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The monkey advanced gravely into the form-room. Mr. Linton staggered back, the cane dropping from his hand. "G-g-odness gracious!" he exclaimed. "Oh, my hat!" gasped Lowther. "Here's Tom Merry minor come to look for his major!" (For this amusing incident see the grand, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. contained in this issue.)

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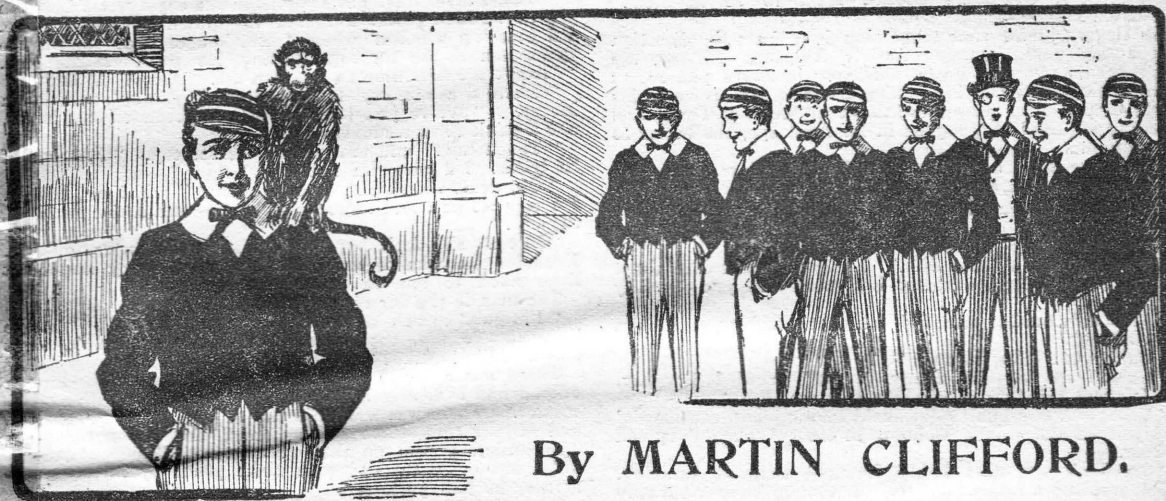
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TOM MERRY MINOR!

A Splendid, New, Long, Complete School Tale Dealing with the Adventures
of the Rival Cos. at St. Jim's.



By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1. Hats Off!

MY hat!" Tom Merry jumped as he uttered the exclamation.

The Terrible Three—Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell—were sitting on a grassy bank close by the boathouse of St. Jim's.

The river before them gleamed in the setting sun. Behind them was the wood that bordered the towing-path, thick and dark and shady. The chums of the Shell were leaning against gnarled trunks as they discussed ginger-beer and dough-nuts from a bag that was open on Monty Lowther's knees.

Tom Merry's hand went up to his head. He was wearing a straw hat—the last straw of summer, as Monty Lowther put it. And his hat had suddenly vanished.

Tom ran his fingers through his curly locks. He glanced round him in amazement. His first thought was that Manners or Lowther had jerked off his hat by way of a joke. But Manners was drinking ginger-beer, and Lowther was eating dough-nuts, and neither of them was in possession of a superfluous straw hat. Tom Merry looked at the wood behind him. It looked too dense for anyone to have stolen through to snatch off his hat from behind. Over him were low-hanging branches, thick with foliage—with birds twittering among the leaves high up.

"My hat!"

"What's the matter?" yawned Lowther.

"Somebody's collared my hat!"

His chums stared at him.

A minute before Tom Merry had been wearing a straw hat, and now he was bareheaded. The hat was certainly gone; and there was no one in sight, excepting half a dozen juniors some distance away on the landing-raft.

"Is that a joke?" asked Manners. "You've put it behind you, I suppose. Tommy, my son, your sense of humour is feeble—very feeble."

"Ass!" exclaimed Tom warmly. "I tell you I didn't touch it. It suddenly vanished off my head! I felt it move, and it's gone!"

"Extraordinary!" yawned Lowther.

"Look here, you fathead—"

"Must have mistaken itself for an aeroplane, and flown away," said Lowther. "I've known hats do that—I don't think. Or perhaps your old strawyard was a Boojum?"

"A—a what?"

"A Boojum. Don't you remember the queer habits of the Boojum, as related by Lewis Carroll?"

And Lowther quoted lazily:

"In the midst of the thing he was going to say,
In the midst of his laughter and glee,
He had suddenly silently vanished away,
For the Snark was a Boojum, you see!"

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!" said Tom Merry. "Some chump has sneaked behind me and collared my straw. I'll thump him when I find him. Pass the dough-nuts!"

Lowther passed the dough-nuts, with a grin. But a moment or two later the grin vanished from his face, and he gave a jump.

"Let my cap alone, you fathead!"

"Eh? What's the matter with your silly cap?" asked Tom Merry, looking round.

"It's gone!" yelled Lowther.

"Wha-a-at!"

It was certainly gone. Monty Lowther was bareheaded. He jumped up, and scanned the dark wood behind him; but there was no sign of a marauder. He ran his fingers over his carefully-parted hair, and snorted.

"One of the New House bounders japing us, I suppose!" he growled. "By Jove! I'll wallop him for giving me such a start! Where is the beast?"

"Perhaps your cap is a Boojum, too!" Tom Merry suggested sarcastically.

"Oh, rats!"

Lowther sat down again. The cap could wait, and the ginger-beer and dough-nuts couldn't. Manners was chuckling.

"Must be Figgins or Reddy, or one of those bounders!" he remarked. "I don't quite see how they got at your giddy headgear, though!"

"I don't see any joke in it myself!" growled Lowther.

And he frowned over his dough-nuts. Manners refilled his glass with ginger-beer, and was drinking it, when he gave a

Next Wednesday:

"A DISGRACE TO THE HOUSE!" AND "THE CORINTHIAN!"

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sudden jump, and the ginger-beer swamped out of the glass.

"Look out!" roared Lowther, as he received half of it on his knees. "What are you swamping my bags with ginger-beer for, you silly chump?"

"My cap!"

"Blow your cap!"

"It's gone!" roared Manners.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Somebody jerked it off all of a sudden!" exclaimed Manners, jumping up. "Where is he? I'll scalp him! I'll—"

Manners glared round in search of the practical joker.

But there was no practical joker to be seen. Save for themselves, the towing-path was deserted, and the deep wood behind them was silent and still. It was quite uncanny, and the chums of the Shell exchanged amazed glances.

"Blessed if the place doesn't seem to be haunted!" ejaculated Manners.

An elegant junior came sauntering down from the direction of the boathouse. It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form. D'Arcy looked a picture, as usual, from the tips of his shining boots to the crown of his glossy topper. He paused to look at the Terrible Three, and carefully adjusted his eyeglass in his right eye, the better to survey them.

"Bai Jove, deah boys!" he remarked. "Have you joined the hatless bwigade, or are you settin' up as nuts?"

"Do you know anything about it?" demanded Lowther heatedly.

Arthur Augustus looked surprised.

"That's accordin', deah boy. I know a gweat deal about a good many things, wathah; but what are you specially alludin' to?"

"Some silly ass has jerked off our caps somehow, and taken them away!"

"Bai Jove! How funnay!"

"I don't see anything funny in it!" growled Lowther. "It's about the most idiotic joke I've ever heard of!"

"Yaas; and you know a lot about idiotic jokes, considewin' that you do the Comic Column in the 'Weekly,'" agreed D'Arcy.

"Oh, don't you start being funny!" snapped Lowther. "You were born funny enough. I want to know what silly fathead has collared my cap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, image?" demanded the Terrible Three together, glaring at the swell of St. Jim's.

"It's wathah funnay, deah boys! Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you've come here looking for a thick ear, Gussy—"

"Or a blue eye—"

"Or a bumping—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" trilled Arthur Augustus.

The Terrible Three made a movement towards him. Arthur Augustus backed away, still laughing; and as he did so, something whisked out of the low branches overhead, and the elegant junior's topper vanished from his head. It was gone in the twinkling of an eye. Arthur Augustus ceased to laugh, and his hand flew to his head.

"Bai Jove! Where's my toppah?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Terrible Three. "Funny, isn't it?"

Arthur Augustus looked excited.

"I do not wegard it as funnay to play silly twicks with a chap's toppah. Where is my toppah gone? I want my toppah!"

The chums of the Shell gazed upward into the low, thick branches. They had seen D'Arcy's topper whisked from his head, but it had happened so quickly that they could hardly be certain how it had gone.

"There's something—or somebody—in the tree!" said Tom Merry. "They don't grow monkeys in Rylcombe Wood, or I should think it was a monkey!"

"Oh, wats! It's some uttah ass playin' a silly pwank—"

"It was a monkey," said Lowther. "I saw his tail whisking."

"How on earth could a monkey get here, in the wood?" said Tom Merry, puzzled.

"Might have escaped from an organ—or it might be one of D'Arcy's relations paying him a visit—"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"

"Skuse me, 'ave you seen a monkey along 'ere?"

It was a rough voice, and the juniors turned at once to see the speaker. He was a roughly-dressed man, with a mottled face, and his breath exhaled a rich odour of rum as he spoke. He wore a dirty fur cap on the side of his head, and an equally dirty clay pipe stuck out of the corner of his mouth. His gait was a little unsteady as he came along the towing-path.

"Have you lost a monkey?" asked Tom Merry.

The man in the fur cap nodded.

