass! Why can't he drill the dummies on his own side of the quad?" groaned Figgys. "Lemme see, the imperfect subjunctive—" "Eyes front!"



Figgys & Co. serenade their rivals. (See Chapter 6.)

Next Thursday:

"A FALSE CHUM!" AND "DEEP SEA GOLD."

"March!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Figgins jumped up, with his hands to his ears.

"I can't stand that!" he roared. "As if the blessed verb isn't bad enough without those blessed idiots making that blessed row!"

He rushed to the window and looked out.

Out in the sunny quadrangle the School House juniors were marching to and fro, and Tom Merry was standing with his hands on his hips while he rapped out orders. There was really no reason at all why the School House fellows couldn't have done it on their own side of the quad, though most of the School House fellows could have given a reason. As a matter of fact, Tom Merry had marched his squad across the quad, with the nefarious purpose of exasperating Figgins & Co., and enticing them out to rag them. The old rivalry between the School House and the New House had broken out lately with more vigour than ever. Perhaps because it had slept for a time; perhaps because there were no important matches on the near horizon. The School House juniors were grinning and casting glances up towards Figgy's study-window as they marched to and fro.

Figgins threw open the window, and a chuckle passed through the School House ranks. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the School House, jammed his eyeglass a little more firmly to his eye, and raised his hat to Figgins. Jack Blake, of the Fourth, kissed his hand. Monty Lowther winked one eye. Manners and Kangaroo laughed. Tom Merry himself indulged in a gentle grin. Figgins shook his fist at the squad.

"Buzz off!" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get on your own side of the quad!" roared Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rats!"

Tom Merry looked up at the study window.

"Oh, that's all right!" he said. "All the quad. belongs to us, you know, as cock-house of St. Jim's."

"I'd jolly soon show you who's cock-house, if I wasn't detained!" yelled Figgins. "You wait till I've veredicated—conjugated this blessed verb!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pway don't get excited, Figgay, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upwards towards the exasperated Figgins. "It's all wight, you know! Undah the circs., the best thing you can do is to gwin and beah it."

Figgins snorted.

"You can come down and have some training, if you like," said Tom Merry generously. "You New House chaps can't drill for toffee, you know! I'm quite willing to give you a few tips."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And I'm standing a feed at the tuck-shop when the drill's over," said Tom Merry. "I'm sure that will bring Fatty Wynn out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It brought Fatty Wynn to the window, at all events. The fat Fourth-Former appeared beside Figgins there, and looked out into the quad.

Tom Merry waved his hand to him.

"Come on, Fatty! Think of steak and kidney pies, and come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Figgy, I—I dare say I could persuade them to march off a bit, and leave you quiet here," Fatty Wynn suggested cautiously. "What do you think?"

"I think you're a blessed porpoise, and if you join them I'll hammer you," replied Figgins.

"And I'll jump on you!" said Kerr, with emphasis. "They're only trying to take a rise out of us, you fat bouncer!"

"But steak and kidney pies——"

"Shut up!" growled Figgins. "Tom Merry, when I've done this blessed verb, I'll come down and scalp the lot of you!"

"Weally, Figgins——"

Figgins slammed the window shut, and returned wrathfully to the table. Kerr continued idly to watch the tramping juniors. Fatty Wynn sidled towards the door, with a dubious expression on his face. Fatty Wynn was thinking of the steak and kidney pies. Mrs. Taggles, who kept the school shop, was famous for her steak and kidney pies. Indeed, many of the fellows said that Fatty Wynn had persuaded his people to send him to St. Jim's instead of to Winchester, because a chap had told him about Mrs. Taggles and her steak and kidney pies.

"Subjunctive imperfect——"

"Steak and kidney——"

"Shut up, Wynn, you ass!" roared Figgins. "If you can't keep quiet get into the passage, for goodness' sake! Subjunctive imperfect——"

"Eyes front! March!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Fatty Wynn silently left the study. Figgins stuffed his fingers into his ears, and wrestled with the German verb. Kerr gave him a sympathetic glance. Then he turned his eyes upon the quadrangle again.

He uttered a startled exclamation.

"My hat!"

Figgins looked round.

"Hang it all, Kerr, don't you make a row, too! What's the matter?"

"Fatty!"

"Fatty!" Figgins looked round the study. "Isn't he here? Where's he gone?"

"He's joined those School House rotters!" roared Kerr, crimson with indignation. "Talk about a chap selling his birthright for a mess of pottage! I believe Fatty would sell his House for a steak and kidney pie. Look at him!"

Figgins made a bound to the window.

It was true enough!

There was Fatty Wynn, with a sheepish expression on his face, in the ranks of the School House juniors, marching, wheeling, and turning with the rest, to the orders rapped out by Tom Merry, of the Shell.

There he was—under Figgins's very window.

Figgins gave a snort.

"The fat bouncer! The blessed Judas! Come on, Kerr!"

He rushed towards the door.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Kerr. "What about the impot?"

"Blow the impot!"

"But the verb."

"Blow the verb!"

"But Schneider."

"Blow Schneider!"

And Figgins rushed from the study. Kerr followed him, and the voice of Figgins was heard calling upon the New House juniors.

CHAPTER 2.

Something like a Scrimmage!

TOM MERRY, of the Shell, chuckled as he looked towards the window of Figgy's study. But he ceased to chuckle as he saw that the window was untenanted. He guessed immediately that Figgins had been exasperated into action.

"Look out!" he exclaimed. "There's going to be war!"

"I'm quite weady, Tom Mewwy. I left my silk hat off on purpose, in case there was twouble," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm quite weady!"

"Line up!" said Jack Blake.

"Here they come!"

Fatty Wynn looked dismayed. He had joined the ranks of the School House juniors for the sake of the promised steak and kidney pies. The fleshpots of Egypt had tempted him, and he had fallen. But Fatty Wynn had no thought of being untrue to his House. He had a wonderful appetite, and a great relish for all things eatable, and his favourite weakness frequently led him into scrapes; but there was not a more loyal fellow in the New House than the fat Fourth-Former. As Kerr had expressed it, with more truth than elegance: "His heart was all right, but his tummy was very unreliable."

"Here, I say——" Fatty Wynn began.

Tom Merry interrupted him.

"Silence in the ranks!"

"But, I say——"

"Silence that private, Corporal Blake!"

"What-ho!" said Blake.

Fatty Wynn made a rush to escape. But Blake and Herries and Digby had hold of him in a twinkling. The squad

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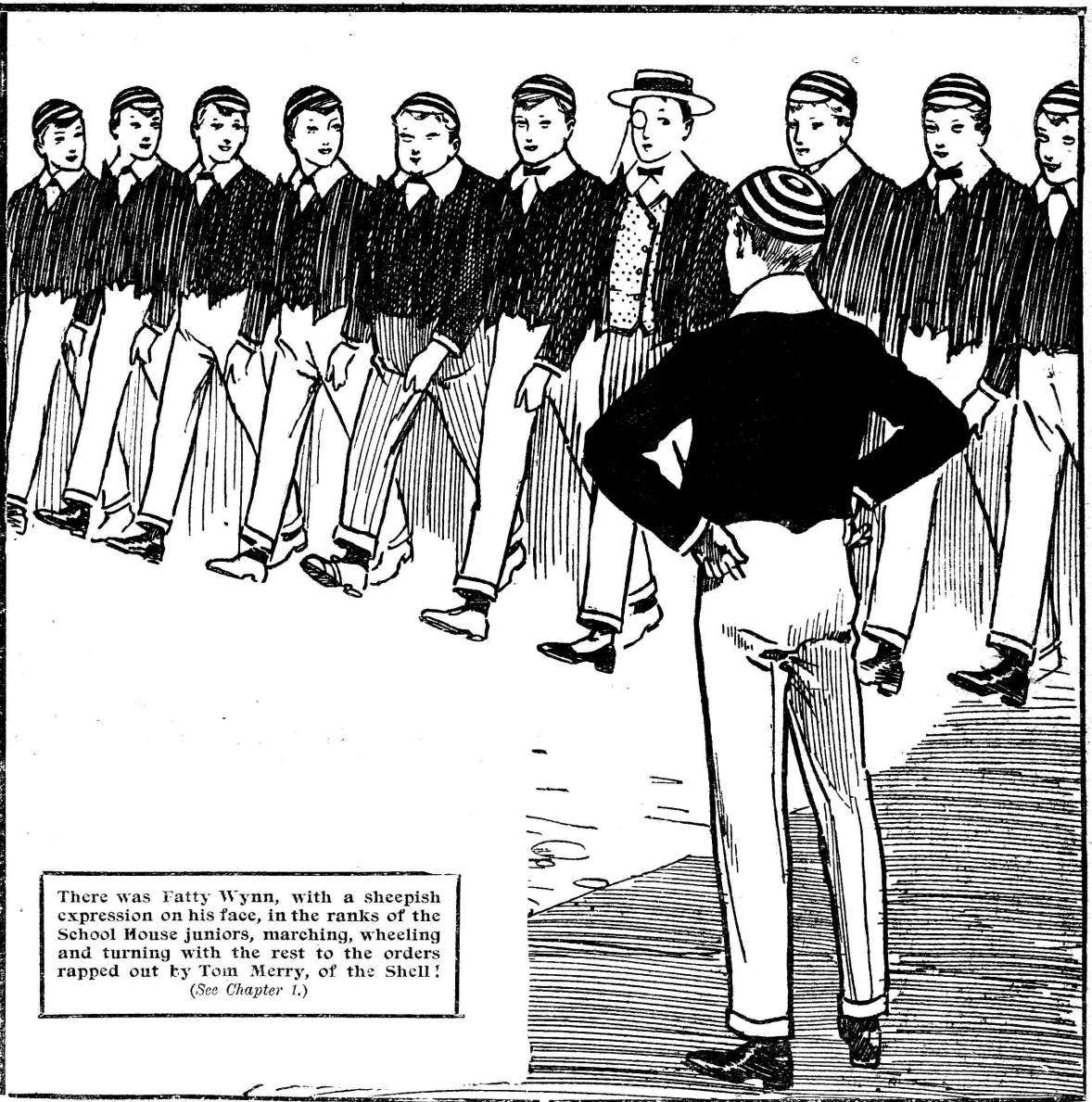
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There was Fatty Wynn, with a sheepish expression on his face, in the ranks of the School House juniors, marching, wheeling and turning with the rest to the orders rapped out by Tom Merry, of the Shell!
(See Chapter I.)

marched off towards the School House, bearing Fatty Wynn as a prize in their midst.

"Leggo!" roared Fatty Wynn.

"It's all right, Wynn," said Tom Merry reassuringly. "We're taking you to the steak and kidney pies."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—"

"Look out!" roared Gore.

Figgins and Kerr and a crowd of New House juniors were pouring out of the New House. They did not stand upon ceremony; they did not waste time in words. They rushed straight upon the School House ranks, and in a moment those ranks were broken up, and the fellows of both Houses were mingled in a wild and whirling combat.

"Go for them!" roared Figgins.

"Hurrah!"

"Play up, School House!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Go for the wotten boundahs, deah boys!"

"Hurrah!"

Fellows went sprawling in all directions. It was a terrific encounter, and for the moment both parties had forgotten that the quad. was in sight of the study windows of masters and prefects. They were only thinking of their House rivalry, and of their determination to get the better of the conflict.

But the fact that they were close to the New House gave the advantage to Figgins & Co., for fresh recruits hurried

up every moment, and the tide was turned very much against the School House.

Back towards their House the latter were driven, disputing every inch of the way, amid wild yells and shouts and cheers.

Fatty Wynn was grasped by Figgins and Kerr and Pratt and French, and dragged away from the School House party, and a number of New House juniors sat upon him on the ground to make sure of him.

The rest charged Tom Merry & Co., and drove them right up to the steps of their own House.

There the tide again turned. School House juniors came pouring out to take part in the conflict, and now Figgins & Co. were outnumbered. But they had no idea of retreating. They charged on desperately.

The conflict grew hotter and wilder

Kildare, of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, looked out of the window in his study in the School House, with a frowning brow. Kildare saw how things were going, and pausing only to pick up his stoutest cane, he ran from his study, and sallied out into the quadrangle. At the same moment Monteith, the head prefect of the New House, came out, also with a cane in his hand.

The two prefects exchanged glances.

"Wade in!" said Kildare concisely.

Monteith laughed.

"Right-ho!" he said.

They waded in.

Without taking the least thought where their blows fell, lashing at each party with great impartiality, the two Sixth-Formers rushed among the struggling juniors.

Loud yells rose from New House and School House alike.

"Ow, ow! Oh!"

"Geroooh—"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Yow!"

"Yah!"

"Yaroooh!"

The conflicting juniors broke and fled in all directions. Kildare and Monteith followed them, lashing with their canes, until the last of them had disappeared. The two seniors, breathless and panting, met again on the scene of conflict. There were no dead or wounded on the battlefield, but there were caps and neckties and torn collars in great numbers.

In distant corners of the quad, panting juniors took refuge, and rubbed their smarting shoulders and arms.

Kildare burst into a laugh.

"The riotous young rascals!" he exclaimed. "But I think they've had a lesson, Monteith."

"I rather think so!" grinned Monteith. "They will not have a battle royal in the quad, again in a hurry."

And he returned to his own House. Kildare went back into the School House, and then fellows came out of their corners of refuge.

On the staircase in the New House was a struggling mass of juniors. Monteith glanced up as he went in.

"What's the row there?" he demanded.

Figgins turned a face crimson with exertion towards the prefect.

"It's all right!" he panted. "We're only helping Fatty Wynn up!"

"What's the matter with Wynn? Is he hurt?"

"Not exactly."

"Then what are you helping him up for?" demanded Monteith, glancing up the stairs.

"Well, you see, he—he—"

"He's not inclined to walk!" said Kerr.

"Isn't he? I'll soon help him," said Monteith, taking a tighter grip on his cane.

He made two steps up the stairs. Fatty Wynn broke away from the juniors and raced up, Figgins and the rest racing after him. Monteith laughed and went to his own study. In the Fourth-Form passage above, Fatty Wynn gasped, and ran, and gasped, with the whole crowd of Fourth-Formers after him.

"Stop!" roared Figgins.

Fatty Wynn stopped at the end of the passage. There was a fresh flight of stairs there, and Fatty Wynn was too breathless to negotiate them. He staggered against the wall, with a pitiful and sheepish grin upon his fat face.

"I—I say, Figgy—" gasped Fatty Wynn. "I—I—"

"Collar him!"

Fatty Wynn was promptly collared. He turned a pitiful and appealing glance upon Figgins and Kerr.

"I—I say, you might stand by your own chum, you know!" he gasped.

Figgins's brow was very stern.

"So I will, when my chum stands by his House," he said; "not at other times. Bring that fat bounder along to my study. He's got to stand his trial for not standing by his House!"

"Oh, Figgy!"

"Bring him along!"

"Roll him!" suggested Pratt. "It's easier than carrying him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House juniors were not slow to adopt the suggestion. Fatty Wynn was bumped over on the linoleum of the passage, and rolled along to Figgins's study. The unfortunate Falstaff of the New House gasped and spluttered in vain. He was rolled right along to the study, and rolled into it, and a crowd of the Fourth followed him in.

"Shut the door!" said Figgins.

The door was closed.

"Stand him against the wall!"

Fatty Wynn, gasping painfully, was placed against the wall. He looked round sheepishly and appealingly at his old comrades. But there was no mercy in the once friendly faces.

Figgins held up his hand in quite a magisterial manner.

"Now, you fat bounder!" he exclaimed. "What have you got to say for yourself?"

are supposed to look. In these days, judges seemed to belong to the most humorous portion of humanity. Figgins had a frown upon his brow that would have befitted the elder Brutus sitting in judgment upon his son. Figgins was, in fact, playing a Brutus part now—he was sitting—or, rather, standing—in judgment upon one of his best chums. But personal friendship could not be suffered to interfere with a matter of this kind.

"Prisoner—"

"Oh, I say, Figgy—"

"Silence! What have you got to say for yourself?"

"How can he say anything for himself if he keeps silence?" asked Jimson.

"Silence in court! The next idiot who interrupts the proceedings will be ejected. Fatty Wynn, you have betrayed your side—"

"Oh, I say, you know—"

"You have basely joined the enemy—"

"I haven't—"

"You sold your honour for a steak-and-kidney pie!" said Figgins inexorably. "Talk about selling birthrights for a mess of pottage a time! Why, you go one better than that chap—I mean, one worse. You've sold your House for a steak-and-kidney pie."

"And he never got the pie—so he's sold himself!" remarked French.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kick that duffer out!"

"Here, hold on!"

The proceedings were interrupted by a scuffle. When French had been violently ejected into the passage, and the door closed again, Figgins resumed.

"The prisoner at the bar—"

"Figgy, old man—"

"Has disgraced himself and his House, and it is only a question of punishment. As leader of the New House juniors, I am bound to be specially hard on him, or else there might be a suspicion of favouritism, as the fat bounder is my chum."

"Hear, hear!"

"Listen to your sentence, Fatty Wynn—"

"I say, Figgy, don't play the giddy goat, you know!" said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "You know I never meant—"

"It's not a question of what you meant, but of what you did!" said Figgins. "You are sentenced—"

"But look here—"

"I'm going to make the punishment fit the crime," said Figgins severely. "You have sold yourself for a steak-and-kidney pie. You are sentenced to eat steak-and-kidney pies—"

Fatty Wynn brightened up.

"Good!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

"You are sentenced to eat steak-and-kidney pies till you'll wish you were eating coke instead," said Figgins, "and we'll all stand round and see that you do it. Kerr, go and get a supply of steak-and-kidney pies from Mrs. Taggles."

Kerr chuckled.

"All serene, Figgy!"

Kerr departed from the study. A smile of fat satisfaction came over the face of the prisoner at the bar. He rather liked the idea of the punishment fitting the crime in this way. Steak-and-kidney pies cost money, and Fatty Wynn rather fancied that Figgins would get to the end of his pocket-money before he got to the limit of Fatty Wynn's appetite.

Kerr returned in about ten minutes. He brought a basket with him, which he deposited upon the floor with a sigh of relief.

"There you are!" he exclaimed. "They weigh something!"

"Fatty Wynn! Begin!"

"Certainly!" said Fatty Wynn. "Of course, I knew you were only joking all the time, Figgy. I knew you wouldn't be hard on an old chum. I'll begin at once, if you like."

Fatty Wynn sat down at the table. Kerr unpacked the basket. There were six steak-and-kidney pies of considerable size. They certainly looked very nice, and a good many of the juniors in the study would willingly have shared in Fatty Wynn's punishment. Fatty Wynn's eyes glistened as he sat down to the table, and took up knife and fork. The smell of the first pie was splendid, and Wynn sniffed at it with keen relish. He started. The pie disappeared in record time. Fatty Wynn reached out for the next. Certainly there never was a condemned prisoner so eager to go to his doom.

The second pie made little or no difference to Fatty Wynn. But Figgins waited patiently. On the third pie Fatty was observed to slacken speed.

But he still ate with good appetite. The third pie followed the others, and Fatty Wynn rested upon his laurels, so to speak. But Figgins pushed the fourth pie towards him.

"Go it!" he said.

"Certainly, Figgy!"

CHAPTER 3.

Figgins Makes the Punishment Fit the Crime.

FATTY WYNN looked round appealingly at the grim faces. Some of the New House juniors were trying not to smile. But most of them, following Figgins's lead, were looking as stern as judges—or as stern as judges

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Fatty Wynn ate the fourth pie slowly. But he came to the end of it, with a shiny face and glistening eyes.

"Go on, Fatty!"

"If—if you don't mind, Figgy, I—I'll leave the others for a bit," faltered Fatty Wynn.

Figgins pushed the fifth pie towards him.

"You'll eat that pie," he said.

"But I say—"

"Or else we shall cram it down your neck," said Figgins cheerfully. "Get the poker, Kerr. We shall want something to cram it down with."

"Certainly," said Kerr.

Fatty Wynn hastily started upon the pie. His speed was decidedly moderate now, and it grew to lento, and then to lentissimo. He paused before the pie was quite finished. Figgins made a threatening gesture, and the rest of the pie disappeared down Fatty Wynn's throat.

Figgins pushed the sixth pie before him, and Fatty Wynn began to have a look of haunting horror in his eyes. It was seldom that he came to the end of his appetite, but he had certainly done so now.

"Figgy, old man—" he murmured.

"Eat!"

"I—I—I've had enough!"

"Eat!"

"I say, I—"

"Eat!" roared Figgins.

Fatty Wynn groaned, and began to eat. The colour faded from his ruddy face, and his eyes began to have a boiled appearance. Morsel followed morsel, but very, very slowly. His jaws worked spasmodically. He travelled half way through the pie, the juniors watching him curiously. Then he stopped.

"Go on," said Figgins grimly.

"I—I can't!"

"Eat!"

"I can't!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Look here, I—I shall be ill. I—I can't eat any more, Figgins. I—I shall always hate steak and kidneys now, and I used to like them so much. Ow!"

"Eat!"

"Look here, Figgy—"

"Hand me the poker, Kerr."

"Here you are!"

Fatty Wynn took another mouthful. He was so slow in swallowing it that Figgins took hold of the poker. Fatty Wynn got it down. His complexion was changing now from the colour of putty to that of shallow sea-water.