"Yes, I 'ave. He got away from the orgin while I was in the Green Man gettin' somethin' to—eat. Name of Mike. I'll give 'im a beltin' when I get 'old of him," added the gentleman in the fur cap, gritting his teeth on the pipe. "Tain't the first time as he's run orf. Mike! Mike!"

"There's a monkey in this tree, I think," said Tom Merry. "We've just had our hats snatched off our heads, and I think I saw a monkey—"

"That's 'im!" said the man in the fur cap. "Jest one of 'is tricks. I'll give 'im a beltin'."

"Oh, don't whack him on our account," said Tom, hastily. "I suppose he doesn't know any better—and it did no harm, anyway."

"Not at all, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, quickly. Even for the sake of his beloved topper, D'Arcy would not have liked to see an animal cruelly treated.

The man in the fur cap grunted.

"I'm goin' to belt 'im for runnin' away," he said. "Broke 'is chain, 'e did, the warmint. I'll tan 'im till 'e can't crawl. Mike! Mike!"

There was a sound of chattering in the tree. The unseen animal had evidently heard, and recognised, the voice of his master. There was a whiz in the air, and two caps, a straw and a silk hat came rushing down, and fell in the grass. The juniors picked up their headgear. The unfortunate Mike was evidently trying to make peace by restoring the articles he had purloined.

"Mike! Come down, you blighter! Kim 'ere."

Chatter, chatter, chatter, from the branches.

"Mike!" roared the man in the fur cap.

A little hairy body dropped from the tree, into the grass at his feet. It was a small, nimble monkey, black as the ace of spades, with a collar riveted round his neck, to which a short length of chain still hung. Mike, mischievous as he was, dared not disobey the dreaded voice.

The man in the fur cap muttered an oath, and grasped the monkey by the collar. Then he jerked a short, thick strap from his pocket, and whirled it in the air. The monkey gave a terrified squeal. He knew what was coming, and he seemed to shrink to half his size in the savage grasp of his master.

Arthur Augustus started forward involuntarily.

"Pway don't thwash him, deah boy!" he exclaimed, in distress. "The poor little beast doesn't know any bettah, you know. Pway don't be wuff."

"You mind yer own business," said the man in the fur cap.

D'Arcy flushed with indignation. The man was half intoxicated, and wholly a hooligan.

The anger and disgust in the faces of the juniors had only the effect of making him more savage in temper. The strap descended with savage force, and there was a shrill squeal of pain from the monkey. Then again and again the cruel strap descended, while the wretched animal writhed and wriggled and screamed with pain.

CHAPTER 2.

Mike Finds a New Master.

TOM MERRY sprang forward.

The monkey was the property of the man in the fur cap, and perhaps he had a right to punish it for breaking its chain and escaping. But no one could have a right to use an animal with such cruelty. The man was wreaking his drunken rage upon the unfortunate victim, and Tom Merry could not stand it.

"Let that monkey alone!" Tom exclaimed sharply.

The man in the fur cap snarled.

"You mind yer own business, young gentleman, and I'll mind mine," he said. "This 'ere is my monkey, ain't it?"

"You have no right to beat him like that."

"That's my business."

And the strap rose again. Tom Merry clenched his fists.

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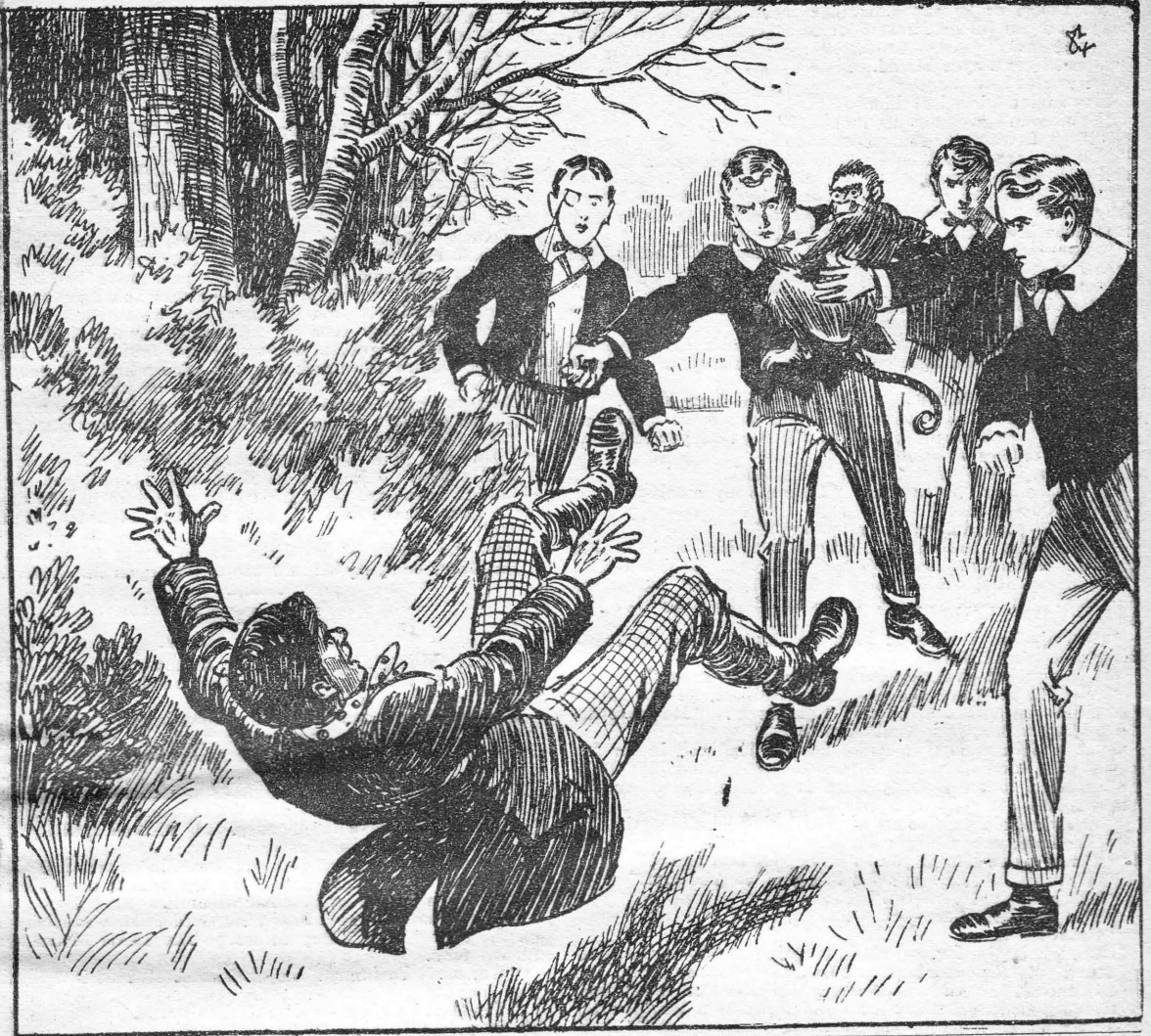
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(See column 2, page 26 of this issue.)

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"If you touch that monkey again, I'll knock you down!" said Tom Merry, between his teeth. The man in the fur cap grinned, and the strap came down again with savage force, and the monkey squealed with pain. Tom Merry's fist lashed out straight from the shoulder. The ruffian went down with a crash. (See Chapter 2.)

"If you touch that monkey again, I'll knock you down!" he said, between his teeth.

The man in the fur cap grinned. He was head and shoulders bigger than the junior of St. Jim's. He did not think for a moment that the boy would carry out his threat. The strap came down with savage force, and the monkey squealed in anguish.

Tom Merry's blood was up now, and he kept his word. His fist lashed out straight from his shoulder.

Biff!

"Ow! Ow! Yah!"

The man in the fur cap went down into the grass with a crash. The monkey jerked loose, and scuttled to the foot of the tree, where he crouched, chattering and grimacing. He was too terrified to climb into safety.

The half-intoxicated ruffian leapt to his feet.

"You 'it me!" he roared, his coarse features working with rage.

"I'll hit you again, if you touch that monkey," said Tom Merry passionately. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you hulking scoundrel."

The man rushed towards him, but he paused as the other fellows lined up with Tom Merry. He was big enough to make things very warm for one of the juniors, but he would have had no chance against the four, and he halted in time.

"Orlright," he said sullenly. "You've 'it me. P'raps I'll meet you some night, and make it square, young fellow-me-lad. And as fur that monkey, I'll take 'im 'ome, and I'll belt 'im till 'is skin comes orf. That's all the good you've done 'im by interferin', my fine feller."

He lurched towards the monkey.

The unfortunate Mike made a spring towards Tom Merry, and clambered up to his shoulder, as if seeking protection.

"Give me my monkey!" roared the man in the fur cap.

Tom Merry hesitated.

It was clearly against all law to keep the man's monkey away from him, but the ruffian's words made Tom Merry hesitate. He knew that he would fulfil the threat he had made—what he could not do to Tom Merry he would inflict upon the monkey as soon as the wretched animal was wholly in his power again. And Mike knew it as well as the juniors, and clung to Tom Merry's curly hair with somewhat painful force. He knew what he had to expect from the man in the fur cap.

"Are you goin' to give me my monkey?" demanded the ruffian.

"I—I suppose you'll have to let him have his property, Tom," said Manners, in a hesitating voice.

"Look here, my man," said Tom, as calmly as he could, for he was boiling with anger. "You're not fit to have an animal. Will you sell me this monkey?"

"No, I won't."

"I'll give you ten shillings for him."

"I wouldn't take ten quid!"