"You'd better buck up," said Figgins. "If I start shoving it down, it will go down quick enough. I can tell you."

"Oh, Figgy, I—"

"Eat!" thundered Figgins.

Fatty Wynn gobbled desperately at the pie. He had to do it, and he tried to get it over as quickly as possible. His hue was now a beautiful art shade in green.

But he stopped before he reached the end of the pie. A chunk of steak, and a really tempting piece of kidney remained. At any other time Fatty Wynn would not have taken a second to dispose of them. But just now he felt as if he could as easily have eaten a mountain of railway sandwiches.

"You've not finished," said Figgins.

"Oh, Figgy! I—I can't!"

"Very well. Take him by the back of the neck, Jimson, and you, Pratt, hold his mouth open. I'll jolly soon help him."

Fatty Wynn groaned.

He took up the piece of kidney, and swallowed it whole. He looked at the last chunk of steak, and gave a deep groan.

"I—I—I can't do it!"

"You'd better."

"I can't!"

"Collar him!"

Jimson took Fatty Wynn by the back of the neck, and held his head back. Pratt forced his mouth open. A sort of convulsive shudder ran through Fatty Wynn. Figgins jabbed the fork into the steak, and inserted it into Fatty Wynn's mouth, which was open like that of a codfish.

"Groo!"

Under Figgins's stern eye Fatty Wynn slowly masticated the steak. He swallowed it with a convulsive effort. Then he gasped.

"Ow! Oh! I shall be ill! Grooh!"

Figgins shook a stern forefinger at him.

"Now you've been through it," he said, "and I think you'll stop a bit before you sell your birthright for a mess of pottage again."

"Groo!"

The juniors crowded out of the study, laughing. Fatty Wynn remained alone. He crawled to the arm-chair, and sank down there, quite white, and with both hands pressed

upon the lower buttons of his waistcoat. He felt as if he were experiencing a particularly rough Channel passage. But we will draw a veil over his sufferings.

CHAPTER 4.

Monty Lowther is too Kind.

"W!"

Jack Blake looked round with an exasperated expression. He was making toast in Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage in the School House. Digby was cutting up the loaf. Herries was opening a tin of sardines. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was sitting in the armchair, doing nothing but caress his right eye, and utter, from time to time a painful ejaculation. Blake had been very patient, but he was growing, as he would have expressed it, fed up.

"Ow!"

Blake growled. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with his eye-glass in his left hand, and his right hand caressing his eye, glanced at him, and repeated.

"Ow!"

"What's the matter with you?" roared Blake.

"Nothin'! Ow!"

"Then what are you making that row for?"

"Ow! I'm not makin' a wow! Ow!"

"Were you hurt in the tussle with the New House rotters?"

"No! Ow!"

"Then what—"

"Not what you would call hurt," explained Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I hope I am not a soft chap."

"You're jolly sanguine, then," said Digby.

"Weally, Dig—"

"You've been making a row ever since we got in," said Herries. "What's the matter with your silly eye?"

"It is not a silly eye. Ow!"

"Look here, you blessed moaning ass—"

"It's my eye," D'Arcy explained. "I am not what you would call hurt. I trust I can take a hard knock as well as anybody. -But this is howwibly inconvenient. My eye-glass will not fit in my eye. There is a bwuise just where the wim wests."

"Where the what whiches?"

"Where the wim wests," said D'Arcy firmly.

"Oh, where the rim rests," said Blake, with a snort. "I see. What does it matter?"

"Weally, Blake, I suppose it mattahs a gweat deal if I cannot wear my monocle."

"Can't you see without it?" demanded Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then what do you want to wear it for?"

D'Arcy jammed his monocle into his right eye, and regarded Herries for a moment, holding the eyeglass in its place with his fingers.

"Weally, Hewwies, I wegard that question as widiculous. Can't you walk without your boots, for instance?"

"I suppose so."

"Then what do you want to wear them for?" demanded D'Arcy triumphantly. "I wathah think I've got you there, Hewwies."

Herries grunted.

"Fathead! I—I—"

"I refuse to be called a fathead!"

"The next time he says 'ow,'" said Blake confidentially, "I'm going to take away his blessed monocle, and jump on it."

"Weally, Blake—"

"We're fed-up with monocles in this study," said Digby. "I know where the ass keeps 'em—he has five or six, in case one gets broken. I'll take 'em all out and jump on them if he says 'ow' again."

"Upon the whole," said Arthur Augustus, after some reflection—"upon the whole, deah boys, I wegard it as more in accordance with my dig, to suffah in silence, and I shall say no more about it. But it is vevy twyin'. I can wuff it with anybody, I hope, but there are some things that a chap weally feels that he cannot stand, and havin' a bump just where you west your monocle is one of them. I have wuffed it in my time. I wemembah once dinin' at a place where they gave me a soiled serviette. And I can wemembah, in my youngh days, goin' on a holiday, and in the huwvy of packin' my tooth-bwush was forgotten, and I twavelled for a whole day without cleanin' my teeth. I bore it, I hope, with fortitude. But there are some things—"

"Exactly!" agreed Blake. "There are some things that cannot be stood, and you are one of them."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Tea's ready. I expect those Shell duffers will be in here to tea. Oh, come in, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther presented themselves at the door. They had their most agreeable smiles on. They showed traces of the late battle in the quadrangle with the forces of the New House. Monty Lowther had a dark circle

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nosed his left eye, and Tom Merry had a swelling on his nose, and Manners seemed to have his mouth a little sideways. But they were quite cheerful about it.

"Please we've come to tea!" said Monty Lowther. "My hat! What's the matter with your eye, Gussy?"

"One of the New House wottahs biffed it," said D'Arcy. "I think it was Figgins! I was thwashin' several of them—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I see no cause whatever for wibald laughtah, Lowthah. I was thwashin' several of them, when I was biffed in the eye. I do not mind a hard knock, of course. There is nothin' soft about me, I hope. But it is doocid awkward, you see, because it is just in the place where the wim of my monocle wests."

"Horrible!" said Lowther.

"Weally, deah boy!"

"But I mean it," said Lowther earnestly. "Something ought to be done for it. Look here, I've got a lotion that's splendid for bruises. Would you like me to rub some of it under your eye? I will do it with pleasure."

"Bai Jove, you are awfully good, Lowthah! If it would be any good for that wotten bwuise, I should be vewy much obliged."

"I'll fetch it at once," said Lowther.

"Thanks awfully!"

Tom Merry and Manners sat down to tea, while the obliging Lowther hurried from the study. D'Arcy caressed his eye as he sat down. Tom Merry and Manners were grinning.

"You see, I don't mind the pain," D'Arcy explained. "I can bear the pain, I hope. Besides, it doesn't hurt, as a matter of fact. But it's so awkward for a chap—"

"Exactly," said Tom Merry. "What ripping toast!"

"It's doocid awkward, because—"

"I like the sardines," said Manners. "By the way, I think we got the better of Figgins & Co. in that row."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I've no doubt Figgins & Co. are saying the same," grinned Jack Blake.

Tom Merry nodded seriously.

"It's occurred to me that Figgins & Co. are getting their ears up lately," he said. "My opinion is that it's about time the School House went on the warpath again, and proved that it's cock-house at St. Jim's."

"Hear, hear!"

"You see, we can't allow those New House bounders to get their ears up, because—because—well, because!" said Tom Merry conclusively. "I know you agree with me."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Certainly!" said Blake. "If you've got any plan for putting Figgins & Co. in their place, I'm on!"

"Yaas, wathah! I should not object to leadin' you fellows against the New House, and givin' them a weally feahful thwashin'!"

"We should object, though," Digby remarked. "Under your brilliant generalship, we might get the fearful thrashing ourselves."

"Weally, Dig—"

"I've got an idea," said Tom Merry. "What price a night attack?"

"Phew!"

"Bai Jove!"

"It would be a bit new, I know," Tom Merry admitted.

"But that's just where we should score. Suppose we let ourselves down from the dormitory window to-night, and got over to the New House, and invaded Figgy's dorm."

"My hat!"

"We could wipe up the place with them, in the surprise," chuckled Tom Merry, "and they would be done brown all along the line."

"It's rather a big order," Blake remarked.

"But we could do it."

"Yaas, wathah! I should be vewy pleased to—"

"Here you are!" said Monty Lowther, entering the study, with a bottle in his hand. "I've got the lotion, Gussy."

D'Arcy rose from the table. Lowther held up the bottle. It contained a violet-coloured liquid. He drew the cork, and dipped the corner of a handkerchief in the liquid.

"I—I suppose it doesn't burn or anythin'?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, somewhat apprehensively.

"Not in the least."

"It's all right—"

"It's simply ripping. Stand quite still, with your face to the light."

"Vewy well, deah boy."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a rather painful expression upon his face, stood quite still, with the fortitude of a martyr. Monty Lowther began to rub the lotion round his right eye. The other juniors looked on, grinning.

Round D'Arcy's right eye a circle of a deep purple colour

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grew, and Monty Lowther gave a dab or two to his nose, en passant.

"Bai Jove. How long does it take, Lowthah, deah boy?"

"It's finished now," said Monty Lowther blandly.

"Thanks awfully!"

Lowther corked up the bottle, and put it in his pocket. Manners glanced at the handkerchief he had used to dab the lotion on.

"Does that stuff come out?" he asked.

"Oh, no!"

"Then you've jolly well ruined that handkerchief!" said Manners.

"Oh, that doesn't matter!" said Lowther airily. "It isn't mine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners. "I should like to see the chap's face, then, when he finds out what you've done with his handkerchief. Whose is it?"

"Yours!"

"Mine!" howled Manners, jumping up excitedly. "Why, you ass—you fathead—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

Arthur Augustus made a stride towards Monty Lowther. Manners looked at his empurpled visage, and his wrath faded away, and he yelled with laughter. D'Arcy grasped Lowther by the shoulder. The Shell fellow looked at him with a cheerful smile.

"Lowthah, did I undahstand you to say that this stuff does not come out?" asked Arthur Augustus, with terrible distinctness.

"I don't know," said Lowther innocently.

"You don't know whethah it comes out?"

"No; I don't know whether you understood me to say that it doesn't come out?" Lowther explained. "How should I know what you understood?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you uttah ass! Does it come out or does it not come out?" shouted D'Arcy.

"Well, as a matter of fact, it doesn't!" said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gave one look in the looking-glass. Then he gave Monty Lowther a look. And then, without a word, he rushed straight at the humorist of the Shell, hitting out with both fists.

CHAPTER 5.

Spoofoed.

MONTY LOWTHER dodged round the tea-table. Arthur Augustus followed fast, hitting out furiously. Blake caught a powerful drive on the side of the head, and Manners captured one in the eye. Then Herries was swept off his chair with a crash on the ear. Lowther was not hit at all. The juniors jumped up wildly, and every voice was heard at once in Study No. 6.

"Stop it—"

"You ass—"

"You fathead—"

"Lemme get at him!" roared D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! I'll smash him! I'll squash the howwid wottah! I'll—I'll—"

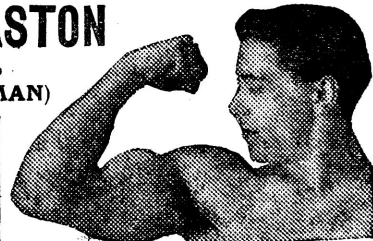
Monty Lowther fled round the table. The other fellows made room for him to pass, but legs and arms were in D'Arcy's way all the time, and he had no chance of catching the Shell fellow.

"My hat!" gasped Lowther. "Does Gussy always treat

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his guests in this way? It must be the special D'Arcy brand of hospitality."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus halted. Deeply injured as he was, he was host on this occasion, or one of the hosts, and the humorist of the Shell was a guest in No. 6. Chesterfieldian politeness was the strong point of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He paused.

"You howwid wottah!" he gasped. "Undah the cires., I will not give you a feahful thwashin'! But I wegard you as havin' acted in a wotten mannah, and of havin' abused the privileges of a guest!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I considah you a beast, and I shall certainly no longah wegard you as a friend!" said D'Arcy. "I wegard you with uttah despision—I mean, contempt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther sat down at the table. He took the cup of tea Blake had poured out for him, and stirred it gently. D'Arcy regarded him with a glance that spoke volumes of wrath; but it was impossible for even the swell of St. Jim's to look stately with a dark purple circle round the right eye, and purple spots on his aristocratic nose.

The juniors roared with laughter.

"I can see no weason whatevah for wibald laughtah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I have been tweated with gwoss diswespect!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have been disfigahed in a howwid way! If this stuff does not come out, it may be days and days before I get wid of it—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For months and months and months," sang Lowther softly.

"You howwid wottah! I can't chastise you in this studay," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity, "but, outside these walls, I shall take the first opportunity of givin' you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I was only trying to be obliging," said Lowther. "That stuff is a really good lotion, and I added a little violet dye for artistic effect. The colour matches the stripe in your waistcoat beautifully!"

"I wufuse to speak to you, Lowthah!"

"Besides, you only have to give it a little rub with a sponge to make it come off," said Lowther cheerfully.

Arthur Augustus jumped.

"What! What did you say, Lowthah?"

"Poor old Gussy! Getting deaf?" said Lowther sympathetically.

"Weally, you ass— Did you say it would come off?"

"Certainly!"

"Then you have been tellin' untwuths, for the sake of a wotten joke—"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Monty Lowther, sipping his tea. "You asked me if it would come out, not if it would come off. It won't come out—that was an incorrect expression. But it will come off, quite easily."

Arthur Augustus stared at the humorist of the Shell. The other juniors simply roared. But relief slowly dawned in the face of the swell of the School House.

"Then it will come off, Lowthah?"

"Certainly!"

"Bai Jove! You certainly led me to believe that it was indelible," said Arthur Augustus. "It was a wotten play upon words, Lowther!"

"Go hon!"

"I wegard it as vevy neah tellin' a whoppah!"

"Oh, Gussy!"

"I will now pwoceed to wash off this wotten stuff!" said D'Arcy. "Pway excuse me, deah boys, if I leave you for a few minutes."

"With pleasure!" said Blake blandly.

D'Arcy sniffed, and hurried from the study. He left the juniors roaring. They proceeded with their tea. In five minutes Arthur Augustus returned, with his face fresh and clean and shining, and not a trace of the purple dye upon it. There was a cheerful smile upon it instead.

In his relief at getting rid of the dye, he was feeling equal to forgiving even the practical joker of the Shell.

"Does that look all wight, deah boys?" he asked, presenting his aristocratic countenance for inspection to the tea-party.

Monty Lowther shook his head.

"No; there's some pink in the cheeks," he said.

"Pink! Bai Jove! I don't undahstand!" Arthur Augustus rushed to the glass, and surveyed his fresh and rosy countenance therein. "You uttah ass! That is only the natuwal colour of my complexion!"

"I know that," said Lowther. "But you asked me if it was all white. It isn't all white."

"You uttah ass! I said wight, not white!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus sniffed, and sat down to his tea. Most of the toast was gone, and all the sardines, and the tea was weak and lukewarm by this time.

D'Arcy looked over the table, and frowned. But he was very patient, and he took bread-and-butter and cold tea, and nothing else, and started.

The juniors grinned at one another.

"Tea all right?" asked Blake.

"Yaas, thanks!"

"Toast all right?"

"The bwead-and-buttah is all wight, deah boy!"

"Enjoying yourself?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, yaas, considewin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors together.

D'Arcy looked at them with a puzzled expression. He did not see any reason for that sudden burst of merriment.

"Weally, deah boys—" he began.

"Ha, ha, ha! Oh, you ass!" roared Tom Merry. "Did you think we should scoff all the tommy? Look there!"

Blake lifted out of the grate a plate of beautifully browned and buttered toast, which he had placed there to keep warm for D'Arcy. Digby produced a plate of sardines, and Herries a fresh teapot, from which he filled a new cup for Arthur Augustus.

D'Arcy held his eyeglass to his eye, and smiled.

"Bai Jove! That's all wight, deah boys!" he remarked. "Pway excuse me for havin' imaged for a moment that you had scoffed it all. It's all wight."

And Arthur Augustus ate with great satisfaction. In spite of Monty Lowther's little joke, the tea-party ended in high good-humour, and Arthur Augustus said that he would lead the expedition that night against the New House, with pleasure. But it was a pleasure that the swell of St. Jim's was not likely to experience, for his generous offer was refused without a dissentient voice.

CHAPTER 6.

The Serenaders.

"GENTLEMEN—" said Figgins.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Figgy!"

Figgins looked round upon the crowd of New House juniors. He was mounted upon the top of an old cask, upended in a corner of the quadrangle of St. Jim's. Quite a crowd of Fourth and Third-Formers belonging to the New House surrounded him.

"Gentlemen—"

"Hear, hear!"

"The time has come—"

"Hurrah!"

"Pile in, Figgy."

"Blessed if I can see how I can pile in, when you're making such a blessed row," said Figgins. "Cheese it, and let a chap hear the sound of his own voice. Gentlemen, the time has come when we've got to put our foot down—"

"Hear, hear!"

"We should certainly hear, hear, if Figgy put his foot down," remarked Jimson. "Judging by the size of Figgy's foot, I mean."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Jimson."

"None of Monty Lowther's second-hand jokes."

"Cheese it!"

"Gentlemen," said Figgins loftily, ignoring Jimson, "the School House have lately got their ears up—I am referring especially to the junior section of the House. The seniors always have their ears up, but that's a thing we have to stand from seniors. Tom Merry & Co. have lately been putting on frills, quite oblivious—"

"Hurrah! Good word!" said French.

"Quite oblivious," went on Figgins loftily, "to the fact that the New House is cock-house at St. Jim's."

"Good old New House!"

"The time has come when we must put our foot down. I can see that it is strictly necessary. When the School House gets its back up, we must strike the iron while it is hot, and nip it in the bud," said Figgins.

There was a roar of cheering and laughter. Figgins's metaphors might be a little mixed, but there was no doubt as to his meaning. And his statements were quite in accordance with the feelings of his audience.

"Therefore, gentlemen, we are going to put the School House LIBRARY.—No. 193.

ANSWERS

House kids in their place, and jump on them, and squash them, and down them generally," said Figgins. "And by way of giving them the challenge, and throwing down the gage of battle, we are going to give them a serenade to start with."

"Bravo!"

"Forward the band," said Figgins.

Four juniors stepped forward. Kerr had a cornet in his hand—it was Herries' cornet, by the way, borrowed for the occasion, without the permission of Herries, needless to say. Herries was almost as fond of his cornet as he was of his bulldog, Towser. Kerr could play it, and Herries couldn't; but that made no difference. If Herries had seen it in the hands of the Scottish junior, he would have seen red at once, and Kerr would probably have seen stars.

Pratt followed Kerr, with a tin tea-tray in his hands. What kind of music Pratt expected to extract from the tea-tray, we cannot say; but perhaps Pratt was not particular. Then came Knight, with a biscuit-box slung over him in the form of a kettle-drum, with two sticks in his hands. And then there was Powis, with a comb and paper. The quartette seemed to be all the members of Figgins's orchestra.

Figgins waved his ruler, which he apparently intended to use as a baton for conducting the band.

"Play up!" he said.

The band started. The cornet blared out. Kerr could play when he chose. On the present occasion he didn't choose. He turned out a dreadful hubbub, which sounded exactly like Herries playing Wagner. Knight chimed in with the kettle-drum-biscuit-box, and Powis with the comb, and Pratt with the tea-tray. Figgins conductor. Apparently he regarded himself as a lightning conductor, for he conducted at terrific speed.

Amid the rattle and bang of the instruments, the quartette chanted in doleful tones:

"We're the cock-house at St. Jim's!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

School House chaps are simply nowhere!

Bang! Bang! Bang!"

"I composed that," said Figgins.

There was a general exclamation of admiration.

"By Jove!" said French. "Did you really?"

"Yes, I did! I think that will knock them."

"It will simply knock them silly," said Jimson, "especially the music! I shouldn't wonder if it brings the house down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're going to parade under the windows of the School House, and chant that at them," said Figgins. "How's that for high?"

"Hear, hear!"

"No, there, there!" murmured Jimson.

"What a chants!" said French.

"Ready?" demanded Figgins.

"Quite ready!" said the orchestra, with one voice.

"Then march! You fellows all follow, ready to chip in if they should rush us," said Figgins. "There may be a row."

"It's jolly certain there will be when that giddy orchestra gets to work," said Jimson.

"March!"

"Hurrah!"

Figgins jumped down from the cask, and led the way. The orchestra followed him, and after him came the crowd of New House fellows, all laughing. They marched across the quadrangle, and halted under the study windows.

Figgins turned and faced his followers.

"Strike up!" he exclaimed.

The band struck up.

There was a terrific clatter of the different instruments. The latest and most striking compositions of Richard Strauss were simply not in it with Figgins's band. If the composer of Elektra had heard that performance, he would probably have changed colour with envy. Figgins conducted, and the band played. The uproar could be heard in every corner of the spacious quadrangle of St. Jim's.

Then they chanted, and the whole crowd of New House juniors joined in the chant:

"We're the cock-house at St. Jim's!

Bang! Bang! Bang!"

The window of Study No. 6 opened. Blake looked out, and Tom Merry looked over his shoulder. The School House fellows had just finished tea in No. 6, when the terrific uproar from below burst upon their ears.