"I'll make it a pound," said Tom Merry. "You fellows can lend me the rest."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I tell you I ain't sellin' that monkey. I'm goin' to take 'im 'ome, and belt 'im till 'e can't crawl about," said the man in the fur cap, rolling the words on his tongue with

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great relish, as he saw how they made the juniors wince. "I'll belt 'im till he's next door to a goner, you bet. Now, and 'im over."

Tom Merry's eyes blazed.

"I won't!"

The ruffian glared at him.

"You won't give me my monkey?"

"No, I won't," said Tom, drawing a deep breath. "You're a cruel beast, and you're not fit to keep an animal, and you sha'n't have him."

"Yaas, wathah; stick to him, deah boy," chirped Arthur Augustus. "I'll back you up. I've a gweat mind to give that howwid wuffian a feahful fwashin', anyway."

"You—you—you're goin' to steal my monkey?" roared the man in the fur cap.

Tom Merry flushed.

"I've offered to buy him from you. If he's worth more than I've offered, I'll pay you a fair price."

"I ain't selling him. I get my living with that monkey. I ain't parting with him. Give me my monkey, or I'll have the law of yer."

"Very well, we'll let it go at that," said Tom Merry. "I belong to the school yonder—and you can come there and claim him. And when you do it, I'll see that you're prosecuted for cruelty to animals."

The man in the fur cap ground his teeth.

"It's stealing!" he howled. "Give me my monkey."

"Go and eat coke!"

"You're goin' to keep my monkey?"

"Yes, I am. I'm going to take care of him, and see that he has a better time than he's had with you, you scoundrel."

"I—I say, that's rather high-handed, Tommy," murmured Lowther. "I back you up, but—but it's his property, you know."

"Nobody has a right to keep an animal unless he treats him well," said Tom.

"I know; but—but that isn't the law, you know."

"Well, if he wants the law on the subject, let him go to the police-station about it," said Tom Merry. "He looks the kind of chap the police would like to see."

That remark seemed to strike home. The man in the fur cap gave a kind of quick, suspicious look around him, as if he expected to see a burly form in blue coming down the towing-path.

"Are you goin' to give me my monkey?" he said again.

"No, I am not. I'll pay for him, if you like, a fair price, but I won't give him to you to be beaten, you brute."

"If you don't and him over, I'm goin' to take him."

"You're welcome to try."

"Fur the last time—"

"Rats!"

The man in the fur cap made a spring at the junior, and clutched at the monkey. Tom Merry hit out, and the ruffian reeled, but then his strong grasp closed on the junior. They struggled, and Mike chattered away at a fearful rate. But in a moment more, Manners and Lowther and D'Arcy had their hands upon the man in the fur cap. He was dragged over, and bumped down heavily on the ground.

Monty Lowther caught hold of the strap.

"Hold the beast, you fellows," he said. "He seems so fond of this strap, he may as well have some of his own medicine."

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, wathah. Pile in, deah boy—I'll hold the beast!"

"Ere, you leggo! Lemme gerrup! I'll 'ave the law on yer!" roared the gentleman in the fur cap.

"Sit on his head, Gussy!"

"I wufuse to sit on his beastly head! It would make my twousahs dirtay!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

Fur Cap struggled violently.

But the juniors held him fast, and, as he rolled over, Monty Lowther brought down the strap with terrific force. A roar like that of a maddened bull burst from the man in the fur cap. But Lowther was not done with him yet. He thought that very likely trouble would follow the rescue of the monkey, and he determined to make Fur Cap pay for it in advance. He lashed the ruffian till he roared and howled with pain.

Fur Cap made a terrific effort, and broke away from the juniors. He rolled down towards the river, and picked himself up there, convulsed with rage, and shaking his fist at the panting juniors.

"Pile in, deah boys," shouted D'Arcy excitedly—"pile in! Thump him—thump him—the wottah! Hurray!"

"Duck him in the river!" shouted Manners.

"Good egg!" Lowther hurled the strap into the middle of the Ryll. "Now send him in after it!"

Fur Cap did not wait to be sent in after his strap. As the juniors rushed at him he dodged and fled. He disappeared up the towing-path.

"Stole away, bai Jove!"

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"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday.

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"THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we've got the monk," said Lowther. "What on earth are you going to do with him, Tom?"

"I'm going to get him to let go of my hair first, if he will," said Tom Merry ruefully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're allowed to keep pets," said Tom. "I'll keep him."

"Not other people's pets," grinned Manners.

"He's mine now. I'm willing to pay for him. There ought to be a law to take animals away from rotters who don't treat them well."

"There ought to be, but there isn't, my son. I'm afraid we shall hear of Fur Cap again. Anyway, he's got something to remember us by. I'll bet he's never had such an awful walloping in his life before—unless he's had the cat in prison some time," said Lowther, with a chuckle.

"Pwetty neahly time for aftahnoon lessons, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, consulting his famous gold tigger. "Bettah shove the monk into the shed where we keep the pets, Tom Merry, and put a dog-chain on him."

"Or you could send him into the Fourth-Form room, along with the others," Monty Lowther suggested humorously.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"I'll put him in the menagerie," said Tom Merry. "Reilly used to keep a monkey, and I don't see why I shouldn't keep one. I shall have to teach him to let people's hats alone, that's all. I dare say he's been taught that trick."

And the chums of St. Jim's walked away to the school, Tom Merry carrying his new acquisition upon his shoulder.

CHAPTER 3.

Tom Merry Minor.

TOM MERRY'S appearance in the quadrangle of St. Jim's with a black monkey on his shoulder attracted a good deal of attention.

Quite a large number of the fellows kept pets of one sort or another, but members of the monkey tribe were rare. Reilly of the Fourth had had a monkey, but after his monkey had clawed the few remaining locks of Mr. Ratcliff, the new Housemaster, Reilly had considered it judicious to send him home. Mike was a very small monkey, and his keen, glittering eyes were full of intelligence. He blinked at the juniors as he sat crouched on Tom's shoulder.

"What on earth have you got there?" demanded Blake of the Fourth. "I didn't know you had a minor, Tom Merry."

There was a roar of laughter at once.

Blake's remark was a happy hit, and Mike was christened on the spot "Tom Merry Minor." The owner of the name turned pink.

"Oh, don't be funny!" he exclaimed. "This is a monkey I've found!"

"Findings keepings—ch?" said Levison of the Fourth, with his disagreeable grin. "That's sometimes called stealing, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry took no notice of the cad of the Fourth.

"We wescued him," said Arthur Augustus, addressing the interested crowd. "He had a byute of a master, who was wallopin' him fwightfully, and we've taken him away."

"Pretty cool, by Jove!" said Figgins, of the New House.

"What were we to do, dear boy? We couldn't leave the poor little monk to be pulverised by a dwunken ruffian."

"No fear!" said Tom Merry emphatically. "I offered the rotter a pound for him, and the offer's still open if he likes to come for the money. That's good enough."

"Yes, rather!" said Kangaroo, of the Shell. "The poor little beast still looks frightened."

"Levison's face, perhaps," suggested Lowther. "Turn it the other way, Levison."

Levison scowled.

"You'll get into a row if the owner comes for it," he sneered. "Stealing monkeys isn't allowed."

"Lucky for you, or you'd get popped into a show in no time," said Lowther cheerfully. "I've thought of a good dodge. If Fur Cap comes back, we'll offer him Levison instead. Nobody would miss him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where are you going to put your minor, Tommy?" asked Bernard Glynn, of the Shell, with a chuckle.

"Don't be a funny ass!" roared Tom Merry, exasperated.

"If you call him my minor again I'll punch your silly head!"

"These minors are a frightful trouble!" grinned Blake. "D'Arcy's minor is just as bad. Might shove him into the Third Form-room with Wally."

"Weally, Blake—"

"I'm going to put him in the shed," said Tom Merry.

"Will you lend me a dog-chain, Herries? I don't want him to wander away."

"Right-ho!" said Herries, of the Fourth. "Better chain him up out of reach of my bulldog. Towser doesn't like monkeys, and I shouldn't like Towser to eat him. He doesn't look over clean."

"Why, you silly ass——" said Tom Merry indignantly.

"Well, I don't want Towser to be ill, you know. He was ill after he bit Levison."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry walked away to the shed behind the house, with the monkey on his shoulders. He was followed by an interested crowd. Herries produced a dog-chain, and Tom Merry fastened it to the monkey's collar. Mike declined to get down off his shoulder at first. Apparently he had taken a fancy to Tom Merry, and found his perch there quite comfortable. He was persuaded down at last, and a box was found for him, with a heap of straw, to make him a comfortable bed. He curled up in the straw, and lay blinking at the juniors.

"You'll have to give him a wash, Tommy," Lowther remarked. "Fur Cap didn't believe in keeping animals clean. Looks as if there are insects about him. You can't have your minor in that state."

"You silly ass!"

"Look out! Here comes Pongo!"

Pongo, the ragged mongrel belonging to Wally D'Arcy—the minor of the great Arthur Augustus—slunk into the shed with a bone in his jaws. But at sight of the monkey, Pongo dropped the bone, and made one jump for Mike. Tom Merry had just time to interpose his boot, and Pongo howled and retreated, barking furiously. D'Arcy minor followed his ragged pet into the shed.

"What's the row?" he exclaimed. "What are you doing to Pong?"

"The beast wants to bite my monkey!" said Tom Merry warmly.

"Well, why shouldn't he, if he wants to?" growled Wally. "Don't you shove my dog, or there will be a row! It's all right—that blessed ape couldn't hurt Pongo. Pongo's teeth would rip him into ribbons in no time!"