They glared down at the New House crowd. The noise was deafening, as the band played up to the roaring chant:

"The School House chaps are simply nowhere!

Bang! Bang! Bang!"

"What's the row about?" roared Tom Merry. "What do mean by making night hideous in this way, you silly owls?"

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"Bai Jove! It gives me a feahful pain in the eahs, you know. Pway stop that awful wow, deah boys!"

"We're the cock-house at St. Jim's!" roared the New House juniors.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

"The School House chaps are simply nowhere!

Bang! Bang! Bang!"

Tom Merry stopped his ears. Monty Lowther glanced out of the window, and grinned. He retreated towards the fire-place, and picked up a large paper bag that had contained pastry. He raked in the chimney, with the result that a mass of soot came tumbling down. Monty Lowther shovelled the soot into the paper bag industriously. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy began to sneeze.

"In the name of all that's howwible, Lowthah, what are you doin' that for?" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's warmly.

"Figgins!" replied Lowther serenely.

"Bai Jove! What a wippin' ideah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Atchoo-choo-choo!" sneezed Digby.

The roar continued under the window. Other windows had opened, and loud and impolite voices were heard expostulating and threatening. But Figgins & Co. paid no heed. The chant was roared out with all the force of the New House lungs.

"We're the cock-house at St. Jim's!

Bang! Bang! Bang!"

Monty Lowther gently approached the window, with the paper bag of soot in his hand. Tom Merry and Blake grinned and made room for him.

"Go it!" said Figgins, waving his baton. "Give them a rouser, before some beastly prefect comes out and cuts up rusty. Go it! I—I— Oh! Oow! Grooooooop!"

Biff!

The paper bag, hurled with a deft aim, fell exactly upon Figgins's head, and burst there. The soot flew in all directions in thick clouds.

"Grororor!" snorted Figgins. "Oh! Ow! What the—how the— Grooooooop!"

"Atchoo! Atchoo! Atchoooooop!"

"Grooh!"

"Yow! Ow! Grr-r-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the School House juniors from the window. "Who's cock-house at St. Jim's now? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grco!"

"Atchoo! Atchoo! Atchoo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House chant had died away. Voices were choked with soot, and the New House fellows at up only a chorus of snorts and coughs. Instruments and instrumentalists were smothered with soot, and sneezing spasmodically.

"Hold on a minute!" shouted Monty Lowther. "I've got some more soot here, and—"

"Run for it!" gasped Pratt.

And the New House serenaders ran. They did not want any more. Sneezing and coughing, they dashed away, leaving a trail of soot behind them as they ran, and leaving the study windows crammed with School House juniors roaring with laughter.

CHAPTER 7.

Fatty Wynn Knows Something.

FATTY WYNN wore upon his plump features an expression of injured dignity. He sat in his study in the New House, and from time to time blinked at Figgins and Kerr, who were doing their preparation. Figgins and Kerr did not look cheerful. Their demonstration against the School House could not, by any stretch of imagination, be called a success. Figgins had been hauled over the coals by the members of the band, as soon as they recovered from their fit of sneezing, and they had told him in very plain language what they thought of him and his precious schemes. Figgins had retired to his study, like Achilles retiring to his tent, in a state of great wrath. He frowned over his preparation, and Kerr frowned out of sympathy. Fatty Wynn looked at them from time to time with great dignity, and yet with an evident desire in his looks to speak, and break the ice.

The severity of the punishment he had undergone was forgotten now by the fat Fourth-Former. As a matter of fact, he was feeling as if he would like to be punished again in the same manner. But that was not all. Fatty Wynn had been left out of the latest demonstration against the School House, and the demonstration had been a hopeless failure. Fatty Wynn, so far from wanting to crow over his leader, felt sympathetic. He cleared his throat at last with a little cough, and spoke.

"Figgins, old man——"
 "It's all right," said Figgins, without looking round. "I know!"
 Fatty Wynn stared.
 "You know what, Figgy?"
 "I know you're hungry."
 "I wasn't going to say I was hungry!" said Fatty Wynn warmly. "As a matter of fact, I am hungry, but that isn't what I was going to say."

"Got a new record, then?" asked Figgins sarcastically. Figgins was not in the best of humours, and he still remembered the fat Fourth-Former's offence of the afternoon.

"I know what I know!" said Fatty Wynn oracularly. "Go hon!" said Figgins. "It wouldn't fill many volumes, would it?"

"Look here, Figgy——"
 "Oh, toddle down to the tuckshop, and let a chap do his prep." said Figgins.

"Well, if you don't want to score against the School House, of course, I've got nothing more to say," said Fatty Wynn, in a tone of patient resignation.

Figgins started, and Kerr looked up from his work. "What's that?" asked both together.

"Oh, nothing!"
 "Look here," roared Figgins, "if you've got anything to say, say it. If you haven't, dry up, and go and eat steak and kidney pies."

"Don't be a pig, Figgy, old man. You're out of temper to-night. Of course, I couldn't help your coming a mucker over that serenade bizney."

"Oh, ring off!"
 "But I think we can score over the School House bounders to-night, Figgy," said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "I've got some information."

"Go ahead!" said Figgins tersely.
 "I was in the tuckshop——"

"Yes, I could have guessed that."
 "Look here, Figgy——"

"Oh, get on with the washing!"
 "Well, I was in the tuckshop," said Fatty Wynn. "I was just telling Mrs. Taggles what I wanted. You know, she's been making new jam-tarts to-day, and they're all fresh, and simply ripping. They're raspberry jam, and——"

"Blow the tarts!"
 "Well, it just occurred to me that you might like some," said Fatty Wynn. "They're of two kinds to-day, raspberry and strawberry jam, and——"

"Get on with the yarn!" shrieked Figgins.
 "I am getting on with it," Fatty Wynn exclaimed. "I must tell you about the tarts, because I was ordering them when Taggles came in. You see, I was sitting in the shady corner of Mrs. Taggles's shop eating the tarts—raspberry ones, and they were ripping, too——"

"Never mind whether they were ripping, you fathead. What happened?" asked Kerr.

"Why, I had a dozen, and then ordered a dozen more, and——"

"And is that all?" asked Figgins, reaching out towards a ruler. "Have you interrupted my prep. to tell me a tale of jam-tarts?"

"No, no, not at all!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn hastily. "What I'm trying to make you understand is that I was in the shady corner eating the jam-tarts—raspberry ones—when Gussy came in. He didn't see me, and he started talking to Taggles. And what do you think he said to Taggles?"

"Blessed if I know or care much," said Figgins.
 "Well," said Fatty Wynn, in an injured tone, "he asked Taggles if he could lend him a long rope."

"A long rope," said Figgins, looking puzzled.
 "Yes," said Fatty Wynn eagerly. "He wanted a long rope, and he said it must be fifty feet long, and strong enough to bear a heavy chap. Taggles asked what it was for, and Gussy said it was impertinent to ask questions."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "And did he get the rope?" asked Kerr.

"I don't know. Just then he saw me, and he made Taggles go outside while he jawed to him. But I saw him tip Taggy, so I suppose he's got the rope."

"What on earth does he want fifty feet of rope for?" said Figgins, looking completely perplexed.

"Well, it isn't for a skipping-rope, anyway," said Fatty Wynn sarcastically. "I guessed at once what he wanted it for. Those School House bounders are up to some little game, and they are going to get out of the dorm. window."

"My hat!"
 "Quite correct," said Kerr, with a nod. "The dorm. windows are a good distance from the ground in the School House. And Gussy saying it must be strong enough to bear a chap's weight settles it. I imagine Taggy can guess, too; but he'd pretend not to, if the tip was large enough."

Figgins whistled.

"Then those young bounders are going to break bounds at night?" he exclaimed. "I wonder what the little game is?"

"We are, I expect," said Kerr. "I shouldn't wonder if it's a night attack."
 "Phew!"

"Either that, or they're going to make some giddy excursion out of bounds," said Fatty Wynn. "In either case, there's no reason why we shouldn't lay for them under the dorm. windows, and collar them as they come down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You know that pile of old flour-sacks in Mrs. Taggles's place," went on Fatty Wynn eagerly. "That was really what put the idea into my head. Suppose a crowd of us waited for the bounders under their window with the flour-sacks, and collared them one by one as they came down, and headed them up in the sacks!"

Figgins and Kerr burst into a roar of laughter. Fatty Wynn looked decidedly pleased with himself. It was not often that his suggestions were greeted with such enthusiasm as this.

"Well, what do you think, Figgy?" he demanded.
 Figgins jumped up, and gave his fat chum a ringing slap on the back, which made Fatty Wynn gasp.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Figgins.
 "Ow!"

"We'll make sure that they're really going out to-night. We shall soon be able to spot it if there's something on, and then we'll lay for them," said Figgins exultantly. "I fancy we shall bring Tom Merry & Co. down off their perch this time. Hurray!"

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn modestly. "I say, the tuckshop isn't closed yet."
 "What about that?"

"Well, as I said, Dame Taggles has been making new tarts to-day—raspberry and strawberry ones, and——"
 Figgins put his arm through Fatty Wynn's.

"Come on, my fat tulip," he said. "You deserve raspberry ones and strawberry ones both. Come on, Kerr, and we'll feed him up to the chin."

And Fatty Wynn went with his chums very contentedly. Harmony was completely restored between Figgins and his faithful Co.

CHAPTER 8.

In the Stilly Night!

"UNDAAH the circs.——"
 "Bed-time, Gussy."

"Thank you, Blake. Undah the circs.——"
 "Well, I'm sleepy, for one," said Digby, yawning.

"Where's Herries?"
 "Undah the circs.——"

"Gone to feed his blessed bulldog," said Blake.
 "Undah the circs., as we are undah takin' an extwemely difficult bizney to-night, I think you chaps ought to agree upon acceptin' a fellow with some tact and judgment as leadah. I think you ought to point out to Tom Mewwy that undah the circs.——"

"Here's Herries. How's Towser, Herries, old man?"
 "He's all right," said Herries. "Quite all right. He's completely got over those German sausages I fed him on. He's ripping."

"I trust I'm the last fellow in the world to put myself forward in any way," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a great deal of dignity; "but, undah the circs.——"

Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked into the junior common-room, with his genial, good-tempered smile.

"Tumble up, you kids," he said.
 "Certainly, Kildare, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus.

"Tom Mewwy, deah boy, I want to speak to you as we go up."
 "Certainly," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Go ahead. Do you want to back out of the expedition to-night?"

D'Arcy jammed his eyeglass into his eye, and surveyed the hero of the Shell with unmeasured scorn. But the effect was somewhat spoiled by the sudden dropping of the monocle. The bruise under D'Arcy's eye would not allow the rim a rest.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"
 "Of course, we will excuse you, if you like," said Monty Lowther. "If you wish to conduce to the success of the expedition by staying out of it, of course——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "I wefuse to entah into a discuss. with you, Lowthah. I weward you as an ass. I was goin' to say, Tom Mewwy, that though I should be the vewy last fellow in the world to put myself forward in any way, at the same time I cannot help recognizin' the fact that an expedish. of this sort requires a fellow of tact and judgment as leadah. Undah the circs., do you feel inclined to wesign the leadahship to me."

"Not at all."
 "Weally, you know——"

"But I'll tell you what I will do," said Tom Merry generously. "You shall stay in the School House and keep watch, while we are gone to the New House."

This kind offer reduced Arthur Augustus to a speechless state, and before he recovered from it the Terrible Three had marched off to bed. D'Arcy was simmering with indignation as he went into the Fourth-Form dormitory, with Blake and Herries and Digby and the rest of the Fourth—that is to say, of the School House portion of the Form. More than a third part of the Fourth Form boarded in the New House, and owed allegiance to the great Figgins.

Kildare saw lights out in the Fourth-Form dormitory in the School House, and Darrel, of the Sixth, looked after the Shell. Neither of them noticed anything unusual in the aspect of the juniors. Tom Merry & Co. went to bed peacefully enough, as if they had no thought in their minds but of sleeping like innocent babes until the clang of the rising-bell in the morning.

But after the prefects were gone, there was a buzz of voices. Tom Merry sat up in bed, and Monty Lowther followed his example.

"You fellows can go to sleep, if you like," said Tom Merry. "I'm going to stay awake, and I can call you."

"What time are you raiding the New House?" asked Kangaroo, otherwise Harry Noble, the Australian junior.

"Midnight."

"I expect you will be fast asleep by then, too!" grinned Gore.

"Rats!"

"Oh, I'll stay awake!" said Bernard Glyn. "It's not fair for only one to keep watch."

"So will I," said Clifton Dare.

"And I," said Manners.

Tom Merry laughed.

"Go ahead, then," he said.

There was a buzz of voices in the Shell dormitory for a time. It died away at last, and one by one the juniors dropped off to sleep. The fellows who had declared that they would stay awake to keep Tom Merry company dropped off the last. But one by one they relapsed into the arms of Morpheus.

Tom Merry was the only fellow awake in the Shell dormitory when eleven strokes boomed out from the clock-tower of St. Jim's.

"You asleep, Lowther?" he called out softly.

"Grooh!"

"Asleep, Manners?"

"Groo!"

"I say, Kangy!"

Snore!

Tom Merry smiled softly.

He sat up, keeping his eyes open by a determined effort, and waited for the clock to boom out again.

Half-past eleven! Twelve! Tom Merry was very nearly nodding off when the twelve deep strokes boomed through the silence of the night.

He started out of half-slumber, and rolled out of bed at once. He struck a match and lighted a candle. The dim glimmer of it flickered through the dusky dormitory.

"Wake up, you chaps!"

Snore!

Tom Merry grinned, and jerked the bedclothes off Monty Lowther. Lowther started up with an exclamation, and rubbed his eyes.

"Groo! Hallo! 'Tain't rising-bell!"

"Get up, you lazy bouncer! It's time to go and call the Fourth-Form chaps."

"Oh! Oooch!" said Lowther drowsily. "I say, Tommy, wouldn't it be a jolly good idea to leave it until to-morrow night—Ow!"

He rolled out of bed as Tom Merry gave him a shove.

Bump!

"Yow!"

"Help me wake the others up," grinned Tom Merry.

"You ass! All right!"

And Monty Lowther, by way of indemnifying himself for his rough awakening, dragged the bedclothes off Manners and Kangaroo. The two Shell fellows turned out, and then Bernard Glyn and Clifton Dane were roused up.

The five juniors dressed themselves quietly, and Tom Merry blew out the candle, and they left the dormitory. They stole silently down the passage, and Tom Merry opened the door of the Fourth-Form-room.

"The bounders are all asleep," whispered Monty Lowther, in the dark. "I'll wake Blake up with a jug of water, and—"

"No, you jolly well won't!" said Blake's voice from the gloom. "You'll jolly well get a thick ear if you try it on, Monty Lowther!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry laughed.

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"You fellows ready?" he asked.

"Yes, and waiting," said Digby.

"Good! Has Gussy got the rope?"

"Yaas, wathah! I undahtook to get the wope ffrom Taggles, deah boys, and I have got it. It is a weally good wope, and will beah any weight."

"That's all right!" said Monty Lowther. "We shall want a jolly strong rope, I suppose Herries is going to take his boots with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You let my boots alone!" growled Herries.

"Come on!" said Blake. "We've got the rope fixed at the window, and the window open, all ready—Don't stop to jaw, you Shell chaps."

"Look here, Blake—"

"Yes, let's buck up!" said Tom Merry pacifically.

And the intended raiders of the New House crossed to the window. Outside a clear starlight glimmered, rendering the old quad. very light.

CHAPTER 9.

"Sacked!"

"HERE we are!" murmured Figgins.

"Quiet!"

"Did you speak, Pratt?" asked Figgins, in a decidedly unpleasant tone of voice.

"I said 'quiet!'" said Pratt.

"Oh! I thought you might have been asking for a thick ear," said Figgins. "Just you shut up your chin, Pratt and don't jaw!"

"Look here, Figgy—"

"Dry up!"

The New House juniors had gathered under the windows of the School House. They were pretty certain that the School House raiders were coming down that way, though whether from the Shell dormitory or the Fourth-Form-room they could not be certain. But that they would easily discover as soon as the raiders started. They crouched close to the house in the shadows of the ivy, and waited.

Figgins & Co. were on the ground early—that was only prudent. But it meant a long wait. The glimmer of a light at last in the windows of the Shell dormitory warned them that something was afoot.

"They're up!" murmured Figgins.

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "Are you getting hungry, Figgy?"

"No, I'm not!" growled Figgins.

"Well, I am. Luckily, I thought of bringing some sandwiches with me," said Fatty Wynn. And there was a sound of busy jaws in the shadow of the ivy. "I say, Kerr, will you have a sandwich?"

"Rats! No!"

"They're ham and beef—"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Figgins.

"Yes, shut up!" said Pratt.

"Hallo! You beginning again?" said Figgins. "I suppose you really want that thick ear, Pratt?"

Pratt murmured something indistinctly.

The light went out, and the New House juniors waited patiently. They heard a faint murmur above their heads.

"They're in the Fourth-Form dorm.," said Figgins.

"Yes, rather!"

"Sacks ready?"

"Yes."

"Mind, keep in cover till the chap comes down," whispered Figgins excitedly, though he tried to keep very cool. "Let them drop into the sacks one at a time, and you fellows stand ready to pull the cord tight and shut them up, so that they can't alarm the others."

"What-ho!"

The New House juniors chuckled. Hidden, as they were, from the view of Tom Merry & Co. at the dormitory windows, it was perfectly easy to carry out their plan. It was probable that a good many of the enemy would fall into the trap before the alarm was given.

There was a creaking sound overhead as the rope was paid out. Figgins glanced up. He caught sight of a boyish form descending slowly.

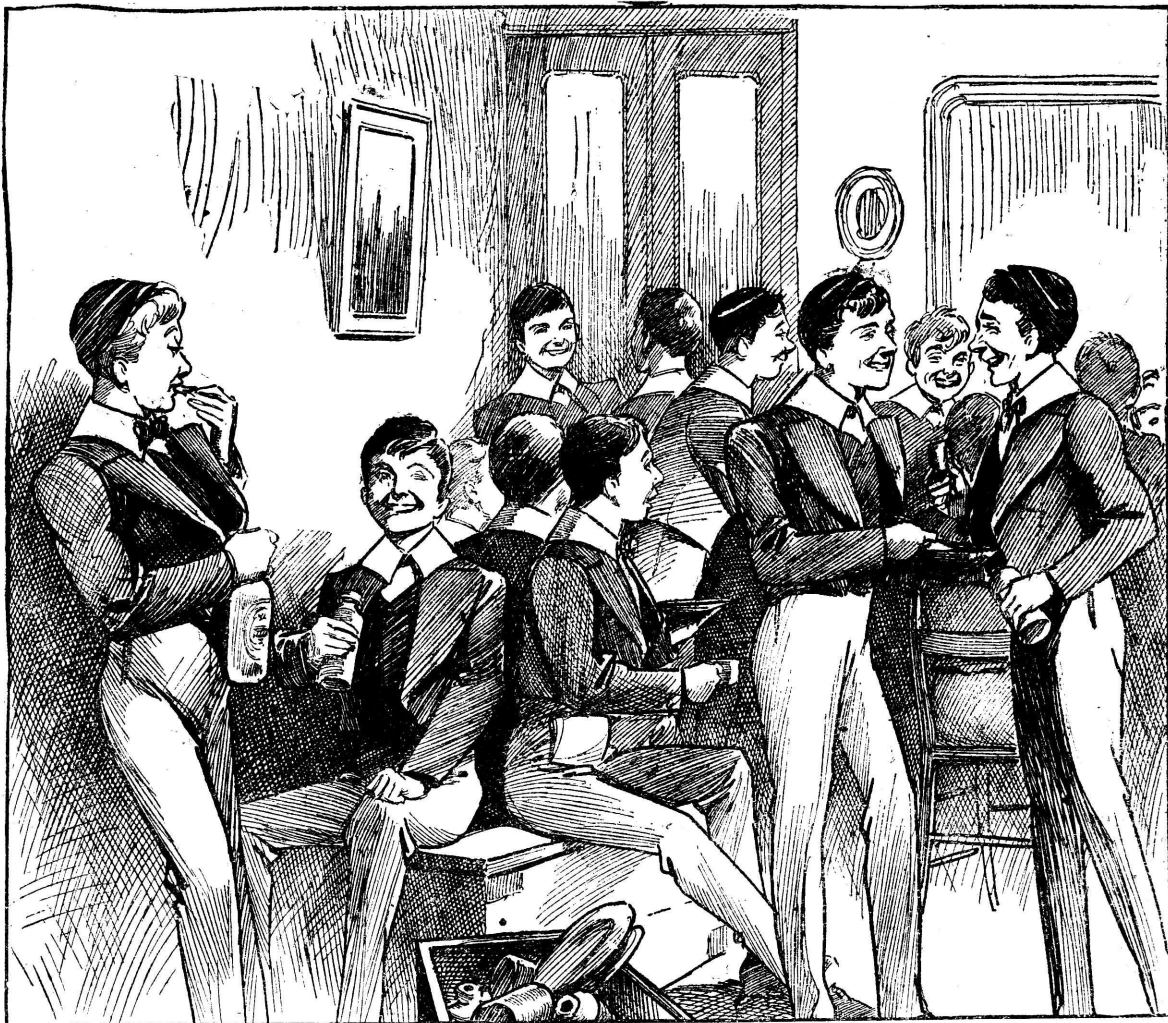
He made a sign to his comrades.

The first to come down was a very elegant form, and Figgins recognised it at once. It was that of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Figgins and Kerr stepped forward silently with the sack.

As the rope was paid out the feet of the swell of St. Jim's descended fairly into the sack, and as he dropped to the ground he dropped inside.

He gave one faint gasp of surprise as Figgins's powerful hand crunched him down into the sack; and the top was tightened in over him.



Lord Mauleverer's study was crammed. Fellows sat on stools and chairs, and on the fender and on the window-sill, and the table and the bookcase. Some stood and some sat on the floor. It was a crowded house, as Bob Cherry remarked; but everybody was joyful.

(An incident taken from the grand, long, complete story of Frank Nugent and Harry Wharton at Greyfriars, entitled "A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE" which is contained in this week's number of "THE MAGNET." Now on Sale. Price One Penny.)

The sack was rolled over out of the way immediately, with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy gasping inside.

Fatty Wynn sat on the head of the swell of St. Jim's as he writhed in the sack.

"Look out!" murmured Figgins. "Here's another!"

The rope had been jerked up as soon as D'Arcy's weight was off it, and now another junior was descending. It was Digby, of the Fourth.

Figgins and Kerr held the sack ready.

Digby dropped into it as D'Arcy had done, and was headed up before he could even gasp, so rapid were the New House juniors.

"Good!" murmured Figgins.

The rope swung free against the school wall. From above came a whispering voice in inquiry. From the window it was impossible for the School House juniors to see close to the base of the wall.

"All serene down there?"

"All serene!" whispered Kerr, in response.

The whisper was taken for Digby's. The School House juniors had not the faintest suspicion of what was going on.

A third fellow came swinging down the rope. This time it was Monty Lowther. From within Digby's sack came an indistinguishable murmur. Pratt sat on him to keep him quiet.

Monty Lowther dropped into a sack. Then came Manners, and then Tom Merry, and each in turn was caught and headed up in the same way.

By that time, however, a sort of suspicion seemed to have gained ground above that all was not as it should be below.

Kangaroo leaned out of the window.

"I say, Digby!" he whispered.

"Hallo?" whispered Kerr.

"Ah! Is that Digby or Tom Merry?"

"Come down!" whispered Kerr. "You're keeping us waiting."

"Hold on! I don't know that voice! Stand out from the wall and show yourself," said the Cornstalk suspiciously.

Figgins grinned.

"The game's up!" he muttered. "But we've got five of them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The windows above were crammed with faces in a moment. The fellows had heard the chuckles of the New House juniors.

"Who's that?" called out Blake from the window.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! New House cads!" exclaimed Jack Blake excitedly.

"Great Scott!"

"Phew!"

"Tom Merry! What are they doing?" called out Kangaroo.

Figgins burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha! Tom Merry can't answer you—he's got the sack!"

"The sack's got him, you mean!" chuckled Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"New House cads!" gurgled Tom Merry from the window.

interior of the sack, but the thick sacking and the remainder of the flour inside, choked his voice.

The New House juniors grinned joyously. They came out of the shadow of the wall, dragging the sacks by the ends, the prisoners struggling wildly within them. A yell of wrath came from the School House fellows above. Shouts and cat-calls, and boots and shoes, were hurled from the windows as the New House juniors retreated across the quad, with their prisoners. But the rage of the School House was in vain—Figgins & Co. were gone, and with them they were dragging five sacks, and in each of the sacks was a helpless, raging prisoner!

CHAPTER 10. Completely Done.

"GROOH!"

"Yow!"

"Yaroo!"

"Lemme out!"

"Bai J-jjove!"

Low and suffocated exclamations came from the closed-up flour-sacks containing the captured School House juniors.

Figgins & Co. chuckled as they hauled the sacks away.

The shower of boots and cakes of soap from the windows of the Fourth-Form dormitory in the School House dropped harmlessly behind them.

Out in the wide quad, the juniors halted, gasping.

"Hold on!" panted Fatty Wynn. "I haven't any more run left in me! Hold on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooh! Lemme out!" came a faint voice, choked with flour.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gweas Scott—"

"Let their heads out," said Figgins serenely, "and tie the sacks round their necks."

"Oh, good!"

And the cords were unfastened, and the sacks were lowered sufficiently to enable the prisoners to get their heads free. Then the sacks were drawn tightly under the chins of Tom Merry & Co. They had no chance to get their hands out of the sacks—the New House juniors took good care of that.

In the soft starlight of the autumn night five floury faces looked out of the necks of the sacks.

Tom Merry & Co. looked like ghosts rising into view. Their faces and their hair were all white with flour, and flour was sticking in their eyes and noses and mouths and ears.

Figgins & Co. looked at them, and roared. They forgot that it was midnight, and that they were out in the quad. They could not help it. They roared.

"Bai Jove," gasped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wegard this as uttably wotten! I am simply covahed with beastly flour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are the flower of the family, you know," French remarked.

"Weally, Fwench—"

"Here, this is enough!" Tom Merry gasped. "Let us out!"

"Not much!" said Kerr. "We've caught you, and here you are. You're not going to be let out until you've owned up that the New House is cock-house at St. Jim's."

"Hear, hear!" said the New House juniors in chorus.

"Rats!" said the five floury heroes together.

"Yaas, watah; wats, and many of them!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It would be inposs. to own up to an untwuth, Kerr."

"Then you stay in the sacks," grinned Figgins. "After you've been in them for a time, it may dawn upon you that we're cock-house."

"Wats!"

"The other chaps will rescue us," gasped Lowther, "and I'll wipe up the quad. with you fellows to-morrow, Figgins."

"Yaas, watah!"

There was a sound of voices and footsteps from the direction of the School House. Jack Blake and a crowd of fellows were descending into the quad, at reckless speed, to rush to the rescue.

Figgins glanced towards the School House, and grinned.

"Time we were off!" he remarked. "Good-night, Tom Merry! I hope you like the taste of flour."

"Groo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Figgins, you uttah ass, I insist upon bein' immediately weleased. I am in a most uncomfy posish. Figgins—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter and footsteps of the New House juniors died away in the direction of their own House.

The five prisoners writhed most uncomfortably in the sacks.

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The necks of the sacks were securely tightened and tied, and it was impossible to get their arms out. They could only wriggle and writhe while they waited for rescue.

"Bai Jove," gasped Arthur Augustus, "this is howwible, you know! I wegard it as simply feahful! What awful asses we look!"

"Speak for yourself," growled Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"I think we all look pretty sick," grinned Tom Merry. "Fancy dropping into a trap like that! How did Figgins & Co. know that we were coming out at all?"

"They must have found out, deah boy."

"Go hon!" said Monty Lowther sarcastically. "How does Gussy guess these things, I wonder?"

"Weally, Lowther—"

"Groo! How long are those duffers going to be?"

"Oh, it's rotten!" groaned Digby. "I'm smothered! The flour is tickling my nose, and I can't scratch it. Ow!"

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Blake, as he nearly stumbled over a wriggling sack. "Hallo! What on earth—"

"Pway don't step on me, deah boy!"

"Gussy! My hat! What are you doing in that sack?"

"Twyin' to get out, deah boy."

"Get us loose, for goodness' sake, and don't stop and jaw!" growled Digby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Blake, there is nothin' whatevah to cackle at."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us loose, and shut up!" growled Tom Merry.

Blake and his companions released the prisoners from the sacks. But they did not shut up. They chuckled and gurgled with merriment. It seemed much funnier to them than it did to Tom Merry and his companions.

Arthur Augustus shook himself as he stepped out of the sack, and a cloud of flour flew from his clothes.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "I—atchoo! Here, mind you frabjous duffer—atchoo—you burbling—atchoo—atchoo—atchoo-oo!"

"Yaas, I can hear you, my deah fellow."

"You ass! Atchoo—atchoo!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"You frabjous duffer—atchoo—you burbling—atchoo—ass!"

"Better get back to the House," said Tom Merry. "If Blake's going to make that row, we shall have an army of prefects out here soon."

"But we came out to waid the New House, Tom Mewwy."

"You can go and raid it if you like," said Tom Merry. "I know when I've had enough. I'm fed up with flour."

"But weally—"

"Ass! Figgins & Co. will be watching for us. We shouldn't have a chance unless we took them by surprise. The game's up for to-night."

"Of course it is!" growled Blake. "Atchoo! Let's get back to bed. Atchoo!"

D'Arcy did not move.

"Undah the eires, I think we ought to go ahead," he declared firmly. "It has become a mattah of personal dig. now. We cannot submit to defeat."

"Oh, rats!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, come on!" said Monty Lowther. "Let Gussy stay here and talk to the flour-sacks, if he doesn't want to go to bed."

"I think we ought to give Figgins & Co. a feahful thwashin'," said the swell of St. Jim's obstinately.

"Go ahead and give 'em it!" said Blake.

And the juniors walked away towards the School House, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy standing alone in the starlight. The swell of St. Jim's wrinkled his brows in reflection. He could not certainly raid the New House alone, and upon due cogitation he realised that, as a matter of fact, the raid was now hopeless, anyway. Having come to this conclusion, he followed his comrades towards the School House.

He arrived under the windows of the Fourth Form dormitory. All the other fellows had gone in by this time, and the rope was pulled up, and the window was closed. The juniors seemed to have forgotten that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was still in the quad.

"Bai Jove!" murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "They've left me out! Bai Jove!"

He held his eyeglass to his damaged eye, and looked up at the window. He picked up a pebble, and threw it up as a signal.

Clink!

The pebble knocked on a pane of glass.

A light gleamed in the dormitory. The window opened, and a head appeared. D'Arcy, who was about to throw another pebble, dropped it.

"Let down the wope, you uttah ass!" he said.

"D'Arcy!"

Arthur Augustus jumped. For the voice that uttered his

name was not that of Jack Blake, or one of the juniors. It was the voice of Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House. It was Mr. Railton who was looking down at him.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

CHAPTER 11.

Gussy, of Course!

MR. RAILTON looked down at the swell of St. Jim's, and the swell of St. Jim's looked up at Mr. Railton. For some moments there was silence.

"So that is you, D'Arcy?" said Mr. Railton, at last.

"Yaas, sir."

"I noticed that your bed was empty. What are you doing out of your dormitory?"

"Waitin' to climb in, sir."

"Ahem! I will come down and let you in."

"Thank you, sir!"

D'Arcy went round to the door of the School House. Mr. Railton admitted him, and then marched him up to the Fourth Form dormitory. All the juniors were in their beds. Some of them were affecting to be asleep; but most realised that that would be of no use, and were watching with wide-open eyes.

Mr. Railton eyed the swell of St. Jim's sternly as he came into the light of the dormitory.

"How did you get into that state, D'Arcy?" he asked.

"By accident, sir."

Mr. Railton tried not to smile.

"I did not suppose that you got like that on purpose, D'Arcy," he said. "Is that flour that you are smothered with?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Where did it come from?"

"From the inside of a sack, sir."

"You mean to tell me that you have been inside a flour-sack, D'Arcy?" exclaimed the School Housemaster.

"Yaas, sir."

"Why?"

"I was put in, sir."

"Oh, I see! It was a practical joke?"

"Yaas, sir."

Mr. Railton glanced up and down the dormitory. Digby rubbed his eyes sleepily. He forgot that his face was as floury as D'Arcy's.

"Digby!" rapped out Mr. Railton.

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"You are smothered with flour!"

"Am I, sir?"

"Indeed you are! Have you been in a flour-sack, too?"

"I—I—I suppose so, sir."

"And any more of you?" asked Mr. Railton, looking up and down the dormitory.

There was no reply.

"Very well," said Mr. Railton; "you can go to bed, D'Arcy. You will take a hundred lines for being outside your dormitory after lights out."

"Ya-a-as, sir."

"You will do the same, Digby."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Railton turned to the light, to switch it out. As he did so a most peculiar sound proceeded from under Jack Blake's bed. It was a smothered moan, gurgle, gasp, and sneeze all rolled into one, and was evidently caused by a wild effort to suppress a sneeze.

Mr. Railton started.

"What is that?" he exclaimed.

"Atchoo—atchoo—atchoo!"

"Dear me! There is somebody under your bed, Blake!" exclaimed the Housemaster, in astonishment. "Are there any boys of the other Forms in the dormitory?"

Blake was silent.

"Come out, whoever you are!" said Mr. Railton.

Tom Merry crawled out from under Blake's bed, looking very red in the face. He had been unable to suppress that sneeze, hard as he had tried to do so.

Mr. Railton had been awakened by the noise in the quad, and knowing from what quarter mischief generally proceeded, he had gone at once to the Fourth Form dormitory. The juniors had got the light out, and themselves in bed, just in time. But there was no time for the Shell fellows to escape. They had plunged under the beds.

Mr. Railton raised their hopes by going down to let D'Arcy in, but he was not gone long enough for them to get clear. They lay low. But for that unlucky sneeze of Tom Merry's, all would have been well.

"Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir? Atchoo-oo!"

"Are there any more Shell boys here? You may as well show yourselves," said the Housemaster quietly.

And then Manners and Lowther and Kangaroo and two or three more Shell fellows crept out.

They stood in a very sheepish row facing the Housemaster.

The Terrible Three were white and dusty with flour, and their aspect was decidedly funny, and the master of the School House found difficulty in keeping a smile from his face.

"So some of you have been in the flour-sacks, too?" he exclaimed.

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Who put you in the sacks?"

The juniors were silent.

Mr. Railton frowned.

"I suppose it all happened outside the dormitory?" he said. "I think I am right in concluding that it is another of your ridiculous disputes with the New House. However, the boys of the New House are not under my jurisdiction, and I shall say nothing about that. You will all take a hundred lines for being out of your dormitory after 'Lights out.' Now go to bed at once!"

"Yes, sir."

And the juniors, not sorry to escape so cheaply, departed for their own quarters. Mr. Railton went back to his own room, and he was smiling as he went.

The sacks were found in the quad, the next morning, and there was a great deal of chucking in the school over the affair. Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, spoke to Mr. Railton on the subject in his sour way.

"It appears that some boys of both Houses were out in the quadrangle last night, Mr. Railton," he said.

"I know that some boys of my House were, Mr. Ratcliff," said the School Housemaster; "and I have punished them."

"If you have a complaint to make about boys of my House—"

"I have not."

"I should certainly see justice done."

"But I have no complaint to make."

And the subject dropped as far as the Housemasters were concerned. But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in for some plain talk from his comrades. They persisted that it was all D'Arcy's fault that matters had gone wrong from beginning to end.

"The ass must have given us away somehow, when he got the rope from Taggles," Monty Lowther said.

"Weally, Lowthah—" protested the swell of St. Jim's.

"And then chucking that stone at the dorm. window," said Blake. "Railton was only looking in in the dark, and we were keeping as quiet as mice, and just when Railton was going away satisfied, there came that blessed stone clinking at the window."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Gussy was born to do these things," said Tom Merry. "The only thing we can do is to bump him."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Let's all jump on him at once," said Kangaroo. "When I give the word three, jump!"

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

"One, two—"

Kangaroo did not get so far as "three." Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was walking away with a haste that comported very ill with the repose which is popularly supposed to stamp the caste of Vere de Vere.

CHAPTER 12.

Hapless Wheelers!

FIGGINS & CO. wore sweet smiles in the Fourth Form that morning. Figgins looked at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy when the Form took their places for lessons. He winked one eye, and the swell of St. Jim's frowned.

"We'll give you bouncers a big licking presently," said Blake, in an undertone.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll give you the sack," murmured Pratt.

And there was a chuckle from the New House portion of the form. Mr. Latham, the master of the Fourth, looked down from his desk over his spectacles.

"You must not talk in class," he said mildly.

And the rival Fourth-Formers contented themselves with looks. But on several occasions Figgins & Co. broke out into smiles over their lessons. They were thinking of Tom Merry & Co. headed up in the flour-sacks.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and after footer practice was over, Figgins & Co. strolled down to the gates. They stood there chatting cheerfully, with many chuckles—the topic, of course, being the defeat of the School House juniors.

There was a sudden ringing of bicycle bells, and Figgins & Co. looked back into the quadrangle.

Four cyclists were coming down towards the gates. They were Tom Merry, Lowther, Blake, and Kangaroo. Figgins & Co. were standing directly in the way, and they did not seem disposed to get out of it.

Ting, ting, ting!

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NEXT THURSDAY'S SPECIAL LONG "A FALSE CHUM!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD, also "DEEP COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY: SEA GOLD," by REGINALD WRAY

"Get out of the road, you New House bounders!" yelled Blake.

"Rats!" said Figgins sturdily.

"Go round!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "It's too far to go round you, Fatty! We're not out for a long-distance ride."

Fatty Wynn turned crimson. Even his own comrades chuckled at Monty Lowther's retort.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn jumped aside at the last moment. The cyclists reached out in passing and knocked their caps off, and then pedalled on, laughing, into the road.

Figgins & Co. rushed furiously after them.

"Stop, you bounders, and we'll lick you!" roared Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter of the School House juniors floated back as they pedalled away on the road to Rylcombe. Figgins stopped.

"Hold on!" he exclaimed. "No good chasing them. I've got a better wheeze than that, too."

He returned to the gateway and picked up his cap. The three New House juniors were talking very earnestly as they went into the quad. Ten minutes later a dozen or more of the New House juniors tramped out of the gates with Figgins & Co., and they were all grinning.

Tom Merry and his comrades cycled on into the village. They had various errands to attend to there, and they stopped for tea at Mr. Bunn's establishment before returning. The dusk was falling as they mounted their machines to return to the school.

They pedalled lazily along the white road from Rylcombe to St. Jim's. They had just passed the cross-roads when there was a shrill whistle from behind a hedge.

It was a signal!

From the hedges on both sides of the road rushed Figgins & Co., and in a twinkling the four cyclists were seized and stopped.

"Hands off!" roared Tom Merry.

"Cyclists off, you mean!" grinned Kerr.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——"

"Down with them!" shouted Figgins.

The School House juniors were dragged off their cycles. They resisted furiously, but the odds were too great.

The New House juniors did not hurt them. They simply bumped them down into the road and sat on them.

Four juniors, lying on their backs in the dust, with a couple of fellows sitting on each of them, glared furiously at Figgins.

Figgins grinned.

"It's all right!" he remarked serenely. "We're taking a lot of trouble to convince you that we're the cock-house at St. Jim's. When you're willing to admit it, we'll give you a rest."

"Rats!" gasped Tom Merry.

"Bosh!" panted Blake.

"Go and eat coke!" said Kangaroo.

"Sit on them, and keep them safe," said Figgins cheerfully. "It won't take me long to get the front wheels off."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"May I borrow a spanner out of your bag, Tom Merry?"

Tom Merry writhed under the weight of Kerr and Fatty Wynn.

"You let my bike alone!" he shouted.

"So I will—when I get the front wheel off," said Figgins, setting to work with Tom Merry's own tools. "It won't take me long."

"You—you rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The School House quartette made a tremendous effort to shake off their foes. But it was in vain. They were pinned down, while Figgins calmly proceeded from bicycle to bicycle, taking off the front wheels.

Figgins was a quick workman. Four wheels soon lay in the road, and the New House juniors picked them up and tossed them over the hedge.

Then Tom Merry & Co. were released.

They rose, dusty and aching, and glaring wrathfully. They were very much inclined to rush upon their enemy, but it

was not much use for four to rush upon fifteen or sixteen. They would only have been bumped for their pains.

"You rotters!" growled Lowther. "We'll make you sit up for this!"

Figgins waved his hand towards the disabled machines.

"Buzz off!" he said.

"Look here——"

"Can't be done! Your face worries me! Ta-ta!"

And the New House juniors, with grinning faces, disappeared through a gap in the hedge. They retained possession of the four loose wheels. Tom Merry & Co. looked at their bicycles. They could either leave them there, or wheel them back to St. Jim's. Riding them was out of the question, under the circumstances.

Tom Merry burst into a rueful laugh. "Well, I suppose we're done," he said. "We may as well take it cheerfully. Let's get along!"

"I suppose there's nothing else to be done," grunted Lowther.

The discomfited juniors picked up their bicycles, and, wheeling them on the back wheels, started for St. Jim's. Loud chuckles came from behind the hedge.

Looking extremely sheepish, Tom Merry & Co. tramped down the dusty road. Evidently Figgins & Co. had given some hint of their intentions, for when the School House juniors arrived at the gates there was quite a crowd gathered to greet them.

A laugh went up as the dusty cyclists tramped in, wheeling the bicycles. School House fellows as well as the New House joined in the laughter.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Kildare, of the Sixth, as he caught sight of the heroes of the School House. "Hallo! Have you lost your wheels?"

"Well, not exactly; they've been taken off," explained Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, Kildare——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The captain of St. Jim's walked away, laughing. Tom Merry & Co. wheeled their machines to the bicycle-shed, looking very red and furious. When they came back to the School House, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was standing on the steps, and his expression was very severe. He jammed his monocle into his eye, and gave them a glance of great disfavour. The bruise under D'Arcy's eye was going down now, and he was able to use his eyeglass again, much to his relief and satisfaction.