"I don't want my monkey ripped into ribbons, you young ass!" yelled Tom Merry.

Wally sniffed.

"Rather nifty, that monkey. Why don't you wash him?"

"I haven't had time."

"Tom Merry's minor has only just arrived," Blake explained.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry made a rush at Blake, and the Fourth-Former dodged out of the shed, laughing.

"I suppose I shall have to chain Pongo up," growled Wally. "I shouldn't like him to get too close to that miserable-looking beast. Come on, Pongo!"

"I wonder if he's hungry?" said Tom Merry, surveying his new pet. "I suppose monkeys live on nuts, don't they?"

"Gussy is the only nut here," remarked Lowther.

"Pway don't be an ass, Lowthah!"

"Anybody got any nuts for Tom Merry minor?" called out Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Glyn, as Tom Merry thumped him.

"Hold on—stop! I only wanted to feed your minor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here," roared Tom Merry, as the juniors yelled, "I don't consider that a joke. What are you silly idiots cackling at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors trooped off, laughing. Tom Merry shook his head sorrowfully at the unconscious Mike. He could foresee a whole hurricane of jokes and chipping on the subject of his minor, and he was not wholly glad that he had come into possession of Mike. But it was not Mike's fault, and Tom Merry patted him affectionately before he left him curled up in the box.

Kildare, of the Sixth, met Tom Merry as the Shell fellow came into the School House. Kildare looked surprised and interested.

"I didn't know you had a brother, Merry," he said.

Tom looked surprised, too.

"I haven't," he said. "I'm the only specimen."

"You haven't a younger brother?" asked the captain of St. Jim's.

"Not that I know of."

"Then what's this talk about your minor coming to St. Jim's?" demanded Kildare.

Tom Merry crimsoned. It was evidently all over the school already.

"It isn't my minor," he growled. "That is an idiotic joke."

"What is it, then—a new chap?"

"Not exactly."

"I don't quite understand," said Kildare. "Is it somebody very like you, or what?"

"Very like, indeed," chuckled Levison of the Fourth, who was passing. "Remarkable resemblance—same breed and everything."

"Shut up, you silly fathead," growled Tom Merry. "It's a monkey, Kildare."

Kildare burst into a laugh.

"A monkey! Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not like me at all!" roared Tom Merry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry made a dash at Levison, who fled into the Fourth Form-room, laughing. With a heated countenance, Tom Merry made his way to the Shell Form-room. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was not there yet, and the Shell fellows were talking and laughing. Tom caught the words "Merry minor" as he came in.

Skimpole of the Shell came towards him, blinking through his big spectacles. Skimpole, the scientific junior, founder of a Science Club which had come to a sudden and untimely end, was great on evolution, the descent of man, the origin of species, and other interesting things like that. Skimpole offered to prove to any fellow the descent of man from an ape-like species, by pointing out the resemblances of face and form and habits—and on one occasion he was proving his case to Gore of the Shell, completely to his satisfaction, when Gore had finished the argument by violently assaulting Skimpole. But little things like that did not discourage a true scientist. Skimpole was simply beaming as he bore down upon Tom Merry.

"I was just asking where you were, my dear Merry," Skimpole exclaimed. "You are just the fellow I want to see. I hear that you have a monkey that strongly resembles you—so strongly that the fellows call it Merry minor——"

"Shut up, you ass!"

Skimpole looked surprised.

"My dear Merry, there is nothing to get excited about," he said soothingly. "It is a very interesting circumstance—very! Do you not see that it is a living proof of the theory of the descent of man from an ape-like species. It is probable that you yourself, my dear Merry, are descended from the same stock as that very monkey—yaroooh. Yah! Ow! What did you hit me for?"

Skimpole sat on the Form-room floor and blinked at Tom Merry in astonishment.

Mr. Linton entered the room.

"What is this?" he exclaimed severely. "Fighting in the Form-room?"

"No, sir!" gasped Skimpole, staggering up. "I am not fighting. I was explaining to Merry that the theory of evolution is backed up, sir, by the remarkable resemblance that exists between him and his monkey——"

"What!"

"And Merry became suddenly excited, sir, for what reason I do not know."

Mr. Linton smiled.

"Go to your places, my boys," he said. "And you would do well, Skimpole, to pay more attention to class-work, and a little less to foolish theories."

"But evolution isn't a foolish theory, sir," said Skimpole, in surprise. "The greatest of modern scientists proclaim their descent from the monkey tribe, and, indeed, declare that their descent from monkeys is self-evident——"

"Go to your place, Skimpole!"

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

Mr. Linton picked a cane off his desk, and Skimpole went to his place without pointing out anything further.

CHAPTER 4.

Fur Cap!

TOM MERRY wore a somewhat worried look as afternoon lessons proceeded.

When Mr. Linton's attention happened to be elsewhere, the fellows whispered and giggled on the subject of Tom Merry minor. Gore drew a picture of an impossible monkey on a page of his exercise book, and labelled it "Tom Merry Minor," and passed it along the Form. The giggles that followed drew Mr. Linton's attention, and he promised to detain the whole class an hour if there were any more of it.

There was no more of it, after that, and the juniors settled down to work, leaving the chipping of Tom Merry till a more convenient time.

But afternoon lessons were not destined to finish without interruption. Mr. Linton was taking the Shell upon a personally-conducted tour among the antiquities of Rome, when there was a sudden sound of disturbance from the quadrangle.

Loud voices rang through the quiet afternoon.

"Get hout!" It was the well-known voice of Taggles, the porter. "Hout with you, you tramp! Houtside, I say!"

"I ain't going without my property!"

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A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale of The Chums of St. Jim's. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Tom Merry started.

The voice came clearly through the open windows of the Form-room, and he recognised the hoarse tones of Fur Cap.

"Phew!" said Manners softly. "He's come for his giddy monkey."

"Houtside!"

"Yah!"

Bump! There was the sound of a heavy fall, and then the voice of Taggles the porter rose in anguished tones.

"'Elp! Ow! 'Elp!"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. He strode to the Form-room window, and looked out. Some of the juniors ventured to leave their places and follow their Form-master.

Taggles was rolling on the ground, and Fur Cap, evidently very much under the influence of liquor, was sprawling over him and punching him.

The juniors waited to see no more.

Tom Merry made a rush for the door, and his chums rushed after him, and they dashed out of the house at top speed. Fur Cap had almost reached the house when Taggles had pursued him and run him down—with disastrous results for Taggles.

But the sudden rush of the juniors forced the ruffian to cease his thumping of the wriggling, yelling porter.

Hands were laid upon him on all sides, and he was dragged off his victim.

Taggles staggered up.

"Thanky kindly, young gentlemen," he gasped. "'Old him! He's a dangerous ruffian, he is. I'll set my mastiff loose in a minute. 'Old him!"

Taggles rushed away for his mastiff.

"We'll see him out, Taggy!" said Tom Merry. "Now then, you chaps, all together! Bring him down to the river!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hurray!"

Some of the prefects had come out of the School House at the sound of the disturbances. But they had no time to interfere. The Shell fellows rushed the ruffian towards the school gates. With so many hands upon him, Fur Cap had no chance to struggle. He could only writhe and gasp out threats.

"You lemme go—I wanf my monkey—I'll 'ave the law on yer! Ow, ow, ow!"

Right through the gateway he went.

Down the path to the river the juniors bore him, and along the towing-path to a spot where the water was shallow.

"'Elp!" shrieked Fur Cap. "Don't chuck me into that water! Ow! 'Elp!" It was clear that the gentleman in the fur cap had a horror of water in any shape or form.

"Ow! 'Elp! Perlice!"

"All together!" roared Tom Merry. "One, two, three

The wriggling ruffian swung to and fro in their arms.

"Go!"

Fur Cap whirled through the air.

Splash!

A mighty spurt of water rose where the ruffian descended into the river, and he disappeared under the surface.

He came up the next moment, gasping and spluttering.

The water was waist-deep, and the man was in no danger; but he looked a sorry sight. His fur cap was a limp rag on his head, and his stubby chin glistened with water-drops. The cold contact with the water had sobered him, but it had not diminished his rage. He came struggling and splashing out of the river, trampling up mud in the shallow water.

"We'll shove you in again if you come out here," said Tom Merry.

"'Old him!" roared the voice of Taggles. "I've got the mastiff 'ere!"

As the drenched ruffian scrambled out of the water, Taggles came running along the towing-path with a big and powerful mastiff at his heels.

"That's 'im!" yelled Taggles. "Seize 'im Cæsar! Seize 'im!"

Cæsar made a rush at Fur Cap.

The infuriated ruffian might have charged at the juniors; but he did not venture to stay to argue with the mastiff.

He gave a whoop of terror, and ran for his life down the towing-path; and Cæsar dashed after him in hot pursuit.

"Oh, my heye!" gasped Taggles. "I 'ope Cæsar will git him! Comin' shovin' his way into the school, talkin' about

monkeys, or somethink. I'll give him monkeys. If Cæsar gets 'old of him, it will stop his monkey tricks!"

Dog and man vanished down the towing-path

"I don't think he'll come back!" grinned Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha! No!"

And the juniors trooped back to the school. Ten minutes later, the mastiff came home, and trotted cheerfully into Taggles' lodge, with a huge fragment of check cloth in his mouth. Taggles chuckled gleefully as he saw it. It was evident that Cæsar had obtained a hold upon the fugitive, and Fur Cap had only escaped by leaving that considerable portion of his lower garments in the mastiff's jaws.