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

"Eh! What's that?" demanded Kangaroo.

"You have allowed the New House wottahs to lick you."

"They were four to one!" howled Monty Lowther.

"Oh, wot! If I had been there, I should have found some way of bwingin' them to ordah, I wathah think."

"Fathead!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Oh, bump him over!" growled Blake.

"Weally, Blake—— Oh!"

The dusty cyclists marched in, leaving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy sitting on the School House steps in a very dazed state. The swell of St. Jim's jumped up furiously, and rushed up the stairs after them.

"You uttah boundahs! I'll—I'll—— Oh!"

There was a sound of bumping on the stairs. Arthur Augustus found himself sitting on the mat at the bottom the next moment, with no very clear idea of how he came there. And the dusty cyclists, somewhat solaced, proceeded on their way.

CHAPTER 13.

Trophies of Victory.

"LOOK there!"

"Bai Jove!"

"The cheek of it!"

"My hat!"

Quite a crowd of School House fellows were standing in the quad, looking towards the New House. Their gaze was fixed upon the window of Figgins's study.

From the window a rope was hanging, and slung upon the rope were four bicycle

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Looking extremely sheepish, Tom Merry & Co. picked up their bicycles, and, wheeling them on the back wheels, started for St. Jim's. Loud chuckles came from their rivals behind the hedge. (See Chapter 12.)

wheels. The wheels hung in a bunch against the wall below the window. They were all front wheels, and were easily recognised as belonging to the bicycles of Tom Merry, Lowther, Blake, and Kangaroo.

Figgins & Co. were hanging them out as trophies evidently, a great deal like Red Indians displaying the scalps they had gained in battle.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying the trophies through his eyeglass. "Bai Jove! I wergard that as wotten, you fellows!"

"It's one in the eye for the School House, and no mistake!" said Gore.

"Faith, and ye're right!" remarked Reilly, of the Fourth. "Sure, and we ought to get thim away somehow!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Fetch Tom Merry out," said Digby. "Let him see them! He's done it, and he ought to see the New House gloating!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry was soon upon the scene. He turned pink at the sight of the bicycle wheels hung out of Figgins's window.

The Terrible Three had had some idea of lying in wait for Figgins & Co. on their return, but Figgins & Co. had been too soon. They were in their House, and the trophies of victory were displayed for all the world to see.

"My hat! This is rotten!" said Blake, in disgust.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look at the cads chortling!"

The faces of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn appeared in the study window above the hanging bicycle wheels, and all three of them were grinning. Fatty Wynn was also eating a sandwich.

Figgins waved his hand to the group of School House fellows in the quad. The group was growing in numbers, and the School House juniors were exasperated. With a general concurrence of opinion, rude remarks were made to Tom Merry & Co. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, for once allowing himself to become excited, was the most emphatic of all.

"I wergard it as a disgwace!" said the swell of St. Jim's, turning his eyeglass upon Tom Merry. "That's the word!"

"Oh, rats!" said Lowther. "We couldn't help it."

"I know what would have happened if I had been on the spot with you, at the time," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy loftily.

"So do I," replied Monty Lowther. "They'd have had five bicycle wheels to hang out of the window instead of four!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Something ought to be done, intoirly!" said Reilly.

"Well, we're done!" grinned Gore.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! It's no laughin' mattah, deah boys! Those wheels have got to be wecapchahed, you know, and soon, too."

"Go and recapture them," said Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, watah! You fellows back me up, and we'll make a wash, and—"

"And rush into old Ratcliff in the doorway!" growled Kangaroo. "Don't be an ass!"

"I wufuse to be called an ass—"

"Something ought to be done," said Tom Merry, running his fingers through his curly hair in a perplexed way, "but I'm blessed if I know what!"

"We have got to wecapchah the bikes—"

"Yes; I know that, ass!"

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as an ass! If you fellows won't back me up, I shall twy it alone, for the honah of the School House!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to caekle at! Undah the cires., there wemains nothin' else to be done. I suppose we can't wash the House, with the mastahs in their studies all weady to wun out and make twouble? Pewwaps—"

"Well, what barmy idea have you got in your napper now?" demanded Blake, as D'Arcy's eyes gleamed behind his eyeglass.

"I wufuse to have my ideahs chawactewised as barmy! I was thinkin' that I might catch the New House disguised—"

The juniors burst into a roar. D'Arcy jammed in his monocle a little tighter, and gave them a look of great indignation.

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Blake. "Let him go disguised! Go in disguised as a chap with some brains, Gussy! They'd never know you!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was thinkin' that I might go in disguised as a portah or somethin'!" said the swell of St. Jim's, with great dignity. "Once in the House, I could wash into Figgay's study—"

"And be used to wipe up the floor with?"

"No; I should give Figgins & Co. a feahful thwashin', and take in the bike wheels, and come away!"

"And what would Figgins & Co. be doing all the time?" roared Kangaroo.

"They would be lynin' on the floor when I had done with them!" said Arthur Augustus loftily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon the whole, I think I might be able to get in at a back door, without takin' the twouble to disguise myself," said D'Arcy thoughtfully. "What would you wecomend, Tom Mewwy?"

"I should recommend you not to talk out of the back of your neck, Gussy!"

"I weward that as a widiculous expwession! Pway wait here, deah boys, and keep Figgins & Co. lookin' this way, while I wun wound and take them in the wear!"

"Gussy, you ass—"

"It's all wight—"

"But they'll eat you!" yelled Blake.

"I should wufuse to be eaten—"

"I—I say— Oh, you ass—you champion ass—"

"I decline to be weward as a champion ass! Pway wait there for me, Blake, and keep Figgins & Co. lookin' this way! When you see them disappear from the studay window, you will know that I am thwashin' them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy disappeared round the chapel rails. The juniors gazed after him.

His serene conviction that he could lick Figgins & Co., and any other juniors who might be in the study, staggered the School House fellows. Blake was following him, but Digby pulled him back.

"Don't be an ass, Blake! You can't get into the New House by a back window—you would run into Ratty first thing, as sure as a gun. Besides, Gussy won't get in. He'll find that he can't get into a window without rumpling his trousers!"

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"Yes, rather!" said Kangaroo. "Besides, if he gets in, he'll be chucked out again at once, and we don't want him to fall on us!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, the ass!" said Blake. "But, of course, he won't get in!"

"Of course, he won't!"

The juniors watched the swinging wheels under Figgins's window, and waited for Arthur Augustus to come back. But D'Arcy did not come back. Blake, beginning to fear that he was really trying to get into the New House by a back window, went to look for him.

"The ass!" said Tom Merry. "If he gets in—"

"He won't!" said Herries.

"Hallo! Look there!"

Figgins & Co. had suddenly disappeared from their window.

The School House juniors watched with tense gaze. Had the swell of St. Jim's, after all, succeeded in carrying out his plan? Was he in Figgins's study?

CHAPTER 14.

Arthur Augustus is Hung.

HE was!

The swell of St. Jim's had found a back door open, and had walked in. He had made his way to the front of the House, and had gone upstairs unmolested. In the Fourth Form passage Pratt gave a yell, and spotted him.

"School House cad!" roared Pratt.

Biff!

Arthur Augustus gave Pratt a shove that sent him spinning, and ran on to Figgins's study. Pratt was on his feet again in a moment, shouting the alarm. But D'Arcy had reached Figgins's study, thrown the door open, and rushed in.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were at the window, grinning at the School House crowd in the quad. But they turned as they heard the noise behind them, and stared blankly at the swell of St. Jim's.

"Gussy! My hat!"

"How did you get here?"

"You uttah boundahs!" said Arthur Augustus scornfully.

"I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin', unless you hand over those bike wheels instantly!"

Figgins & Co. roared. D'Arcy dropped the eyeglass from his eye, and pushed back his cuffs.

Figgins & Co. shrieked.

"Figgins—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins.

"You uttah asses—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Vewy well; undah the cires., I have no wescource but to thwash you—"

"Oh, hold me, somebody!" moaned Figgins. "Gussy will be the death of me—I know he will! Spare us, for the sake of our youth, Gussy!"

"Spare our grey hairs!" groaned Kerr.

"Wait till I've finished this sandwich!" said Fatty Wynn.

"I wufuse to wait! Will you hand over those bike wheels—"

"I don't think!"

"Then I shall thwash you!"

"Mercy!"

"He's going to thrash all three of us together!" gasped Figgins. "I never knew Gussy was so dangerous before! He ought to have a label on, 'This ass is dangerous to the public!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy wasted no more time in words. He rushed at Figgins & Co., hitting out.

In a moment the chums of the New House had grasped him, and they had him down on the floor, and were sitting on him.

"You—you uttah wuffians!" gasped D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Figgins. "Did you expect us to stand still while you were using us for punching-balls?"

"You are spoilin' my clothes—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are wufflin' my twousahs—"

Pratt looked in at the doorway with a grin. There was a crowd of New House fellows behind him. They were all grinning, too. One of them had a collar in his hand, and another a necktie.

"Want any help?" grinned Pratt.

"No; I think we can manage it!" said Figgins, with a chuckle.

"Blake tried to get in just now," said Pratt. "We had quite a tussel with him, and we left him in the water-but!"

He left quite a watery trail behind him when he departed. Shall we put Gussy in the water-butt?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah wuff beasts! I decline to be put in the watah-butt! I insist upon bein' immediately released! Upon the whole, Figgins, I will not thwash you!"

The New House juniors yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No; I don't think you will!" grinned Figgins. "If anybody gets thrashed, I rather fancy it will be Adolphus Aubrey D'Arcy, of that ilk! Anybody got a rope?"

"What on earth do you want a rope for, Figgy?"

"Why, I'm going to hang Gussy!"

"Eh?"

"I'm ging to hang Gussy!" said Figgins calmly. "Surely he ought to be hung! They used to hang burglars at one time, and Gussy's a giddy burglar. He's broken into a House and tried to steal bicycle-wheels. Get a rope!"

Pratt rushed off in search of a rope. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy struggled furiously in the grasp of his captors. His clothes were getting rumpled indeed by this time.

"You uttah asses! I wefuse to be hung——"

"Here's the rope!" exclaimed Pratt, rushing into the study.

"Good! Tie his hands together—this handkerchief will do!"

"Ripping!"

"I wefuse—— Oh!"

D'Arcy's hands were tied together. Then the rope was tied round him under his armpits. Figgins certainly meant to hang him, but not by the neck until he was dead. The rope was a long and strong one, more than equal to bearing D'Arcy's weight. The swell of St. Jim's understood; he was to be added to the trophies captured by Figgins & Co. He resisted desperately as he was dragged to the window, but it was not of much use. The study was crammed with New House fellows now, all lending a hand.

While the struggle was going on, the group of School House fellows in the quadrangle were growing feverish with excitement. When Figgins & Co. appeared at the window again there was a yell.

"Yah! New House cads!"

"What on earth have they got there?" said Digby, in wonder.

"My hat!" yelled Kangaroo. "It's Gussy!"

"Gussy!"

"Great Scott!"

It was Gussy!

As the School House fellows gazed, the swell of St. Jim's was swung out of the window on the end of the rope, and his heels kicked and clattered against the school wall.

He was lowered till he was on a level with the bike wheels, and then the rope was made fast.

The window above him was crammed with laughing juniors.

"How's that for high?" roared Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who's cock-house at St. Jim's now?" shrieked Kerr.

And the crammed juniors in the study yelled, with one voice:

"New House! New House!"

"My hat!" said Tom Merry. "It looks as if there's something in it. We're getting it in the neck now, and no mistake!"

"We are!" said Monty Lowther. "Hallo! Here's Blake! Have you been using yourself as a dam in the river, Blake?"

"Groo!" said Blake.

"You're wet——"

"Groo! Hoo! Yow!"

Exasperated as they were, the School House juniors could not help laughing as they looked at Blake. He was drenched and dripping with water, and some green ooze was attached to his ears and hair, and his collar and tie were gone. He certainly did not look a very cheerful object.

"How on earth did you get like that?" demanded Tom Merry, in amazement.

"Yow! New House cads—rain-barrel!" Blake jerked out.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothing to cackle at, that I can see!" growled Blake; and he went into the House to get a change of clothing.

The School House crowd stared at the New House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, swinging gently on the rope under the window, kicked his heels against the stone with a continuous clatter. He yelled to the onlookers for rescue.

"Wescue, deah boys! I am most unconify, and my clothes are bein' simply wuined!" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins & Co. "Hear us smile!"

And Figgins & Co. smiled in a way that could be heard across the quadrangle.

"Ow! Pway wescue me, deah boys——"

"How are we to rescue you, you ass?" shouted Tom

Merry. "You're out of reach, and we can't get into the House!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"You can have this lot cheap, if you like!" called down Figgins. "One silly ass and four bike-wheels, going cheap—you've only got to admit that we're cock-house of St. Jim's!"

"Never!"

"Rats!"

"Well, we are, you know, whether you admit it or not," said Kerr. "May as well own up to the facts, my infants!"

"Rats!"

"What on earth——" exclaimed a voice.

The voice belonged to Monteith, the head prefect of the New House. Monteith came out to see what the disturbance was about, and he had very thoughtfully brought a cane with him. He stared up at the bike-wheels and the elegant junior suspended below Figgins's study window in blank amazement.

"What the dickens——"

"Cheap lot for sale, Monteith!" said Figgins cheerfully.

The prefect burst into a roar of laughter.

"You young rascals!" he exclaimed. "Lower that rubbish down at once, and stop this nonsense. You hear me?"

"Right you are, Monteith."

"Weally, Monteith, if you are alludin' to me as wub-bish——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. lowered the cords, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and the bike-wheels descended in a heap to the ground together. The School House juniors rushed forward and sorted them out, and D'Arcy was released.

"Hear us smile!" roared Figgins & Co. from the window.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy struggled to his feet.

"Bai Jove! I'll——"

"Come on, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to come on, Tom Mewwy! I am goin' into the New House to give those boundahs a feahful thwashin'."

"Stop, you ass!"

"I wefuse to stop, and I decline to be called an ass!"

"Collar him!" yelled Digby.

The swell of the School House was collared as he was dashing off. In spite of his strenuous objections, he was rushed off to the School House, and bundled upstairs, and not released till he was in his study. There Tom Merry shook a warning finger at him.

"Now be quiet!" he said severely.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"And get a wash," said Monty Lowther. "You need it."

And the swell of St. Jim's decided that he would.

CHAPTER 15.

The Terrible Three Think it Will Not Do.

"HIS won't do!"

Tom Merry made that statement in a decided tone. Manners and Lowther nodded. They did not know what Tom Merry was alluding to, but as in duty bound they agreed with their leader.

"It won't, you know," said Tom Merry, looking across the tea-table in his study at his chums.

Monty Lowther helped himself to jam.

"The jam will do," he said. "I've tried it. And the tea's all right. What won't do?"

"Fathead! I'm speaking of the New House. It won't do—the way we've been done by Figgins & Co. lately."

And Tom Merry brought down his fist upon the table, by way of emphasising his remarks, with a crash that shook the table and made the crockery dance. Manners, who was in the act of raising his tea-cup to his lips, gave a wild yell as the hot liquid shot over his chest.

He jumped to his feet.

"Ow! You ass——"

"Sorry, Manners——"

"Yaroo! I'm scalded——"

"Never mind!" said Monty Lowther. "Put it all down to the account of Figgins & Co. But you might thump the bookcase next time, Tommy, if you don't mind."

"I—I—I'll thump his silly head next time!" roared Manners. "This tea's gone through my waistcoat. I'm wet!"

"You couldn't expect to be dry under the circumstances," said Monty Lowther. "What's the difference between you and a tea merchant——"

"You ass——"

"One has his tea in his chest, and the other has his chest in the tea," explained Monty Lowther. "I made that up on the spot——"

"You frabjous ass!"

"Oh, it's no good wasting humour on you!" said Lowther, as Manners mopped at his waistcoat with a handkerchief. "There was that conundrum of mine, about the difference between myself and a lunatic——"

"There isn't any difference, that I can see!" growled Manners.

"Look here, Manners——"

"Oh, scat!"

"When you two have done jawing, we'll talk it over," said Tom Merry. "Look here, this won't do. Figgins & Co. have been scoring all along the line——"

"They have," said Monty Lowther; "and they look like doing it still. And you won't improve matters by banging furniture and upsetting tea in this study, so far as I can see."

"We've got to settle the bounders somehow," said Tom Merry determinedly. "They're got to be put in their place for good and all."

"Completely done in, squashed, conquered, and kyboshed," suggested Monty Lowther sarcastically. "It's easy to talk about it in this study, at all events. It's not quite so easy to kybosh Figgins."

"The fact is," said Manners, "that we're getting the dry rot in the School House. The House ain't what it used to be. Perhaps we want a new leader."

"Oh, rats!" said Tom Merry warmly. "The leader's all right, if the followers were any good."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy," said a voice at the door. "I agwee with Mannahs, and I have come to make the same remark to you."

And Arthur Augustus pushed open the door, which was half open, and presented himself to the gaze of the Terrible Three. They gazed at him.

"It will not do!" said Arthur Augustus. "Mannahs is quite wight—we wequire a new leadah, and I suggest selecting a fellow of well-known tact and judgment."

"Lemme see," said Monty Lowther thoughtfully. "You are referring to me, I suppose?"

"Certainly not, Lowthah!"

"To Manners, then?"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

"Oh, you are thinking of Blake?"

"Decidedly not. You know perfectly well that I was w'fewwin' to myself, Monty Lowthah!"

Lowther looked astonished.

"But you said a fellow of tact and judgment!" he exclaimed. "If you had said a silly ass, or a fathead, or a grassy chump, of course, I should have known that you were referring to yourself. But——"

"I w'fused to listen to these wude and oppwobwious wemarks, Lowthah. I came here to point out that as Tom Mewwy has made such a muck of mattahs, he had bettah weign the leadahship in my favah for the p'wesent. I twust I am not the kind of chap to put myself forward in any way. I only want to be leadah till we have downed the New House, and then I will cheerfully suwwendah the posish. to Tom Mewwy again."

Tom Merry laughed.

"But that would be years and years," he remarked. "In fact, it would not be till we were old, old men that you would give it up, Gussy, because you couldn't touch Figgins & Co., you see—you would get all the downing."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy——"

"Gussy wants to be leader on the Kathleen Mavourneen system," said Monty Lowther. "It may be for years, and it may be for ever, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I w'fused to entah into a widiculous discush. I have offahed my opinion for what it is worth."

"Jolly good of him to give us his opinion for nothing," said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Undah the cires., if you w'fused to back me up I shall take action against Figgins & Co. on my own, and leave you out," said Arthur Augustus loftily.

The Terrible Three roared.

"You've done that once, and they hung you out of the window!" yelled Lowther. "The next time they'll shove you up the chimney, I suppose."

"I should w'fused to be shoved up a beastly chimney. I was thinkin' that it would be a good ideah to w'eck Figgins's study."

"Good egg!" said Monty Lowther. "But how are you going to do it?"

"Wush in——"

"They're on their guard, you ass. You'd have twenty of them on your neck before you'd crossed the doorstep, even if you didn't rush into Monteith or Mr. Ratcliff, and get a licking," said Tom Merry.

"I should wisk that. I think that if I wushed in, and took them by surpwise, I could w'eck the studay before they

wecovahed, and that would be a win for us. We can't let mattahs go on like this."

"You wouldn't rush in so quickly as you'd rush out, I expect," said Manners.

"Will you fellows follow me?"

"We'll come as far as the door, and see you chucked out," said Lowther. "But as for attacking a house full of juniors, seniors, prefects, and masters, we don't want any on our plate. You can have all those nice things for yourself."

"Don't be an ass, Gussy," said Tom Merry. "You'll be collared and chucked out before you've got fairly inside."

"Howevah, I am goin'."

"Ass!"

"I w'fused to be called an ass. It is time somebody stood up for the honah of the School House, I think," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

And he walked out of the study with his nose in the air. The Terrible Three looked at one another seriously.

"He can't be allowed to go," said Tom Merry, rising. "I'll speak to Blake, and make him stop the silly ass."

The Terrible Three went down to Study No. 6, talking football. Tom Merry looked in.

"Gussy's gone on the warpath, Blake."

"Has he?" said Blake, in a tired voice. "Well, let him rip!"

"But he's gone to invade the New House all on his lonesome," said Manners.

"My hat! We'd better go out and gather up the fragments, then."

And the juniors went downstairs. It was dark in the quadrangle, but the stars were coming out, and the juniors could see across to the New House. Had Arthur Augustus gone there? The juniors could not see him, nor was there any sign of disturbance over at the rival house.

"He can't have gone, after all," said Manners.

"Oh, you don't know him," said Blake. "He would charge a locomotive if he made up his mind to it, and think it was a very rude engine if it pushed him over. Hallo, I think I can hear something."

Some slight sound came through the gloom of the quadrangle. The juniors listened. There was a sound of footsteps, and a strange figure came into the radius of light from the doors and windows of the School House.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy!

But it was a changed D'Arcy. His collar was torn out, his necktie was gone, his hair was ruffled, his jacket split up the back, and his trousers rumpled, and he was smothered with mud. He looked a deplorable object.

"My only hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "How did you do that, Gussy?"

"Great Scott!"

"Bai Jove!" D'Arcy groped for his eyeglass, and stuck it in a muddy eye. "Bai Jove, I have been tweated with gwoss diswespct."

"Ha, ha, ha! You look it!"

"How far did you get into the New House?" asked Blake.

"As a mattah of fact, I didn't get into the New House at all," confessed the swell of St. Jim's. "They must have seen me comin', as they met me outside. I twited to wush through them, but somehow they stopped me, pewwaps because they were five to one."

"Ha, ha, ha! Perhaps."

"And then they bumped me and wolloed me in the mud, and I—I came back," said Arthur Augustus. "Upon the whole, Tom Mewwy, I w'fused to weliieve you of your duties as leadah. I don't see why I should."

And Arthur Augustus tramped wearily and muddily into the house, followed by a roar of laughter from the juniors. The laughter was echoed in the distant darkness from the direction of the New House.

"But it won't do," Tom Merry exclaimed. "This will mean a regular downfall for us if it goes on. We've got to back up against the New House, and give them the giddy kybosh. It simply won't do."

And his chums agreed that it wouldn't.

CHAPTER 16.

Tom Merry's Plan.

THERE was no doubt that the New House juniors were going ahead. The satisfied smiles they wore showed it, as well as the exasperated looks of the School House fellows. Tom Merry & Co. put their heads together over it, and held many a council of war. They had all agreed upon deciding that it wouldn't do. But, further than that, it seemed impossible to get. How to put Figgins & Co. in their place was a puzzle that they could not find the solution of. Figgins & Co., in fact, declined to be put in their place—or, rather, they regarded the position of cock-house at St. Jim's as their place, which the School House would not admit for a moment.

"We've got to simply kybosh them!" said Blake; and the others fully concurred. But how was the kyboshing to be done?

That was the question. It was a question to which Tom Merry & Co., for the present, could find no answer.

Tom Merry was striding along with his hands in his pockets, his brow corrugated with deep reflection, thinking the matter over, when a scheme came to him. It was suggested by the voice of Kerr, sounding in dramatic accents from the wood-shed. And this is what Kerr was saying.

"That you have wronged me doth appear in this!

You have condemned and noted Lucius Pella

For taking bribes here of the Sardians."

Tom Merry paused.

He smiled a little. He knew that it must be a rehearsal of the New House Junior Dramatic Society. Figgins & Co. were very strong on amateur theatricals, and they were rehearsing Julius Cæsar. Kerr was Cassius for the moment, and Tom Merry listened for the voice of Brutus. It came, in the unmistakable tones of Figgins.

"You wronged yourself to write in such a cause!"

"You've missed some out, Kerr," came the voice of Fatty Wynn, who apparently had a volume of Shakespeare on the spot.

"Yes, ass. We can't shove it all in," said Kerr. "We're going to do Julius Cæsar in a performance lasting an hour and a half—that's all the fellows will stand. We can't put it all in and run on at lightning speed."

"Well, don't cut any of my parts, please," said the voice of Pratt. "If I'm going to be Cæsar, I want it all in, as Cæsar clears out of the play so soon."

"Oh, cheese it, Pratt!" said Kerr irritably. "Blessed if it isn't a martyrdom to stage-manage for you fellows. You all want all the fat, and you won't take a back seat. If you think you're going to fill up the stage, you're quite off-side. You won't have much to say before you're stabbed in the Capitol."

"Look here——"

"Go on, Figgins!"

"Cassius, you yourself

Are much condemned to have an itching palm,

To sell and mart your offices for gold

To underservers!"

Figgins delivered the lines in tones that might have been heard as far as the school gates. Kerr snorted.

"Don't roar!" he said. "We don't want a crowd of School House chaps to come round. Keep it under."

"Oh, all right. Go on with your part."

"I! An itching palm!" exclaimed Kerr—Cassius.

"Yes, rather."

"Ass! Brutus doesn't say yes, rather!" shrieked Kerr.

"Do you think they talked like that in those days? Besides, they were jabbering in Latin, and they couldn't have worked it in that language. Stick to the book."

"Keep your wool on, old son," said Figgins soothingly.

"Go ahead!"

"You know that you are Brutus that say this,

Or by the gods, that speech were else your last."

"Jolly good, Kerr," said Fatty Wynn. "By the way, are any of you fellows getting hungry?"

Tom Merry smiled.

"Oh, if Fatty's getting hungry, we may as well chuck it," said Kerr, in disgust. "We shall hear of nothing else. Look here. Get here at seven o'clock to-night, and we'll have another rehearsal by candlelight."

"Right you are!"

Tom Merry walked away. The New House juniors came out of the wood-shed. There were five or six of them, and they all caught sight of Tom Merry strolling away. Kerr frowned.

"Hallo! There's a School House bounder!" he exclaimed.

"He must have heard you fellows spouting. We shall have them all round us at the next rehearsal, if he heard me say that about getting here at seven."

"Don't let's come, then," said Fatty Wynn. "We could have a talk about it, instead; say in the tuck-shop."

"Oh, cheese that!"

Figgins burst into a chuckle.

"I wonder!" he began; and paused.

"Well, what do you wonder?" growled Kerr. "Whether we shall ever be able to give a performance of this giddy play?"

"Oh, no. I wasn't thinking of the play," said Figgins innocently. "I was wondering whether, if Tom Merry heard what you said, he might think of turning up here with a crowd of fellows to rag us!"

"Very likely."

"Well, if he did——"

"If he did it would muck up the rehearsal!" growled Kerr.

"Blow the rehearsal!"

"What I'm thinking is that if he came with a crowd of them, we ought to have some fellows on the spot, hidden in the wood-shed, and we could turn the tables on them nicely," said Figgins, with a chuckle.

A grin broke out on Kerr's face.

"My hat! That would be a jape."

"What-ho!"

And the amateur dramatists chuckled very much as they strolled back to their House. As a matter of fact, Figgins had guessed quite correctly what was in Tom Merry's mind. The hero of the Shell was grinning as he went into the School House. He found Lowther and Manners in the passage, chatting with Blake and D'Arcy.

"Wherefore that grin?" asked Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed.

"I've just happened upon a meeting of the New House Amateur Dramatic Society," he replied.

"Well, that's enough to make a chap grin, I suppose."

"They were meeting in the wood-shed," said Tom Merry.

"I believe they generally do," remarked Blake. "The fellows in the New House won't stand the spouting."

"And they're going to meet there again at seven this evening for a rehearsal, and by candlelight. Kerr said so, and I heard him."

"Ah!"

"And when they're safely inside the wood-shed," said Tom Merry, lowering his voice cautiously, "I rather think it would be the proper caper for a crowd of our chaps to walk in."

"Bai Jove!"

"Taggles keeps his tar-pot in the wood-shed," went on Tom Merry. "And I think that a set of amateur dramatists with their faces tarred would raise a smile. What?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jollay good, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Of course, we must be careful not to get any tar on their clothes. That would be too wuff. But it's a wippin' ideah!"

"Hear, hear!" said Blake, with a grin. "It will make them sing small for once, anyhow. We'll be there at seven sharp, by George!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy said "Yaas, wathah!"

CHAPTER 17.

Tar and Feathers!

"HARK!"

The shades of night, as the poet says, were falling fast. Deep dusk hung round the old walls and the old elms of St. Jim's, and lights gleamed from the many windows of the two Houses. Light, too, gleamed from the window of the wood-shed. Through the deep dusk a number of shadowy figures came stealing towards the shed.

Tom Merry & Co. were on the warpath.

"Hark!" repeated Tom Merry.

From the wood-shed came the rolling tones of the great Figgins.

"If you have tears, prepare to shed them now!"

The School House juniors chuckled.

"That's jolly appropriate," murmured Blake. "They'll be feeling like shedding tears soon, I think."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Quiet!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Don't give the alarm till we've got 'em."

"Come on!"

The juniors stole on. They expected to find half a dozen New House fellows rehearsing, and they had brought a sufficient force to deal with them. There were the Terrible Three, and the four chums of Study No. 6, and Kangaroo, Dane, and Glyn, and Reilly, and Hancock and Gore and Macdonald and Lumley-Lumley. Fifteen sturdy juniors were enough to make resistance on the part of the New House fellows quite impossible. And when Figgins & Co. were captured, tarred, and feathered, there was no doubt that they would have to sing small.

Tar there was plenty in the wood-shed, in a liquid condition. The roof of the wood-shed was in the course of being tarred, and Taggles had left all his materials there overnight. As for feathers, the School House juniors had obtained the interior of an old mattress, and Manners was carrying them in a bag.

Not that the School House juniors meant to be too hard on their victims. They did not mean to tar Figgins & Co. all over. Some dabs of tar on the head and face, and feathers stuck upon them; that would be enough to prove to all St. Jim's that Figgins & Co. had been tarred and feathered.

The School House party arrived at the window of the wood-shed, and craned their heads over one another's shoulders to look in.

There were the rehearsers.

Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, Pratt, French, and Knight. They

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seemed to be very busy, and Kerr had a book in his hand, apparently to prompt them.

Round the wood-shed, inside, were stacked faggots, and gardening implements, and other things, and a door leading into another apartment was half open, but the further room was in darkness. Figgins & Co. had half a dozen candles going, stuck in bottles or in crevices of the walls.

"I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him!" said Knight.

"Go hon!" murmured Monty Lowther.

And the fellows outside chuckled inaudibly.

"The evil that men do lives after them;

The good is oft interred with their bones!

So let it be with Cæsar!"

"Yes," murmured Lowther; "and if they had buried his commentaries with him, and his blessed Gallic War especially, it would have been a lot nicer for chaps in junior Forms in modern times!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shush! They'll hear."

"It doesn't matter if they do now," said Gore. "They can't get away."

"Wathah not!"

"The noble Brutus," went on Knight,

Hath told you, Cæsar was ambitious.

If it were so, it was a grievous sin,

And grievously hath Cæsar answered it!"

"Good!" said Kerr.

"You all did see that on the Lupercal,

I thrice presented him a kingly crown—"

"Crown, you ass!" shrieked Kerr.

"I thrice presented him a kingly crown, you ass—"

"Oh, you chump! Look at the book!"

"Which he did thrice refuse. Was this ambition?

When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath slept—"

"Wept!" yelled Kerr.

"Well, you should write it out in better style, then. Cæsar hath wept! Ambition should be made of sterner stuff—"

"Stuff! Stuff!"

"It's not stuff—"

"It is stuff, you chump!"

"It isn't! Lot you know about Shakespeare, to call

'Julius Cæsar' stuff!" exclaimed Knight indignantly.

"I mean the word is stuff—sterner stuff!" yelled the unhappy Kerr.

"Oh, I see! 'Ambition should be made of sterner stuff!'" said Knight. "I thought snuff sounded rather odd, myself."

"I guess we've had enough of this," said Lumley-Lumley. "Let's get in."

"Right-ho!" said Tom Merry.

Tom Merry threw open the door of the wood-shed. The rehearsals suddenly ceased. The half dozen New House fellows turned round and stared at Tom Merry & Co. as they came in.

"Hallo!" said Figgins. "Get out! You're interrupting the washing!"

"Weally, Figgins—"

Manners deposited his bag of feathers upon a bench, in a most emphatic manner. Lowther dragged the tar-pot out of a corner.

Figgins regarded that proceeding with some interest.

"What's the little game?" he asked.

Tom Merry explained.

"You New House chaps have been getting your ears up too much lately," he said. "We are going to put you in your place. We are going to tar and feather you."

"My hat!"

"When the school sees you tarred and feathered, they'll know which is cock-house at St. Jim's," Blake remarked.

Figgins chuckled.

"Then the tarring and feathering is to prove it," he said.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We'll let you off, if you admit that we're cock-house at St. Jim's, and promise to be good little boys in the future," said Kangaroo magnanimously.

"Rats!"

"Collar them!" shouted Tom Merry.

Gore fastened the wood-shed door, in case any of the enemy should attempt to escape. But the enemy did not attempt it. They backed away in a group towards the furthest wall, and put up their fists.

"Now, I warn you to clear out," said Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Otherwise, we shall tar and feather you," said Kerr.

The School House fellows roared. It seemed decidedly cool for Kerr to say that six fellows would tar and feather fifteen.

"Oh, collar them!" exclaimed Digby. "No more jaw!"

"Go for the boundahs, deah boys!"

And Tom Merry & Co. rushed to the attack. In a moment

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the New House fellows were struggling with heavy odds. In the midst of the wild and whirling tussle, Figgins gave a shrill whistle.

Then a sudden change came over the scene.

From behind bundles of faggots, from all the recesses of the wood-shed, and from the adjoining shed through the doorway, hidden foes poured.

On all sides New House juniors seemed to spring up out of nothing.

In a second or two, twenty juniors were crowding round to the rescue of Figgins & Co., and the odds were against the School House.

Tom Merry uttered an exclamation of dismay.

"Trapped, by Jove!"

"Trapped by us, you mean!" yelled Figgins. "Ha, ha, ha! And the tar and feathers will come in handy! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Get out!" shouted Tom Merry. "Knock 'em out of the way, and get out!"

The School House juniors made an heroic attempt to cut their way to the door. But the numbers against them were too strong. The door was fast; and half a dozen of the foe were guarding it. The struggle was terrific, and half the candles were knocked over, and piles of faggots and brooms and other things came showering down as the combatants reeled and staggered to and fro.

But one by one the School House fellows were got down, and each, as he was put on the floor, found a New House junior sitting upon him, to keep him there.

"Collar them!" roared Figgins. "Don't let one get away!"

"Not much!"

"Hurrah!"

One by one, till all the School House party were down, and sat upon; and still there were ten or eleven New House fellows with their hands free. The odds were too great. Tom Merry & Co. were fairly vanquished.

Figgins wiped a smear of red from his nose, and grinned.

"Got 'em!" he remarked.

"Bai Jove! Fwench, you ass, get off my chest! You are uttably wuim' my shirt."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hold 'em tight," said Figgins; "I've got the whipcord here. I'll tie up their hands behind them, so that they can't give any trouble."

"You—you rotter!" gasped Tom Merry. "Do you mean to say that you were ready for this?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We guessed you were coming, you see," Figgins explained, "and we were ready. The tar and feathers is a jolly good idea, and we'll certainly carry it out. Only you'll get the tar and feathers instead of us. That's the only difference. Quite a minor point; and I'm sure you won't mind."

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Besides, as you said, the tarring and feathering will show, once for all, which is cock-house at St. Jim's," Kerr remarked.

The New House crowd yelled with laughter, and the School House fellows gave one another sickly looks. They were fairly caught. There was no doubt that this time Figgins had brought about the downfall of Tom Merry & Co.

Figgins tied their hands in turn, and then they were allowed to rise, with a New House fellow holding each of them by the arm.

Figgins dipped the tar-brush into the tar, and Kerr opened the bag of feathers. The prisoners waited apprehensively. The idea of tarring and feathering did not seem to them nearly as comic as it had appeared a short time before.

"Upon the whole, Figgay, I wegard tawwin' and feathewin' as a wotten dodge," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Pewwaps it would be bettah to dwop the ideah entirely."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins pointed with the tar-brush to the swell of St. Jim's.

"Gussy first!" he said.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"I've often heard Gussy say that it is a D'Arcy's place to lead," said Figgins. "Now he's going to have a chance. Bring him here."

Fatty Wynn and French dragged the swell of St. Jim's forward. Figgins dabbed the tar-brush upon his aristocratic countenance, changing its aspect completely. The New House fellows roared.

"Bai Jove!" spluttered Arthur Augustus. "Gwoo! Look here, Figgay, I shall give you a feahful thwashin' for this! I—"

"Better close your mouth, or you may get some tar in it," suggested Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

Ow! Gwoo! Uggugugh!"

"There, I warned you!"

"G-r-r-r-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Feathers, please!"

A double handful of feathers came fluttering upon D'Arcy. They stuck to the tar upon his face and hair, and he looked like a very much ruffled fowl. The wood-shed rang with laughter.

"Now Tom Merry!"

"L-l-look here, Figgy—"

"Yank him forward."

"I tell you— Groo! Ow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry was tarred and feathered. One by one the School House juniors were disposed of by the industrious Figgins, until the fifteen of them were in the same state, reeking with tar, and smothered with feathers.

The New House juniors simply shrieked as they looked at them. It was certainly a comic sight, though the humour of it was lost entirely upon the victims.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Figgins. "Did you ever see such a giddy barnyard! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Turn them out!" said Kerr. "They'll think twice before interrupting a New House rehearsal again."

"Ow!"

"Groo!"

"Bai Jove! Gw-w-w-woo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn opened the door of the wood-shed, and the School House juniors were jostled out. Tom Merry gasped.

"Figgins, we can't go back in this state!"

"We should have had to," grinned Figgins. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the giddy gander. Ha, ha, ha!"

New Storyettes.

Self Convicted.

The defendant leaned over the rail with a nasty sneer.

"The constable who has just given evidence," he snorted, "seems wonderfully certain about the details of my case, but how is it he doesn't call his fellow-officers to corroborate what he says?"

"Becorse," replied the man in blue, "there 'appens to be only one constable stationed in this village."

"But I saw two last night!" indignantly asserted the defendant.

"Exactly!" the policeman rejoined triumphantly. "That's jest the charge against you!"

The Latest Capture.

Scares and alarms were in the air. British spies had been arrested in Germany; German spies had been arrested in Britain.

Excitement reigned supreme. War might, or might not, occur at any moment. No one knew how, or where, or when, or why, or whosoever, or inasmuch; but there it was.

As they discussed the situation at the club, Juggins rushed in, a paper in his hand.

"Another capture!" he screamed; "and they've got the right man this time!"

In a startled group they collected round him.

"Where?" "What was he doing?" "Who is it?"

"Was he a German or British spy?"

"Spy! Who's talking about spies?" cried Juggins witheringly. "Spies ain't anything compared with this news! Why, our club's just captured Flysprint, the finest wing in the whole football world!"

Gunner: "He used to be a pessimist, and say the world was a bubble. I understand he has changed his opinion?"

Buyer: "Yes. You see, he fell out of an aeroplane not long ago."

"Alas," said the tramp dramatically, "no matter where I turns, there's a hand raised against me!"

"Which shows that you ought to be thankful for one thing," said the burly farmer.

"What's that?"

"That it ain't a foot that's raised."

"Oh, come on!" said Blake desperately. "We've got to go through it. Come on!"

"I wufuse—"

"Let's get out!"

The School House juniors tramped disconsolately away, tarred, feathered, and with their hands still tied behind them. Yells of laughter from Figgins & Co. followed them.

The unhappy raiders tramped up to their own House, where fresh yells of laughter greeted them. They were glad to get to the bath-rooms, where they scrubbed, and scrubbed, and scrubbed, but for a long time scrubbed in vain.

In the New House, Figgins & Co. triumphed.

There could be no doubt that the New House had scored all along the line. Even the seniors and prefects roared over the story, and it was said that even Mr. Ratcliff was seen to smile when he heard of it. Figgins & Co. were triumphant, and in danger of striking the stars with their sublime heads.

And when Tom Merry & Co., well scrubbed, and exhausted with their efforts, but still considerably tarry and feathery, came out once more, they heard a yell from the New House:

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

Then a chorus!

"We are! We are!"

"Hear us smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry and his comrades smiled, in a sickly way; but the smile of Figgins & Co. could be heard all over the quadrangle of St. Jim's.

THE END.

Another splendid long, complete tale of St. Jim's next Tuesday, entitled "A FALSE CHUM," by Martin Clifford. Also "DEEP SEA GOLD," by Reginald Wray, the most thrilling adventure story ever published. Order your "GEM" Library in advance. Price One Penny.

Britain's Bullpups.

The new Territorial didn't like camp life. He had been used to "all the comforts of home," and snatch-as-snatch-can dinners on Salisbury Plain didn't appeal to him. He decided to beard his orderly.

"Well," said the orderly, as he entered, "any complaints?"

"Yes, sir," replied the youthful Terrier, "we didn't get enough meat to eat to-day."

"H'm!" commented the orderly. "Has this occurred before?"

"Occurred before!" gasped the complainant. "I should think it has occurred before! It occurs at every meal every day; and if it occurs much longer, instead of calling us Terrriers, they'll be jolly well calling us blessed whippets!"

Doctor: "You have some sort of poison in your system."

Patient: "Shouldn't wonder. What was that stuff you gave me?"

A False Start.

It was round No. 17. The two pugilists looked like drowned rats.

The referee held up his hand.

"The fight will have to start all over again!" he announced hoarsely.

A low growl ran through the vast assembly.

"Wot's the trouble?" roared a fiery individual in the tenth row.

"The trouble is," explained the referee, "that the moving-picture man has struck a bad spot in his film, and the pictures are no good. Are you ready up there, professor? All right! Shake hands, boys! On my right we have—"

Justice with Mercy.

Colonel Blood looked very fierce—very fierce indeed.

The other officers comprising the court-martial looked grave.

With ashen countenance and trembling limbs Private Tompkins, of the 16th Mudshires Territorials, faced his judges. Private Tompkins had been found asleep at his post.

"Tompkins," he said, addressing the prisoner, "you have been found guilty of the appalling crime of sleeping while on duty. For this offence the punishment is death—"

The colonel paused, and the silence in that court was as the silence of the grave. Then he continued.

"But," he said, "taking into consideration your youth, and all the circumstances of the case, the court has decided to be merciful. You will be fined threepence!"