Tom Merry & Co. returned to the Form-room. They were a little apprehensive as to how Mr. Linton might regard their sudden outbreak; but the master of the Shell only told them to go to their places. It had been necessary for somebody to go to the rescue of Taggles, and the Shell fellows had been first in the field.

But Tom Merry was very thoughtful when classes were dismissed, and he came out of the Form-room with his chums.

"That rotter doesn't mean to let me keep Mike without a row," he remarked. "I'm afraid we haven't seen the last of him!"

"I don't think he'll face the mastiff again!" grinned Manners.

"I don't see why he can't part with Mike," said Tom. "Why can't he sell the monkey? He isn't fond of him, or anything of that sort; he treats him like a brute. Why can't he sell him at a fair price?"

"Obstinate beast, most likely!" said Manners.

"Well, he's not going to have Mike!" said Tom Merry determinedly.

"Suppose he goes to the Head?"

"Then we shall explain to the Head, and he'll get prosecuted by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals!" said Tom Merry triumphantly. "He knows that, and I don't think he was coming here to see the Head. I think he was tipsy, and he came here to steal the monkey!"

"Steal it! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, to collar it! I'm going to take care of it. The little beast is quite fond of me already—"

"Touching thing, family affection!" murmured Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry glared.

"If you're going to be funny—"

"My dear chap, I'm quite serious. It's a ripping thing to see a minor fond of his major—very rare in schools, too!"

"You silly ass—"

"Ha, ha, ha! I suppose you don't mind if we call you Merry major now?" yelled Monty Lowther.

And he fled, shrieking, as Tom Merry charged at him.

CHAPTER 5.

Washing Day!

LOWTHER and Manners went down to footer practice, leaving Tom Merry to look after his new pet. When they came in to tea, some time later, they found a crowd in the Shell passage. Outside the door of the study they shared with Tom Merry, the passage was crammed. The chums of the Shell surveyed the scene of commotion in surprise.

"What's up?" exclaimed Lowther. "Not a fire?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"If it's a rag, you—"

"It isn't a wag, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We're watchin' Tom Mewwy, that's all!"

"What are you watching Tom Merry for, ass?"

"I wufuse to be called an ass—"

"He's washing his monkey!" grinned Kangaroo of the Shell. "It's worth watthing. Come and look! Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners and Lowther pushed their way through the crowd of juniors, and stared in at the open doorway of the study.

Mom Merry was very busy.

The study table was pushed into a corner, and in its place stood a tin bath of steaming water, with several old newspapers spread under it to protect the carpet.

Tom Merry, in his shirt-sleeves, was kneeling beside the tin bath, very red in the face with his exertions, and very much splashed with water.

Mike the monkey did not seem to take kindly to water.

Probably he had never been washed before, and he may have looked upon it as some form of torture, or perhaps he shared his former master's horror of soap.

He was certainly getting plenty of soap. Tom Merry had put him into the bath, and was lathering soap upon him with a heavy hand. Mike squealed dismally under the infliction. He had almost disappeared under the lather, and looked like a white ghost of a monkey. The juniors in the passage were

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encouraging—or, rather, exasperating—Tom Merry with a continual flow of remarks.

"Go it, Merry major!"

"Keep your minor clean!"

"Are you going to shave him?"

"Wash and brush-up, twopence!"

"Put your beef into it, Merry major."

"Why don't you wash your minor like that, Gussy? He needs it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry turned a crimson face towards his tormentors.

"Will you shut up?" he roared.

"We're only watching the circus!" grinned Levison.

"This is as funny as the cinematograph, and cheaper!"

"Yaas wathah! I'm vewy pleased to see you bwingin' up your minah in the way he should go, Mewwy majah!"

"Give him some more soap!" chuckled Blake. "He hasn't had enough; you've only used about a couple of bars on him!"

"I say, you're making the study in a pretty muck!" said Lowther, in dismay.

Tom Merry snorted.

"Didn't you say the monkey wanted washing?" he demanded indignantly.

"Well, yes; but—"

"Then come and lend a hand, instead of grinning like a hyena! The little beast won't keep still. He doesn't seem to like being washed! He may have got some soap in his eye; he won't keep his silly head still!"

"Get Lowther to sit on his head, and Manners to hold his tail—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners and Lowther nobly went to their chum's aid. Mike was decidedly a handful. He was wriggling and splashing in the water, and scattering it in spurts over the carpet. His tail whisked about and thrashed the water, and sent it in drenching splashes over his unfortunate master.

"My knees are soaked through!" gasped Tom Merry. "He's drenched my blessed waistcoat! Why don't he keep still?"

"Cheeky young beggah!" said D'Arcy. "But it's the same with all these minahs—they won't do as their majahs tell them!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners and Lowther grasped the monkey. Manners caught his tail, and held it fast, and Lowther grasped the metal collar. Then Tom Merry swamped water on him, and washed off the soap. The water was getting decidedly discoloured, and Mike was getting proportionately cleaner. He was muttering and chattering at a great rate, and making wild efforts to get loose.

"Hold him!" ejaculated Lowther, as the collar was jerked out of his hand. "He's loose, the beast! Hang on to his tail, Manners!"

The monkey whirled round on Manners, and the Shell fellow let go the tail as the wet, hairy body bumped on him. The monkey made a spring to escape, and the Terrible Three all grasped at him together. Manners bumped on Lowther, and he reeled over the bath. He caught at Tom Merry to save himself, and brought him down—right in the bath!

Splash!

"Oh!"

"Groooh!"

Tom Merry and Lowther were head and shoulders in the bath. It rolled over as they struggled madly out, and the water swamped over the study floor, a wave of it catching Manners, and drenching him to the knees. There was a hysterical yell from the juniors in the passage. They were almost in convulsions.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Oh! Yah!"

"Groooh! I'm wet! Huh! Groooh!"

"Where's that blessed monkey?"

"Groooh! Blow the monkey! I'm soaked! Ow! My mouth is full of soap—groooh!—and hairs! Grugggggg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo. "Look after your minor, Tom Merry; he's trying to get out of the window!"

Tom Merry, with soap and water running down his face, made a bound to the window. Mike slithered up the curtains in a twinkling. They were pretty chintz curtains, a present from Tom Merry's old governess, Miss Priscilla Fawcett; but they were not pretty any longer when Mike had clambered over them. He tore great gashes in the chintz, and left a trail of soap and water and dirty claw-marks.

He sat on the curtain-pole at the top of the window, and chattered and grinned at terrific speed.

Tom Merry shook his fist at him.

"Come down, you beast! Come and be caught, you rotter! You silly asses, to let him get loose! Come down at once, Mike! Oh, crumbs!"

"Look at my bags!" roared Manners.

"Blow your silly bags! Come down, Mike!"

"Look at me!" yelled Lowther. "I'm soaked! I'm drenched! I'm dripping! I've got some soap in my eye! I've got soap in my mouth! I've got soap in my nose! Yow!"

"Blow your nose! Come down, Mike, old man!"

Chatter, chatter, chatter from Mike; but he declined to come down. Evidently he considered that the washing was a joke that had gone quite far enough.

"My hat! I'm beginning to understand why Fur Cap lathered the little beast!" panted Tom Merry. "Mike, old man, do come down! I won't wash you any more! Come down, you grinning little imp! Oh, crumbs! Somebody get me a pole or something!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mike, Mike—Micky! Come down, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry almost tore his hair. The monkey had obeyed the brutal, threatening voice of Fur Cap, but Tom Merry could not speak in the tones of that gentleman. And Mike was not inclined to obey Tom Merry. He had not yet learned obedience to his new master. The animal, too, was scared and worried by the unaccustomed washing, and by the soap that had found its way into his eyes and nose. He clung to the curtain-pole and chattered at Tom Merry. The top of the window was open, as usual, and Tom was in momentary fear that the ape would take it into its excited head to escape out of the room. A chase after Mike out of doors was likely to prove more exciting than pleasant.

The yells of laughter from the juniors in the passage only excited the monkey more. Tom Merry shouted to them to shut up, and they yelled the louder.

"He'll catch cold if you don't towel him!" yelled Reilly.

"Faith, and phwy don't ye put some salt on his tail, and catch him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Get Finn to lasso him for you."

"I guess I could do it," said Buck Finn, the American junior in the Shell. "I reckon I could rope him in in short order."

"I'll get on a chair," said Tom Merry. "Stand ready to catch him if he dodges. I can reach him on a chair."

He dragged a chair under the window and mounted on it. He reached out his hand for Mike, and caught one leg. Mike squealed and whisked out of the top of the window, and as Tom Merry clung to him, the chair reeled under his feet. Mike jerked himself loose and disappeared out of the top of the window, and Tom Merry made a wild effort to maintain his balance, and failed—and came down backwards. Fortunately, he threw out his arms and caught Manners and Lowther in time—fortunately for him, that is to say, but not so for Manners and Lowther. The Terrible Three bumped on the floor together, and a terrible roar rose from them.

"Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Do that again!" yelled Kangaroo.

"I reckon this beats buck-jumping!" roared Buck Finn.

The Terrible Three scrambled up. They grasped a cricket-stump, a chair, and a poker, severally, and charged at the yelling crowd in the passage. And the crowd of laughers stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

CHAPTER 6.

Roped In.

"WHAT on earth are you kids up to?" demanded Kildare, pausing as he came in from the football-field towards the School House.

There was a crowd of Shell fellows and Fourth-Formers outside the House, gathered round Buck Finn, the American junior. Buck Finn hailed from the Western States, and he had spent his boyhood among the cowboys on the great plains of Arizona. He had brought a peculiar training with him to St. Jim's—he was a wonderful rider, a dead shot with any kind of firearm, and uncannily expert with the lasso—or the riata, as he called it.

Some of the juniors had taken instruction from Finn in the difficult art of throwing the lasso, and some had become quite expert; but Finn was easily first. Just now, Finn had a noosed rope in his hand, and half a dozen of the juniors round him had clothes-lines and blind-cords, and other kinds of ropes, and were making nooses in them.

Kildare stared at them.

"It's all right, Kildare," said Blake reassuringly. "We're not going on the warpath against the New House this time—and we're not going to hunt the Sixth and catch 'em wild in their studies—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tom Merry's minor has escaped," explained Kangaroo. "We're going to help him catch him. There was a lot of trouble when Reilly had a monkey, and he escaped—he clawed old Ratty's top-knot—"

"Whose?" said Kildare severely.

"Mr. Ratcliff's, I mean. If Tom Merry's minor should get into the Head's study and claw the Head, there might be trouble."

"I think it's pretty certain there would be trouble," grinned Kildare. "You had better get that monkey caught as quickly as possible."

"We're going to. Merry major and Manners and Lowther are stalking him down now, but they can't catch him. Merry major can't climb like his minor, you see. So we're going to rope the little beast in."

Kildare grinned and went on up the steps of the School House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy whirled his lasso round his head, to make a trial cast, and there was a fiendish yell from Jack Blake, as the rope caught him across the face.

"Yaroh! You fathead—"

"I wish you would not get in the way of my lasso, Blake—"

"You—you—you—"

"I am goin' to lasso the stone urn at the end of the balustrade, deah boys. Pway stand cleah!"

Whiz!

The lasso flew. The rope uncurled, and the noose settled down—not on the stone urn which adorned the balustrade, but over the head and shoulders of Eric Kildare, who was just going into the House, a dozen yards from the object of D'Arcy's aim.

D'Arcy dragged excitedly on the lasso. The tautening of the rope proved that he had caught something, and he did not see for a moment what it was.

"Wippin', bai Jove! First twy—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let go, you ass!" roared Blake. "You've caught Kildare!"

"My hat!" gasped Kildare, as the rope dragged him down the steps. "You young villain! I—I—oh—leggo—Great Scott!"

He lost his footing on the steps, and came rolling down, and curled up in the rope. Arthur Augustus rushed forward in a state of consternation.

"Bai Jove! I'm awf'ly sowwy, deah boy! I didn't mean—"

Kildare sat up dazedly on the lowest step.

"You young sweep—"

"My deah chap, I'm feahfully sowwy! It was quite an accident. I—"

"Undo me!" roared Kildare.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Kildare was rolled up in the rope, and his arms were pinioned to his sides. Otherwise, his hands would have been busy upon D'Arcy already. The juniors stood by and yelled as the swell of St. Jim's unrolled the rope. They could guess what D'Arcy would get as soon as Kildare was loose.

"There you are, deah boy!" panted D'Arcy, at last.

"Pway allow me to wepeat that I am vevy sowwy, and say—yawooh! Gwooh! Gwooh! Yah! What are you doin', you frightful ass? Leggo my eah! I wefuse to have my eah pulled! Ow!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Gweat Scott! Yawooh! Dwaggimoff!" shrieked D'Arcy.

"There!" said Kildare breathlessly, as he finished by pitching D'Arcy into the quad. "Now let me catch you playing fool tricks with a lasso again, and I'll give you a real hiding."

And he went into the House.

Arthur Augustus sat on the ground.

"Bai Jove! I werged it as uttaly wotten of Kildare to be so watty about a simple accident—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any reason whatevah for wibald laughtah. I am considewably hurt. I am weally too exhausted to wise."

"Sit still," said Herries. "We'll practise on you with the lassoes."

"Good egg!"

"I wefuse to allow anythin' of the sort!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, jumping up very quickly, in spite of his exhaustion. "I werged you as wottahs!"

"Come on," said Kangaroo. "We've got to catch that giddy monkey before dark."

And the army of lassoes marched off to the assistance of the Terrible Three, who were stalking Mike in the quadrangle.

Mike had scuttled along the ivy on the School House, and reached a low wall, where he chattered and grinned at his pursuers. Tom Merry had rushed off for Taggles' ladder, and planted it against the wall. By the time he mounted it, however, Mike departed for fresh fields and pastures new. Along the wall he reached the gymnasium, and he climbed to the roof, and grinned defiance at the juniors. The ladder was not high enough to reach the roof of the gymnasium, but a shower of stones drove Mike squealing from his new quarters, and he escaped into a tree. In the branches of the elm he clung on and chattered afresh.

"Come down, Mike! Come here, Micky, old fellow!" implored Tom Merry.

Micky old fellow chattered at a terrific rate, but declined to come down.

"I'll climb the tree," said Tom Merry. "You chaps watch for him, and keep him from getting back to the gym, if he dodges me."

"Right-ho!" said Manners and Lowther.

Tom Merry clambered actively into the tree. Mike promptly ascended to the highest branches, and Tom followed him resolutely.

Mike clambered along a branch, which was not strong enough to bear the junior's weight, and squatted at the end of it, grinning. It really looked as if the mischievous little brute was enjoying the chase, and was determined to keep it up for the fun of the thing. Tom Merry sat astride of the branch where it joined the trunk, and coaxed Mike to come to him. But Mike turned a deaf ear to the voice of the charmer.

Just then the lassoes arrived on the scene.

"It's all wight, deah boy!" called out Arthur Augustus. "We're goin' to wope him in for you. It's all wight!"

"I reckon you'd better leave it to me!" said Buck Finn.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Bettah leave it to me, deah boy! I've pwactised a good deal with the lasso, you know, and I weally think I can manage it."

"Mike won't be so easy to rope in as Kildare!" grinned Blake.

"Accidents will happen, deah boy. Stand cleah!"

"You bet!" grinned Buck Finn. "I reckon I'm going to stand jolly clear while you handle the riata."

The juniors crowded back as D'Arcy swung the coiled rope round his head.

"You watch me, deah boys," said D'Arcy. "This sort of thing is quite easy when you know how to do it. All you've got to do is to get the noose to settle ovah the object you are twyin' to lasso, then you dwag on the wope and it tightens up, and the animal is a pwisah. Quite simple."

"Oh, buck up," growled Monty Lowther.

"Pway don't huwvy me, deah boy. This kind of thing is quite simple to a chap that knows how to do it, but it requires tact and judgment."

Whiz!

The lasso flew, and the rope uncoiled, and the noose settled over Tom Merry's neck.

Arthur Augustus dragged excitedly at the rope.

"Got him! Help me dwag him in, deah boys—"

"Ow! Help! Murder! Help!"

Tom Merry clung desperately to the branch. The juniors rushed at D'Arcy and forced him to slacken his efforts, or it really looked as if he would have succeeded in dragging Tom Merry's head off.

"You dangerous ass!" spluttered Blake. "Are you trying to hang Tom Merry?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, putting up his eyeglass, and surveying the unfortunate captain of the Shell in great surprise. "Tom Merry has got his head into the lasso! What have you done that for, Tom Mewwy?"

"I—I'll show you in a minute," panted Tom Merry.

"I was twyin' to lasso your minah, not you, Mewwy majah. I must say it was wathah clumsy of you to get your silly head into the wope."

"Hold him till I get down," said Tom Merry, sulphurously. "Weally, deah boy—"

Tom Merry succeeded in getting his head out of the lasso. Then he slid down the trunk of the elm. He had forgotten the monkey for the moment. The pressing need he felt just then was to get to close quarters with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