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DEEP SEA GOLD!

A WONDERFUL NEW STORY OF AMAZING ADVENTURE IN A SUBMARINE MOTOR CAR.

By REGINALD WRAY.



The Opening Chapters of "DEEP SEA GOLD," specially re-written for this number of "THE GEM" LIBRARY.

Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde, chums of Weltsea College, are bathing in the sea early one morning, when they are suddenly seized by enormous octopus-like tentacles and dragged swiftly down beneath the surface of the water. The chums are almost at their last gasp, when a dark trap-door appears before them, and they are pulled aboard a strange submarine craft, the like of which they have never seen before. It is, in fact, a submarine motor-car, and the boys are soon introduced to Captain Flame, the captain of the Octopus, as the strange craft is named.

The crew consists entirely of boys, with whom Dick Dauntless and Jack Orde are soon on good terms. So fascinating does life beneath the waves prove, that when, after a period of thrilling excitement and amazing adventure, Captain Flame offers the two chums their liberty, they decide to remain on board the Octopus and throw in their lot with him.

Their decision is confirmed when the chums learn that Captain Flame is bound for the Pacific with the express intention of searching for Dick Dauntless's millionaire father, who was a friend of his, and whose yacht, the Morning Star, has long been reported missing.

A chance paragraph in a newspaper gives the adventurers a clue, and they make for that dreaded mass of floating weeds known as the Sargasso Sea. There, stuck fast in the midst of the weeds, they find both the Morning Star and a tug which had been sent to aid her.

Captain Flame, with a small party of his boys, set out in a launch to investigate; but Dick Dauntless alone returns to the Octopus. All the rest of the exploring party, including Captain Flame himself, have mysteriously disappeared. Dick Dauntless rescues them from the hands of the Tankas, a strange race of men, whose home is in the crater of an extinct volcano. When the party return to the Octopus they find that it is being attacked by the fearful monsters of the deep. Captain Flame rushes to the side of the largest, and, thrusting the muzzle of his rifle into the brute's eye, pulls the trigger.

Disabled!

Dick Dauntless held his breath. The least he expected was to see the inventor trampled out of human shape by the wounded monster; but the bullet had done its work.

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DON'T MISS 'A SCHOOLBOY'S SACRIFICE' The Splendid, Long, Complete School Story appearing in this week's number of the 'MAGNET' LIBRARY. Now on Sale. Price One Penny.

Entering the only vulnerable place in that huge body, it had pierced the brain.

The hideous monster stiffened, for several seconds it stood motionless, then sank with a crash to the ground.

Fired by Captain Flame's success the boys flung themselves dauntlessly upon their awful foes.

Even little Charlie Steele, keeping, as ever, close to Dick Dauntless's side, plunged his sword up to the hilt in the body of a long-necked lizard.

Gallantly the boys fought, not with any hope of success, but, believing death inevitable, they were determined to die, fighting to the last, like Britons.

Nor could any other fate have been theirs, had not the deep, booming roar of the Octopus's syren rang suddenly out.

The effect of the syren's roar would have been ludicrous had not the danger been so great.

With one accord the monsters ceased their struggles, and Dick saw a huge head surmounting a long, snakelike neck, which, raised high above him, was about to swoop down upon him, remain poised in air, then, terrified by a roar such as they had never heard before, the whole awful horde fled in all directions.

Drawing a deep breath, Dick Dauntless looked wonderingly around him.

A short distance away, a large-finned monster, not unlike an enormous walrus, was gasping out its last breath, its huge back resting against the car's stern.

Close beside it lay Jack Orde, his face showing white and pale through the glass of his helmet.

His right hand clasping his left arm, his yellow face looking sickly and discoloured, Mopsa was leaning, faint and weary, against the body of the saw-backed monster Captain Flame had slain.

Will Avery, swaying from side to side as though about to fall, leant upon the muzzle of his gun.

Charlie Steele, unnerved, now all immediate danger was over, had flung himself on the ground, and was sobbing as though his heart would break.

Captain Flame could be seen firing vengeful shots into the body of a long-necked lizard, whose comparatively thin skin was unable to resist the powerful explosive bullet, with the result that, ere long, it sank like a wounded bird to the bottom, where it lay, writhing in agony, and deafening the hearers' ears with its pain-laden bellowing.

Karl Munchen was nowhere to be seen, but shortly afterwards, Dick saw him creep, white-faced and trembling, from beneath the mass of weed stalks which the monsters had thrown aside to get at the Octopus.

"What, Dauntless, dreaming ch? To work, lad, or the monsters will return, and we cannot hope that our syren will frighten them off a second time!" cried Captain Flame, as, his eyes ablaze with triumph, he returned from the slaughter of the lizard.

Aroused by their leader's words, the boys turned towards the battered and indented car.

As they did so, a steel panel was moved cautiously aside, disclosing the white face of the engineer.

Nodding his greeting, the engineer disappeared, and as, assisted by Tom Allstraw, Dick Dauntless raised Jack Orde from the ground, he appeared at the door of the water dock.

Soon the boys were once more inside the car.

An alarming sight met their eyes.

The floor was littered with all manner of movable articles, showing how fearful had been the buffeting to which she had been subjected.

But worst of all was the tiny stream of water which trickled down the walls of the steel hull, telling of plates cracked, and rivets torn from their fastenings.

Silently MacIntyre took Captain Flame's extended hand, then led him into the chart-room, the floor of which was strewn with wreckage from the table and shelves.

Captain Flame turned pale as he saw his cherished specimen-cases, and many of his most delicate instruments, lying, broken and useless, on the floor.

Mr. MacIntyre groaned aloud.

"It's all my fault, sir. I alone am to blame," he declared dismally.

"Your fault? What do you mean?" snapped out Captain Flame.

"I never gave a second thought to the nightmare monsters that prowl about in this God-forsaken sea, so when the forest trees fell on to the Octopus, and I knew it would be days before the boys could cut their way back to me. I thought it was a good opportunity to overhaul the engines," confessed MacIntyre.

"Well, I do not see anything wrong in that," interposed the inventor.

"And there would not have been had I simply overhauled them, but I dismantled them altogether," he continued.

Captain Flame laid his hand on the engineer's shoulder. "I understand, old friend. So when the monsters attacked the car, she could neither fight nor run away. It was only an error of judgment, after all," he declared kindly.

"No, no, it was much more," insisted the engineer. "I've always boasted that if left alone in the Octopus, I could face any danger, overcome any obstacle; and now, when I have the opportunity to prove my word, here's the Octopus as helpless as a tramp steamer, with a broken propeller-shaft. It's hard—bitter hard."

"Then your engines are not damaged?" cried Captain Flame, in tones of intense relief.

"No, no!" cried the engineer. "That would have been the last straw! They're just in pieces. I can put them together in a couple of hours."

"Mac, you must do it at once," asserted Captain Flame impressively, "or we'll never leave the Sargasso Sea alive."

"You think the big beasties will return then?" asked MacIntyre.

"There are crueller and more fearful foes in the Sargasso than the monsters of the deep," was the reply. "Fishmen with just enough intelligence to make them dangerous, and, worst of all, a strange race, the smallest of whom would tower a head and shoulder above you, despite your six foot three. Perhaps these last have already discovered our escape. Depend upon it, they will do their best or their worst to re-capture us."

"And the boy's father?" asked MacIntyre, glancing cautiously at where Dick Dauntless was leaning over Jack Orde, who was showing symptoms of returning consciousness.

"I believe him to be still alive, but a prisoner in an, as yet, undiscovered land at the bottom of the sea. But his life must be in fearful peril every moment, and the sooner we start after him the better."

MacIntyre uttered a grunt of dissent.

"I'm thinking that the old car will want a bit of tinkering up after the knocking about she has had, and we'll be lucky if we reach the islands, let alone running her into any more dangers!" he declared.

Captain Flame stamped his foot impatiently.

"I'll take her down the mouth of the crater, if—" he began, when Mopsa, his yellow face contorted with terror, rushed into the chart-room, crying:

"We're all dead drowned, certain sure! The store-room under the stern is full of water, and it's pouring in like whisky down a Yankee's throat!"

Scouting Beneath the Sea.

Although Mopsa's news might probably herald the death of himself and all on board, Captain Flame did not show the slightest sign of fear or anxiety.

His voice rang trumpetlike through the room.

"Steady, lads, the greater the danger, the more need there is for courage!" he cried. "Munchen and Steel, to the engine-room with MacIntyre. Monston and Avery, to the forehold, get spare plates, and tools to repair the hull. Dauntless, follow me."

The boys had listened to Mopsa's ill-omened words with blanched faces and terror-laden eyes; but so great was the ascendancy Captain Flame exercised over them, so boundless their confidence in his ability to save them, that each boy went to his allotted post without a word.

Leaving Orde with a farwell squeeze of the hand, Dick followed Captain Flame along a passage already ankle-deep in water, until they came to a door in the stern of the car from beneath which the water was spurting violently.

Already the stout steel door was bulging ominously.

A low-voiced order sent Dick hastening to the carpenter's room, from which he returned laden with baulks of timber, a brace and bit, iron-cutting tools, screwdrivers, and a bag of oakum.

Working as men will work when their lives depend upon their efforts, Captain Flame and Dick Dauntless soon made the door safe from any chance of being burst open by the weight of water behind it, and caulked the crevices at the sides and the bottom, through which it streamed.

Their task completed, Captain Flame laid his hand impressively on Dick's shoulder, saying:

"My boy, I am about to place all our lives in your hands. I am certain we will be pursued, not only by the fishmen, or I would have no fear, but by the Tankas."

"But they are men like ourselves, and cannot live under water any more than we could without our helmets," objected Dick.

"True! But think how many ships must have sunk to the bottom of the Sargasso Sea; and yet you yourself have remarked on the fact that there is not a wreck to be seen between Crater Island and the outer sea. Does not that prove that the Tankas have the means of raising heavy weights from the bottom of the ocean of which we know nothing? In our present helpless state they would have no difficulty in carrying off the Octopus and making us all prisoners," declared the inventor.

Dick raised no further objections. The argument was unanswerable.

"What is it you wish me to do, sir?" he demanded.

"Take one of the torpedo-boats and cruise about near Crater Island. If my fears are groundless and you see no more dangerous foes than the fishmen approaching, return at once. If, as I fear, the Tankas are advancing upon us, delay their passage for at least an hour."

Drawing himself up to his full height, Dick Dauntless saluted, and, turning on his heels, made his way to a small room adjoining the armoury, where the car's torpedo-shaped boats were stored ready for use.

Selecting the swiftest of the three, Dick Dauntless subjected it to a careful overhauling, then, placing three glistening objects, like models of the torpedo-boat, in tubes, which he attached to the keel of his craft, he laid himself at full length in the padded hull of the boat, adjusted the glass hood to his head, then, drawing to the top half of the ingenious craft, moved one of the switches lying ready to his hand.

Immediately the screws securing the two halves of the boat were clamped together with a half-turn, whilst the boat itself tilted forward, and, sliding down an inclined plane, passed through a round trap-door, which was worked by the boat's pressure on the slide.

In less than a second later Dick found himself floating motionless outside the car's hull some five feet from the bottom of the sea.

The ringing of hammers on iron told that Captain Flame and his assistants were already at work repairing the leaks in the hull.

But Dick did not pause to look around him.

A touch on the lever, and he was threading his way, between the tree-trunks, towards Crater Island.

Fish of all description surrounded him.

Doubtless the finny denizens of the deep wondered what strange creature this was that had appeared so unexpectedly in their midst.

Dick feared them not. He had tried the speed of the torpedo-like boats before, and knew that a touch of a lever would send him speeding far ahead of the fastest fish.

But he dare not try the experiment. It is true night had already given place to day, but the thick seaweed overhead rendered all beneath the water dim and indistinct, and he was unwilling to turn on the boat's electric searchlight, lest he should attract attention, and thus defeat the end to which he was pledged.

He saw no monsters. Nor did their absence surprise him.

He had already discovered that the evil brutes slept during the day, awaking to renewed activity after nightfall.

Yet he was destined to receive an unpleasant intimation that such creatures really existed.

As he stole cautiously along the bottom of a twisting glen or valley an irrepressible cry of terror burst from his lips.

A huge, talon-like claw had shot from beneath what he had taken to be a huge rock, and was hovering threateningly over him. Above the claw appeared a hideous head, its huge mouth opened to receive its prey.

It was only Dick's never-failing presence of mind which saved him.

There was no room to swerve to right or left, no time to retreat; his only chance was to dart swiftly forward.

His hand pressed the throttle-lever open to its utmost, and the torpedo-boat, springing forward like a thing of life, darted from beneath the descending claw, with so small a margin of safety that the boat was tossed about like a chip in a raging torrent, by the rush of water displaced by the descent of that horrible claw.

One danger was passed, but, ere Dick had time to experience the joy of deliverance from his peril, another and a greater presented itself.

Awakened from its sleep by the commotion, an octopus—in comparison to which the one Dick had slain in the inland sea was but a pigmy—raised itself on its shorter tentacles, and, its huge beak snapping viciously, hurled four of its

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long, sucker-armed feelers at the glistening object, which it evidently took to be some new and strange fish that had dared to disturb its slumbers.

There was no time to deliberate on the course to be pursued. Even the momentary pause which had given him his chance in the preceding adventure was forbidden in this.

Tightening his grip on the tiny steering-wheel, he steered straight for the monster's black beak.

Dick Dauntless fancied he detected a sudden flash of fear in the octopus's saucer-like eyes; then, as he had hoped, it opened its huge mouth and raised itself higher on the tentacles which supported it, whilst the others twined together, in a vain attempt to seize the elusive craft.

Dick waited until it seemed as though he was about to plunge headlong into the creature's enormous mouth; then, with a gentle touch on the depressing-lever, shot like an arrow beneath the huge, repulsive body.

Dick Dauntless held his breath.

He expected to feel his frail craft crushed beneath the weight of the monster's body.

But no. He was once more in the open sea, and every revolution of his screw was taking him further from the fearful peril he had so narrowly escaped.

Glancing into a tiny mirror, Dick saw, to his relief, that he had left the octopus far behind.

Slowing down, he rose to about half-way between the seabed and the surface, and at length reached the fence which hemmed in the fishmen's domain.

The Sea-Serpent.

It was no light task that Dick Dauntless had undertaken. To steer the boat through the thick mass of limbs and branches which arose from the trunks of the trees to the surface of the sea taxed his skill to the utmost; but, realising that now the greatest caution was necessary if he would escape detection, he avoided the slenderer fronds on the surface, and, forcing the sharp prow of the boat between the upper branches, at length came to rest with the glass stem of his boat peeping out from the inside of the fence.

As he glanced through the toughened glass, which, though some eight inches thick and as strong as steel itself, was perfectly transparent, he was relieved to find that as yet no alarm had been given.

The fields they had traversed on their journey to and from Crater Island were now swarming with busy life.

With a strange sense of unreality, Dick Dauntless watched the fishmen cultivating their crops, tending the oyster-beds, or keeping watch over their large herds of dugongs on their wonderful farm beneath the sea.

Dick Dauntless had not been an unseen watcher of the busy scene long ere he saw a fishman seated with his ugly head half out of the water a short distance away start to his feet and peer anxiously at something immediately before him.

Presently the sentry pressed a conch-horn, which hung suspended by a cord over his shoulder, to his lips. The next moment a mournful, wailing call had echoed far and wide over that strange country under the sea.

Immediately the labourers in the fields, the herdsmen guarding their cattle, dropped their tools, and, snatching up long spears from the ground, hastened in the direction of the man who had raised the alarm.

Dick's hand sought the reversing switch of his boat, for he feared at first that he was the object of these warlike preparations. But ere he could put his engine into motion he removed his hand and watched with wondering eyes the strange scene which unfolded itself before him.

Rapidly forming up in ranks which showed that they were not ignorant of at least the rudiments of military discipline, the fishmen swam swiftly to the top of the fence, uttering loud, angry shouts as they cleaved their way through the water.

For a little while all was confusion near the spot where the sentinel had raised the alarm.

What was happening Dick could not tell, but evidently a fierce fight was being waged on the top of the fence.

Presently he saw that the fishmen were being beaten back in confusion, some dropping slowly to the ground with fearful wounds on their naked bodies and limp, lifeless limbs.

A minute later the cause of the disturbance appeared in sight.

First appeared an enormous, scaled head, thrashing about to right and left, snapping at the swarming fishmen, who, with a courage which won Dick's fervent admiration, were attacking it on all sides with their three-pronged spears.

The head was attached to what Dick at first thought was a long neck, and he believed that the assailant was one of the fearful lizards with which the Sargasso Sea was infested.

But as coil after coil thrust its way remorselessly through the fiercely fighting fishmen's ranks he realised that the creature was nothing more nor less than a huge sea-serpent.

It was indeed a fearful sight to see the monster draw its long, scale-protected body over the fence, pausing now and again to rear its mighty head and strike viciously at its assailants, many of whom were caught in its cruel jaws or crushed beneath its writhing coils.

Never had men fought better. As the battle increased in ferocity the places of those who perished were taken by fishmen who hastened to their comrades' assistance from Crater Island.

Yet was their valour wasted.

The sea-serpent continued its remorseless advance over the heavily-cropped fields, leaving a trail of dead and dying fishmen behind it.

It soon became evident that the monster was not escaping scathless. Gradually the sea around it became dyed with blood flowing from numerous wounds, where the sharp spears of the fishmen had penetrated the joints of its armour.

At first Dick thought that the serpent's goal was Crater Island, but when he saw some of the herdsmen rapidly rounding up their flocks of dugongs he realised that it was hunger which had induced the sea-serpent to make its attack.

Moving with astonishing swiftness, the brute was soon amongst the herd, which, scattering in all directions, broke over fences and through growing crops in their terror.

But the serpent's lightning-like movements were too quick for them, and Dick could scarce believe his eyes when he saw the huge creature swallow dugong after dugong as a bird would swallow worms.

The monster was doomed to pay dearly for its gluttony.

Gorged by food, its movements became slower, until at length the fishmen, enraged at seeing half their herds destroyed, closed recklessly on it.

The sea-serpent seemed to realise the peril of its position. For a few minutes the water was lashed to blood-stained foam as it writhed and circled in rage and pain.

But gradually its struggles grew less, as, thrusting their spears into the exposed flesh underneath the enormous monster, the fishmen inflicted a hundred wounds upon it, any one of which must have been vital to a creature less generously endowed with life.

At length the battle was over, the serpent dead, the fishmen triumphant.

Cries of triumph arose on every hand. Suddenly a blast on the conch-horn echoed through the sea, and, leaving the serpent's body where it had fallen, the fishmen threw down their spears and resumed work.

So quietly did the fishmen return to work that, but for the huge body of the serpent, which lay where it had fallen, Dick could scarcely believe that a minute before they were fighting for their lives.

Evidently such scenes were of daily occurrence near Crater Island.

He was about to return to the Octopus, with the assurance that all was well, when a deep booming roar fell upon his ears.

It came from Crater Island, and, with quickening pulse, Dick recognised the roll of the fearful drum which had deafened his ears whilst hiding in the inland sea the previous night.

At first the beats were slow and solemn, but the roar grew quicker and quicker until it boomed forth in one loud, continuous roar.

Crying to each other, the fishmen threw down their tools. All, save the sentinel on the wall and the men herding the dugongs, hastened up the sloping side of the mountain.

Wondering what this sudden alarm might portend, Dick Dauntless was tempted to make a dash for land, but the certainty of being perceived caused him to remain where he was.

Nor had he cause to regret his decision.

Soon he saw two fishmen, wearing a species of flat cap made of shell, hurrying down the slope. Behind them, but taking care not to overrun their leaders, came a mob of shouting, gesticulating fishmen.

Their eyes fixed upon the ground, the leading fishmen rapidly descended the hill. Now and again they paused to cast round like hounds at fault.

Like a flash the truth burst upon Dick Dauntless.