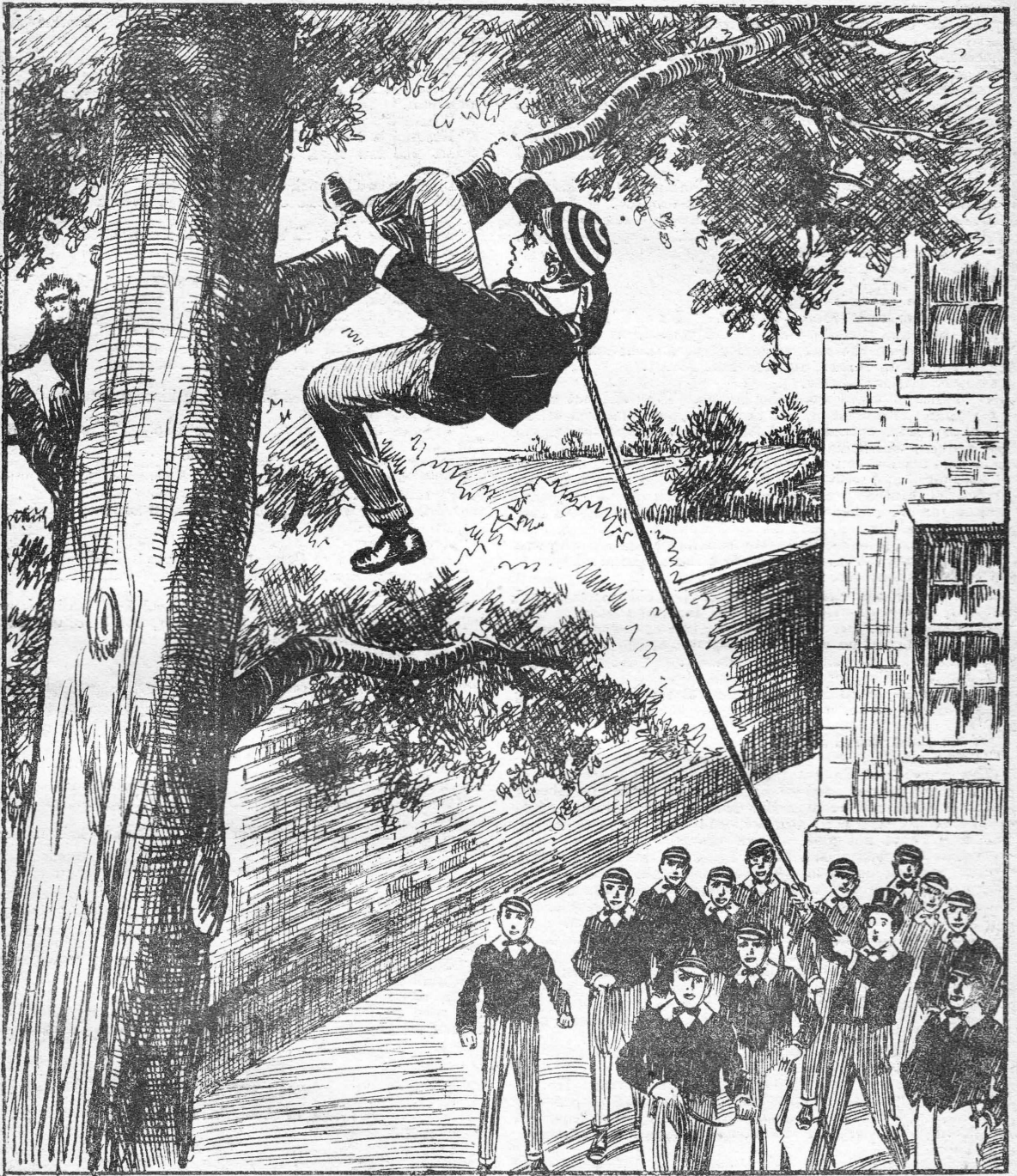
"Sowwy, deah boy," said D'Arcy, as the Shell fellow clambered down. "I'll twy again, and if you don't put your clumsy head in the way, pewwaps I shall get your minah this time. I say—look here—bai Jove—ow!"

Tom Merry grasped the lasso and coiled it into a bunch, and started on Arthur Augustus, using it not as a lasso, but something in the manner of a blacksmith's hammer. The swell of St. Jim's roared and dodged.

"You uttah ass! Stoppit! Chuckit! Yah! Leave off! Dwag him away, deah boys! He's spoiling my jacket—yah! Bai Jove—ow! ow!"

Whack! whack! whack!

"Bai Jove! He's dotty!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, hopping about frantically in his wild efforts to avoid the slashes of the coiled rope. "Dwaggimoff! Gweat Scott!" And the swell of St. Jim's fairly ran. After him went Tom



Whiz! The lasso flew, and the rope uncoiled, and the noose settled over Tom Merry's neck. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy dragged excitedly at the rope. "Got him!" he exclaimed. "Help!" roared Tom Merry, clinging desperately to the branch. (See chapter 6.)

Merry, still slashing away with the coiled rope, and the swell of St. Jim's ran and roared, and roared and ran, while the juniors under the elm tree rocked with laughter.

CHAPTER 7.

Lynch Law.

TOM MERRY came back panting. He found the juniors in convulsions.

Mike, in the meantime, had dropped from the branch and scuttled away, and had vanished from sight. Tom Merry was looking very red, and a little cross.

"Where's that blessed monkey?" he demanded, staring up into the tree.

"He's gone, I think!" sobbed Blake. "Ha, ha, ha! Oh, these minors!"

"Where's Gussy?" asked Figgins, who had joined in the hunt, with a crowd of New House fellows, all eager for the fun.

"He's locked himself in his study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to cackle at. Where's that blessed monkey? He's got to be caught."

The search for the elusive Mike recommenced. He was

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NEXT WEDNESDAY—**"A DISGRACE TO THE SCHOOL!"**

spotted on the school wall, and half a dozen lassoes were launched at him, and got considerably mixed with one another. Mike grinned and scuttled along the wall, and reached the roof of Taggles' lodge. The juniors gathered round the lodge, and some of them climbed on the wall to cut off Mike's escape that way. Taggles came out with a frowning brow.

"Wot's all this 'ere?" he demanded.

"Tom Merry's minor is on your roof!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"I won't have you young raskils climbing on my lodge," declared Taggles. "I'll report yer. I'll—oh, lor!"

The monkey, from the roof of the lodge, had reached down, and clawed Taggles' hat from his head. Taggles jumped, as his ancient tile vanished.

"Who's grabbed my 'at?" he roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's Tom Merry's minor!"

"I'll report 'im!" roared Taggles. "I won't 'ave it! I'll report—oh, lor, it's a monkey!" he gasped, as he caught sight of Mike on the roof, clutching the ancient hat.

"Come down, Mike!" shouted Tom Merry.

Chatter, chatter, chatter!

Whiz! whiz! whiz! went the lassoes. They did not settle over Mike's elusive head, but they whacked upon him on all sides, and Mike squealed and fled. The hat came rolling to the ground, and Mike took refuge on the chimney-pot. He soon found that coign of vantage a little too warm, however, and squealed and scuttled off it. He slithered away from the lodge and clambered on the old stone arch of the gateway. As the juniors rushed to pursue him there, he dropped into the road, and hopped away across it towards the hedge.

There was a sudden shout from a man in a fur cap who was slouching along the lane. He made a run at the monkey.

"Mike! Come 'ere!"

Mike heard the dreaded voice of his old master, and stopped, shivering. The man in the fur cap sprang at him and grasped him, and then turned a glare of defiance on the crowd of juniors who were streaming out of the gateway.

"Got 'im!" he yelled, triumphantly. "Now, you git 'im if you can!"

And Fur Cap dashed down the lane at top speed, clutching the trembling Mike.

"The rotter!"

"He's stolen the monkey!"

"After him!"

The juniors ran in hot pursuit.

But Fur Cap was running hard; he did not mean to part with his prize, after recapturing him so unexpectedly. Tom Merry & Co. ran their hardest, and kept pace with him, but they could not gain. Down the lane they went at a rush, Fur Cap well ahead, and heading for the village. Tom Merry gritted his teeth. Once within the walls of the Green Man, Fur Cap would be safe from pursuit, and the monkey would be lost for ever. And then the cruelty of the ruffian would have free play upon his helpless victim.

"Hold on," muttered Buck Finn. "I reckon I can do it. Stand clear."

The American junior lifted his hand with the lasso in it.

Whiz!

The long rope flew and uncoiled in the air.

Down came the noose, settling with deadly exactness over the head of the running man.

Buck gave a yell of triumph.

"Roped in, by thunder!"

Fur Cap gave a yell, too—of surprise and terror. He did not know what had caught him. But he was caught—the tautening of the rope dragged him suddenly backwards, and he bumped heavily upon the hard, unsympathetic ground.

"Yow! Ow!"

The rush of the juniors overwhelmed him before he could struggle to his feet. Mike had fallen from his grasp as he sprawled, and the monkey flew at once to Tom Merry's shoulder, as if to his natural protector. And Tom Merry took a firm grip upon his collar. He did not mean to give Mike a chance of getting away again.

Fur Cap sat up and swore. He had a fine flow of language, and the language he used was lurid enough to turn the atmosphere purple. Buck Finn put a sudden stop to it with a jerk of the lasso, which laid the ruffian sprawling in the road again.

"Shut up, you beast!" exclaimed Blake, in disgust.

"I'll out yer! I'll—" Fur Cap recommenced.

"Yank him along!"

"Hurray!"

A crowd of juniors grasped the rope, and Fur Cap was dragged along in the dust. He struggled wildly, but the roose was tight now, and he could not possibly release himself. He went rolling and tumbling along the road at the end of the rope.

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"Lemme go!" he roared. "Ow! yow! Lemme go! Perlice! 'Elp!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The language Fur Cap used was simply dreadful.

"I reckon I'll stop that," chuckled Buck Finn. "We'll lynch him."

"Wha-at!"

"Hanging's too good for him," said Manners, "and it's against the law here, Finny, whatever it may be out in Arizona."

"I reckon we'll lynch him all the same."

Buck Finn threw the end of the rope over a branch that overhung the road.

"Now, hang on it, all together," he commanded.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!"

As the noose was tight round the ruffian's body, and not round his neck, there was no danger to him in lynching him, as Finn suggested. The juniors piled their weight on the rope, and Fur Cap was dragged struggling into the air.

He swung to and fro six feet from the ground, spinning round at the end of the rope, struggling wildly and spluttering.

The juniors surrounded him, giving him an occasional push to keep him in motion.

"Lemme down!" spluttered Fur Cap. "Ow, ow, ow! I'm 'urt! Ow! Perlice!"

"Serve you right, you scoundrel!" said Tom Merry.

"You won't be let down till you've promised to be a good boy," said Jack Blake, giving the ruffian a playful dig in the ribs. "Are you sorry for using those naughty words?"

"I'll—I'll—"

"Are you sorry?"

"No!" roared Fur Cap. "I'll out yer! I'll—"

"Fasten the rope, and leave him there," said Blake.

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say, you let me down!" exclaimed Fur Cap in alarm.

"I can't 'ang 'ere. I say, young gents, don't be 'ard on a cove. Lemme down!"

"Are you sorry?" said Blake sternly.

"No—yes. Yes!"

"Are you awfully sorry?"