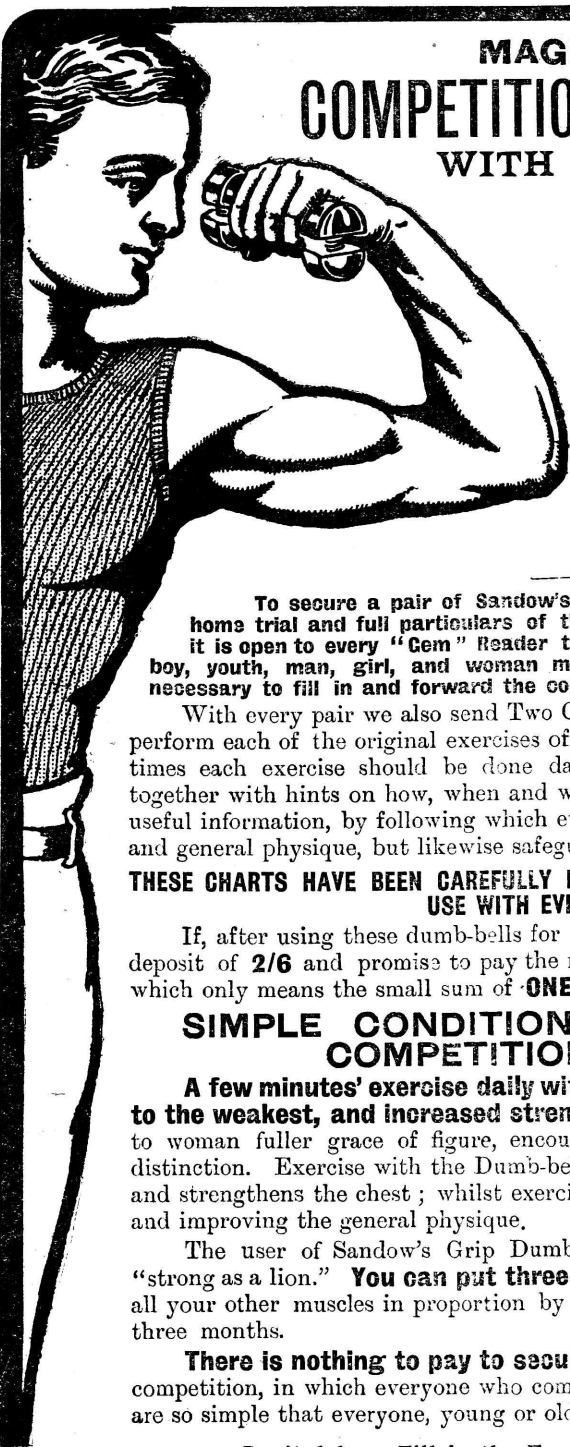
The escape of the prisoners had been discovered, and the shell-capped fishmen were trackers leading the pursuit.

Fighting the Tankas.

Eagerly Dick Dauntless glanced around for some sign of the Tankas.

At first he looked in vain, but just as the foremost of the spear-armed fishmen reached the wall, and Dick was about to retire, he saw the floating weeds above the fields bending inwards, as though pressed down by some heavy object.

Nearer and nearer came the disturbance in the weeds, until at last it had passed completely over his head.



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(Continued from page 24.)

Realising that what he had seen betokened the advance of the Tankas—though how they moved over the water he was at a loss to conceive—Dick backed from out the fence.

As he did so he heard a clang as of iron on iron, and a spear, hurled by a crouching fishman, glanced off the steel side of his boat.

Wheeling swiftly round, Dick sped after where, filling the air with shouts, like hounds in full cry, the fishmen were following on the track of the fugitives.

His first impulse was to make the best of his way back to the Octopus, and put Captain Flame on his guard.

Then he glanced at a timepiece let into the hull of the boat close to his eyes, and saw that, though much had occurred, the hour that Captain Flame had stipulated upon was not yet passed.

For a moment he swam on undecided, then headed straight for the main body of fishmen.

Intent upon throwing the fishmen into confusion, he moved to the extreme end of their rugged line, then, putting his engine at full speed, sent the brilliant rays of his searchlight blazing fiercely ahead, and swooped down upon the fishmen like a hawk on a covey of partridges.

So astounded were the strange creatures at the sudden appearance of the boat, that scarce a blow was struck at her as she passed through their ranks from one end to the other, hurling all she encountered to right and left.

Backwards and forwards she rushed, throwing the ranks into utter confusion, until at length, shrieking with terror, the whole mob—it scarce deserved the name of an army—fled in all directions.

Extinguishing his light, Dick backed slowly from the scene of the scrimmage, and waited the next move on the part of his foes.

Suddenly, to his amazement, a long, barbed spear shot from the surface, which was by this time agitated as the waters above the field had been.

Down descended the fearful weapon until at length it struck a trembling, shell-capped fishman between the shoulders, and, passing completely through him, was withdrawn as quickly as it had descended, the unfortunate man impaled upon its barbed head.

Horrified, yet filled with curiosity to discover whence the spear had come, Dick rose slowly to the surface.

A strange sight met his gaze.

Some fifty yards from where he had risen floated a huge raft.

It was crammed with shell-armoured Tankas, in the midst of whom was an enormous drum, on which four red-robed priests were beating lustily.

A deadly monotonous booming note filled the air. Harnessed to the raft were about a hundred fishmen. Others swam by its side, or pushed in the rear.

Around the raft ran a narrow path, along which trotted huge, bare-armed Tankas, carrying long-lanterned whips, with which they thrashed mercilessly the unhappy fishmen, who, straining every nerve, were drawing or pushing the raft over the weeds.

Even as Dick watched the strange craft approach, the huge spear which had been thrust from the raft by a dozen brawny Tankas was drawn to the surface, the writhing fishman still held on its broad blade by the gleaming barbs.

As the wretched creature was dropped upon the floor of the raft, a tall savage, whose shell helmet and breastplate were encrusted with precious stones, strode forward, and, his arms gesticulating angrily, evidently upbraided the poor wretch.

With a moan of terror the wounded fishman dropped at the Tankas's feet.

Turning contemptuously on his heels, he signed to a waiting priest, the one whom Dick had seen escort the white prisoner to the cavern by the shore of the inland sea.

The priest carried the same murderous-looking sword he had borne the previous night. With this he severed the fishman's head from his shoulders with a single blow.

Cries of horror and indignation arose from the fishmen dragging the raft. They were hushed by cruel blows from the whips of the drivers.

Dick waited to see no more.

The episode warned him how little mercy the crew of the Octopus might expect if they fell into the hands of the cruel Tankas.

Yet he could not bring himself to strike an unprepared foe. Sinking to some twenty feet beneath the surface, he shot so swiftly upwards that he burst from the sea like a huge flying-fish; and, rising a dozen feet from the surface, circled gracefully in the air ere he plunged down into the weeds once more.

Cries of amazement burst from the raft, changed to ejaculations of alarm as, his headlight blazing fiercely, Dick swam round and round the raft, the sharp blows of his strange craft cleaving an easy passage through the weeds.

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NEXT THURSDAY'S SPECIAL LONG "A FALSE CHUM!" COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY.

Immediately in the raft's rear he brought his boat to a halt, and fired one of the tiny torpedoes straight at his foe's clumsy craft.

Anxiously Dick watched the miniature missile darting through the water.

He feared lest a weed-stalk might cause it to deviate from its course.

But fortune fought on his side. Straight towards the raft sped the missile.

Dick backed away from the vicinity of the doomed craft. It was well he did so, for small though the torpedo, the explosive she carried was one specially prepared by Captain Flame, and more powerful than any known to science.

As the torpedo struck the raft, it was hidden for a moment in a ball of flame, which, clearing away, revealed a mass of torn and rent timbers, to which clung many of the gaily-adorned warriors it had borne so proudly a few seconds before.

Loud cries of terror filled the air, and Dick, aghast at the destruction he had wrought, felt sick with horror, as he saw Tanka after Tanka, weighed down by his heavy armour, disappear under the waves, when from almost immediately beneath him arose the wailing cry of a conch-horn.

Immediately the warriors who had sunk beneath the waves were carried to the surface by the fishmen, whilst those still afloat were supported on the shoulders of their devoted slaves, who, hastening to their masters' rescue, saved all who had not been slain by the explosion.

Dick waited to see no more.

Confident that all danger from the Tankas was past, he turned his boat's head towards the Octopus.

The Escape of the Octopus.

Dick Dauntless found the submarine motor-car to all appearances ready to resume its perilous journey into the heart of the Sargasso Sea.

Guiding his boat up the open tube from which it had emerged, he pressed its pointed nose into a circular opening in a steel plate which barred its progress. This closed the outer trap, and, setting the pumps to work, cleared the tiny chamber of water.

As soon as it was safe to do so, Dick opened the semi-circular top of the boat, and, creeping from the air chamber, passed into the interior of the car.

Cramped by the narrow limits of the torpedo-like boat, Dick Dauntless was glad to stretch his limbs ere he hastened towards the chart-room.

Jack Orde appeared at the door leading into the passage.

"Hallo, old chap, better, eh?" asked Dick.

"Just one single mass of bruises from head to foot, that's all," laughed Orde. "Otherwise I'm all right. Have you seen Captain Flame?"

"No, I am only just back," replied Dick. "Why do you ask?" he added, for there was a peculiar intonation in Jack Orde's voice which he had been quick to notice.

"Oh, nothing. That is to say, I'm afraid we'll have to return to the island at once," answered Orde.

"What, and leave my father in the power of the Tankas?" cried Dick, aghast at the news.

"So it seems. We have done our best, but we can only patch up the Octopus's hull," explained Jack. "Besides, the reserve store of chemicals for the engines were in the flooded compartment, and the salt water has ruined them."

A keen sense of disappointment weighing down his heart, Dick Dauntless made his way to Captain Flame's room, there to receive confirmation of what Orde had told him.

"But I'm not sure the Octopus need return to the island, Dick," said Captain Flame, when, having received Dick's report, he returned to the subject of their delayed journey.

"There's an uninhabited island some hundred miles to the east of the Sargasso, where we can land and effect all necessary repairs. At any rate, it is on our way. We can drain the flooded store-room, and find out exactly how much of the chemicals for the engine are damaged. Perhaps there may be sufficient to last us. Ah, what is that?" he added.

"By Jove, the Tankas are upon us!"

As he spoke Captain Flame pointed, through the plate-glass window before him, to where several of the huge inhabitants of Crater Island, each in charge of two fishmen, were being dragged rapidly to the bottom of the sea.

At first Dick Dauntless thought he was the witness of an act of vengeance on the part of the fishmen. A second glance assured him he was wrong.

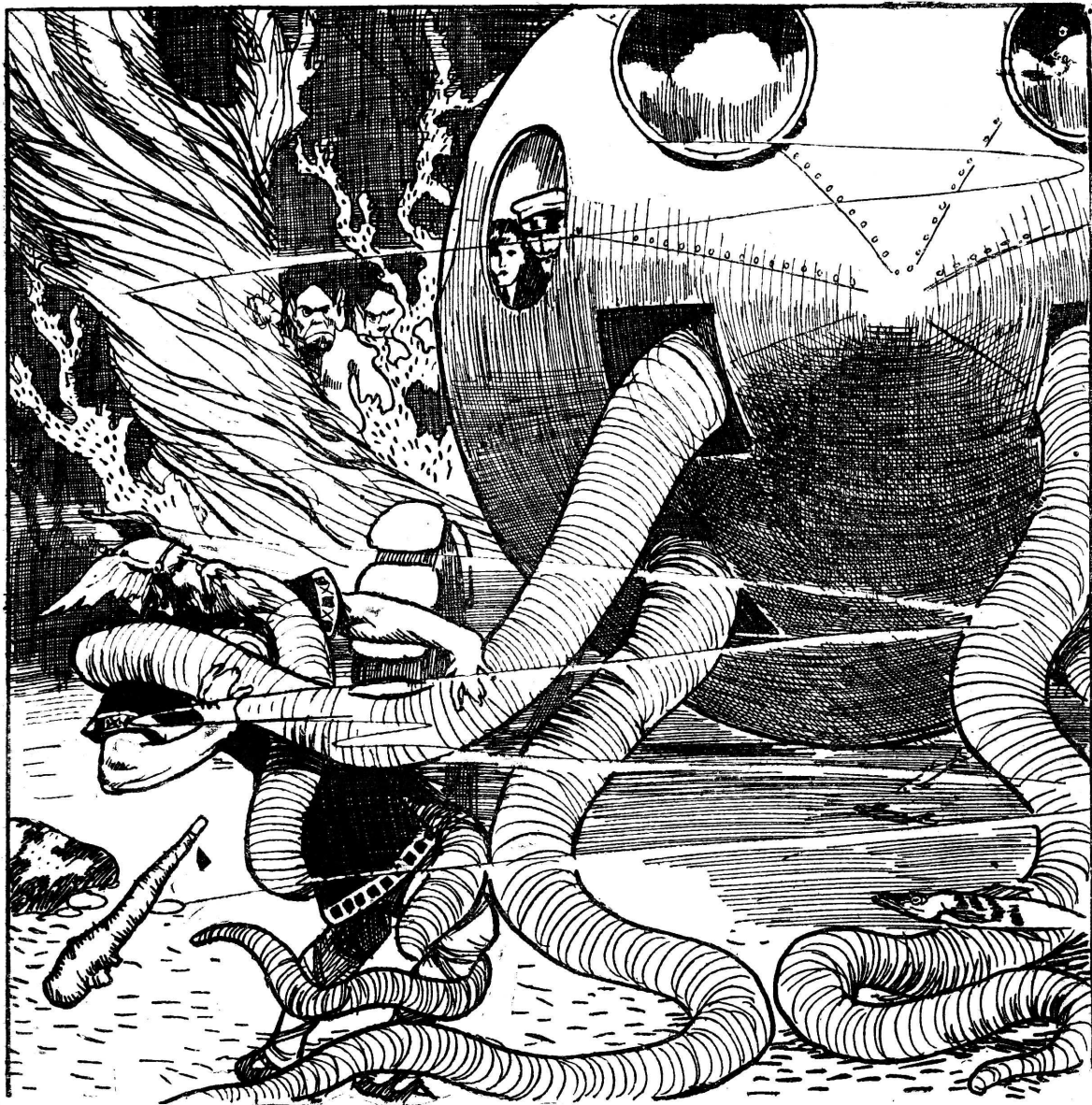
The amphibians were bringing down their masters that they might look at the strange and, to them, incomprehensible object which had invaded the Sargasso.

Rushing into the conning-tower, Captain Flame sent a warning message to the engine-room to "stand by."

With one hand on the telegraph, the other hovering over the various levers which controlled the submarine car, he awaited the next movement of their foes.

Nor had he long to wait.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD, also "DEEP SEA GOLD," by REGINALD WRAY.



Captain Flame sent a steel tentacle shooting out from the fore part of the Octopus at lightning speed, and its tapering end curled round the chieftain's body. (See below.)

Surrounded by a guard of fishmen, a stalwart Tanka, clad in a tight-fitting purple tunic, clasped with a gem-studded golden girdle, and with a fillet of gold, centred by an enormous uncut diamond, on his head, descended to the bottom of the sea.

In his hand he carried an enormous iron mace. His nostrils were tightly closed, his cheeks distended. He strode forward, evidently intending to strike a single blow at the unknown ere he was obliged to ascend to the surface for air.

Leaning forward, Captain Flame held out his hand with a conciliatory gesture.

The Tanka evidently saw him, for he frowned haughtily. But he ceased not to advance, and with upraised club paused before the unprotected wall of glass.

An ejaculation of dismay burst from Dick Dauntless's lips. But Captain Flame only smiled pityingly at the savage.

Grasping one of the tiny wheels before him, he sent a steel tentacle shooting out from the fore part of the Octopus at lightning speed.

Its tapering end curled round the chieftain's body, then, as the fishmen hacked vainly at it with their three-pronged spears, Captain Flame shouted the order "Full speed astern!" to the engine-room.

Swiftly the Octopus backed for about fifty yards; then, ere the fishmen guard could rush to their leader's assistance, the door of the water-dock opened, and it seemed to their terrified eyes as though the strangely shaped monster had devoured their king.

"Empty the water-dock and secure the prisoner, Dick!" ordered Captain Flame. "He has been beneath the water some time; he may need artificial respiration. If so, let Mopsa attend him."

As Dick hurried away to execute the order, Captain Flame turned his attention to where the fishmen, with loud outcries and violent gesticulations, indicative of horror and despair, were moving swiftly towards them.

Sending the Octopus's weird siren cry booming through the water, Captain Flame dashed at the fishmen.

To his surprise they made no attempt to escape, but flung themselves down on the weed-covered ground, their hands raised in supplication.

(Another grand, long, exciting instalment of this thrilling tale of adventure beneath the sea next week. Order your copy of "The Gem" Library now, price 1d.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 193.

NEXT THURSDAY'S SPECIAL LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY:

"A FALSE CHUM!" By MARTIN CLIFFORD, also "DEEP SEA GOLD," by REGINALD WRAY.

OUR NEW WEEKLY FEATURE

**Next Week's Story.**

I have a real treat in store for my readers next week in the shape of Martin Clifford's latest St. Jim's story. The title,

"A FALSE CHUM!"

gives the keynote to the character of this splendid tale, which shows up in a powerful light the bitter mortification and wounded pride of the schoolboy betrayed by the chum to whom he had given his whole-hearted confidence and trust.

If you are wise, you will ask your newsgent to-day to reserve you a copy of next week's GEM, containing

"A FALSE CHUM!"**A Chat Page in "The Magnet."**

The chorus in favour of my starting a Chat page in our popular companion paper, "The Magnet," is being daily swelled by letters from my readers in every part of the British Empire. Below are printed a few selections from my daily budget of letters and postcards on the subject:

"Manor Park, E.

"Dear Editor,—I am just dropping you a line to say how pleased I am with E. J. Nelis's notion. I think it would be ripping to have a Chat page in 'The Magnet.' I only hope you will accede to his idea. I have been a constant reader of THE GEM and 'The Magnet' libraries for a very long time indeed, and I think both books afford excellent reading for boys and girls. The elegance of 'Gussy' and Billy Bunter's enormous appetite are especially very funny.—I remain, yours truly,

"Ealing.

"Dear Editor,—I have been a regular reader of THE GEM and 'The Magnet' for over two years, and I think I may say I have never read better books before, or after, and they get better every week. If you would not mind, I would like to ask a question. Is it possible to have another serial about Frank Kingston? Except the one we are now having, I think it was the best serial tale I have ever read, and I should like very much to read another tale about him. Perhaps it would be best to ask what other readers think about it? Two weeks ago a certain reader asked if we might have a 'Weekly Chat' in 'The Magnet,' and you asked what other readers thought. I myself think it is a very good idea. Wishing your papers every success,—I remain, yours truly,

A. E."

"Bournemouth.

"Dear Editor,—I think it is a splendid idea to start a Chat page in 'The Magnet,' and hope it will be able to be carried out. I have been taking in 'The Magnet' each week for three years, and thoroughly enjoy reading it, especially when the girls from Cliff House are mentioned.

"I do not take THE GEM in quite regularly, but have read nearly all from No. 100, and like them all immensely. I also think the latest serial in THE GEM, 'Deep Sea Gold,' is very interesting and original, and I like it better than the last one, though that was very good.—With best wishes,

"DORIS P."

Here, then, we have the opinions of three readers which are typical of those expressed by hundreds more. In regard to the question A. E. of Ealing, asks, it is quite possible to have another Frank Kingston story, and, if circumstances warrant, you may be sure this popular character will appear again before long. My readers can always rely on my giving them in the good old GEM and "Magnet" the very best reading matter that money or brains can procure.

I should like to ask my girl reader, Doris P., as a personal favour, to take THE GEM in quite regularly in future. I think

you will all agree that she will have a good return for the copper she spends.

An Acknowledgment from Master Nelis.

Here is another little note from the originator of "The Magnet" Chat page idea, which has been taken up with such enthusiasm:

"Liverpool.

"My dear Editor,—I am greatly indebted to you for publishing my letter in No. 187 of THE GEM, and can hardly thank you enough, because I feel that you have made me look forward more to both papers. Perhaps you will be surprised to hear that it is the first time I have had my name in print. I have received nearly a dozen letters from boy and girl readers of London, and one from Ireland, all of them wishing for a Chat page in 'The Magnet,' which I hope there will be in a short time.—Now I must close with many thanks.—Your Liverpool chum,

EDWARD J. NELIS."

Wait and see, Master Nelis!

Over Three Hundred Answers!

Miss Grace Williams, whose request for a chum to correspond with her was published on this page in No. 188 of THE GEM, writes as follows:

"30, Opal Street, Kennington.

"Dear Editor,—Referring to my request in THE GEM, you will be surprised to hear that I have received over three hundred answers. I had no idea THE GEM was so popular. I have had such real, nice letters from all over the United Kingdom (England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales). It would be impossible to answer all, but I have answered a good many, including those who very thoughtfully enclosed stamps for reply. Every one of them tells me how they enjoy the stories in THE GEM and 'Magnet,' and say what a splendid example of clean, healthy reading they offer to British boyhood. I should esteem it a great favour if you will thank the Gemites in your next issue of the Chat page.—Faithfully yours,

"GRACE G. WILLIAMS.

"P.S.—I am wondering now whether I shall receive any from abroad."

A Chatty Letter.

A girl reader writes me a very nice letter on behalf of herself and her sister, and one which betokens a great interest in the doings of the various characters in the famous GEM and "Magnet"—an interest which, I am glad to say, is enthusiastically shared by an ever-increasing number of readers.

"Stroud, Glos.

"Dear Editor,—My sister and I take THE GEM and 'Magnet' libraries every week. We always look forward to the stories—they are so full of interest and fun. We are very interested in the doings of Tom Merry & Co., and the others, especially in the enormous 'feeds' Fatty Wynn puts out of sight; but the best of it is, as soon as he has finished one he is ready for another. Gussy is also a great favourite with us.

"Billy Bunter, in the 'Magnet,' is very clever in making up yarns about the postal-order which never comes; it is really amusing how he finds out if there is a 'feed' coming off, and manages to get himself invited. We are anxious to hear of Alonzo Todd again, with his delightful flow of speech and simple ways. Bulstrode has changed from the bully he used to be, and makes a good captain. When are you going to start a 'Chat' in the 'Magnet'? Wishing both the papers every success.—We remain, yours truly,

"S. A. M. and B. A. M."

Many thanks to both my girl readers for their letter. As for a Chat page in "The Magnet," well, I can only say again, "Wait and see!"

THE EDITOR.