"Yes!" shrieked Fur Cap.

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"Will you promise to be a good boy?"

"Ow! Yes!" gasped Fur Cap, with a murderous glare, which did not say much for the sincerity of his promise.

"And you'll promise not to try to steal the monkey again?"

"Steal 'im!" spluttered Fur Cap. "Why, he's mine—he—"

"Will you promise not to steal him?"

"Ow! Yes!"

"Then you can come down!"

The rope was released suddenly. Fur Cap bumped into the road and roared. Buck Finn loosened the lasso, and detached it.

"Now you can vamoose the ranch," said Buck Finn. "If you ain't lighted out in one second, you go into the ditch."

The one second was enough for Fur Cap. He went down the road at frantic speed. And the grinning juniors returned to the school, Mike safe upon Tom Merry's shoulder.

CHAPTER 8.

A Case of Attempted Burglary.

"G R-R-R-R-R!"

"Bow-wow-wow!"

Tom Merry sat up in bed in the Shell dormitory in the School House.

It was past midnight, and St. Jim's was fast asleep. But the silence of the night was broken by the voices of the dogs, and Tom Merry, as he sat up and rubbed his drowsy eyes, distinguished the deep, fierce growling of Herries' bulldog, and the loud, sharp barking of Pongo.

The shed where the pets were kept was at some distance from the School House; but in the silence of the night the sounds were quite audible—too audible, in fact. They had awakened Tom Merry; and a yawn from Monty Lowther's bed showed that he was awake, too.

"Blessed row those beasts are making to-night!" growled Lowther.

"It's queer," said Tom Merry. "Towser is generally quite quiet, and Pongo has been taught not to bark at night."

"Your blessed minor worrying them, perhaps. He stole a bone from Pongo this evening. He is at his tricks again." Bow-wow-wow-wow-wow!

"It may be Mike, but he's chained in his box," said Tom Merry. "He couldn't get near the dogs, Monty."

"Perhaps they don't like his niff," grunted Lowther. "Mike wants a lot more washing before he'll be very pleasant at close-quarters."

"I wonder—"
"Hallo, where are you going?" demanded Monty Lowther, as he heard Tom Merry slipping out of bed.

"I'm going to see what's the matter."
"Oh, rot! You'll get into a row if you're found out of the door, and somebody else may come down to see what the dogs are making that row for."

"I'll risk it. It might be Fur Cap again. He's quite rascal enough to try to burgle my monkey."

Lowther chuckled.
"Your monkey!" he murmured.
"Yes, my monkey," said Tom Merry firmly. "I don't suppose Fur Cap came by him honestly, in the first place. If he could prove his claim to him, why doesn't he apply to the police? There's plenty of law in this country, if he wants it. I think very likely he's sneaked in to steal my monkey. I'm going to see."

"Hold on a minute. I'll come with you. If that ruffian's there, you don't want to tackle him alone. I'll call Manners."

"I'm awake, ass!" came Manners' voice. "Do you think I can sleep with dogs barking in one ear, and silly asses jawing in the other?"

And Manners turned out of bed.
From the distance, the growling and the barking came almost without interruption.

The Terrible Three dressed themselves hurriedly. Several other fellows in the dormitory had awakened, and probably in the other dormitories, too. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther stole out into the passage on tiptoe, and descended the stairs. The house was very silent. If anyone else had been awakened by the barking, he had not yet turned out to investigate the cause of it. The three juniors reached the lower hall, and Tom Merry undid the fastenings of the window.

"Hold on a minute," murmured Lowther. "If we're going burglar-hunting, we'd better take something with us."

"There's Railton's stick in the stand," whispered Manners.
"And Lathom's gamp."

The juniors chuckled, and despoiled the hall-stand. Tom Merry took Mr. Railton's heavy stick, Manners the Fourth Form-master's umbrella, and Lowther the beautiful, gold-headed cane belonging to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. Thus armed, the juniors dropped into the quadrangle, and hurried round the house.

The Terrible Three came in sight of the shed, wrapped in darkness, and looming up dimly. The door was open, and in the doorway they caught a glimpse of a slinking form. A low, hoarse voice came to their ears:

"Good dog! Good doggie! Oh, you blighted beast, I wish I could get a lick at you with this 'ere cudgel, I'd stop your yowling! Good doggie!"

The juniors recognised the voice.
"Fur Cap!" murmured Lowther.

"We'll capture him," whispered Manners. "He ought to be put in prison—attempted burglary, you know."

"Attempted kidnapping, you mean!" grinned Lowther. "It's kidnapping to take away Tom Merry's minor."

"Shurrup, ass!"
"But, I say, you can't charge a chap with burglary for trying to take his own monkey," Lowther whispered.

"Better give him a hiding."
"Good!" said Tom Merry.

The juniors advanced.
Fur Cap was apparently in a difficulty. He could not get into the shed, of which he had succeeded in picking the padlock, without passing the bulldog. Towser was on a long chain, which enabled him to guard the entrance. Pongo was chained out of reach, and he could not get at the intruder, and was apparently barking away merely for the fun of the thing. Fur Cap might have dodged past the growling bulldog into the shed, but then his difficulties would have been greater. He would have been within reach of Pongo, and would have had to dodge past the bulldog again to get out. Towser was not likely to let him pass unscathed twice, if even once.

Fur Cap was relieving his feelings by cursing under his breath; but, excepting as a relief for the feelings, his strong words did not get him any "farrarder."

"Now!" whispered Tom Merry.
The juniors made a sudden rush.

Fur Cap gave a sharp yelp of surprise, and was dragged back heavily to the ground. His cudgel was yanked out of his hand before he had a chance to use it.

Monty Lowther caught it, and sent it whirling over the nearest wall with a swing of his arm.

"Here we are again!" he said cheerfully.

Fur Cap ground his teeth.
He was on the ground on his back, and Tom Merry's knee was planted on his chest, and he wriggled and struggled in vain.

"Now, what are you doing here?" said Tom sternly.
"Ang yer, I'm after my monkey!"

"You are a burglar!"
"I ain't a burglar! I defy yer to charge me with burglary!" howled Fur Cap. "I'm 'ere arter my monkey, wot is my property!"

"Now, look here," said Tom Merry, "I'll repeat my offer of giving you a quid for the monkey. Otherwise, you'll get a hiding for coming here. Take your choice."

"I ain't selling that monkey. It's wallyble."
"You've got Gussy's cane, Monty?"

"Here it is!"
"Lather him!"
"You bet!"

Tom Merry and Manners rolled the ruffian over, and Monty Lowther started operations with D'Arcy's cane. Fur Cap gave a fiendish yell.

"Ow, ow, ow!"
Lash, lash, lash!
"Leave off!" said Fur Cap sulphurously. "I'll go quiet. Leave off!"

He wriggled under the lashes of the cane, and yelled in a curious, suppressed way. The juniors understood his motive. He did not want to awaken the house. Although he might not fear a charge of attempting to steal the monkey, he probably had a good many reasons for not wanting to be handed over to the police. There were probably other matters that might be raked up most unpleasantly for him, if the strong arm of the law once enfolded him. Tom Merry felt pretty certain of it, for if the man had had a clean record, he would probably have applied to the Head of St. Jim's for his monkey to be restored, and risked a prosecution for cruelty to animals. It was not likely that so utter a brute had a clean record. Cruelty and crime go hand in hand.

"Chuck it a minute, Monty!" said Tom.
"Why?" said Lowther. "I'm just getting into a regular swing. This is as good as Indian clubs, as an exercise."

"Hold on a minute," chuckled Tom Merry. "Look here, Fur Cap—I don't know your name, but that will do. Look here. I believe you are a dishonest scoundrel, as well as a brute, and very likely you stole that monkey in the first place. I shall keep him, unless a decent owner turns up. But I'm willing to buy him of you, and I'll give you a quid."

"Ang you! I ain't sellin' 'im!"
"Then you'll be handed over to the police. Get a rope, you chaps, and we'll tie him up, and ask Mr. Railton to telephone to the police-station."

"Ere, you 'old on!" muttered Fur Cap, in alarm. "I've said I'll go away quiet."

"Will you sell the monkey?"
Fur Cap hesitated. It was evident that he would have sold whole forests full of monkeys rather than make any closer acquaintance with the police. A cunning gleam shot into his little ferrety eyes.

"You'll let me go if I do?" he asked.
"Yes."

"Then 'and over the quid, and he's yours!"
"Hold on, Tom!" muttered Manners, as the captain of the Shell fumbled in his pocket. "The villain means to take the money, and steal him afterwards."

Tom Merry laughed.
"I know he does. But I'm going to pay for the monkey so as to have the right to keep him. You fellows are witnesses that I've bought him."

"Good egg!"
Tom Merry made up the pound with half-a-sovereign of his own, and a loan of five shillings each from his chums. Fur Cap took the money and slipped it into his pocket. He was allowed to rise to his feet.

"Now we'll see you off the premises," said Tom Merry. "The monkey's mine, and if you try to touch him again, I'll give you in charge."

"You wait!" muttered Fur Cap.
The juniors marched him to the school wall, and he clambered over it and dropped into the road. Lowther yawned portentously.

"Bed now—hey?" he said.
"Wait a bit. I've got to get Mike."

"What on earth for?"
"That rotter will come back in an hour or two and try again," said Tom Merry. "Towser may not keep him out next time. The monkey isn't safe there."

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"But what are you going to do with him?"

"Take him into the dorm."

"Oh, crumbs!"

Tom Merry fetched Mike from the shed, and came back with the monkey on his shoulder. The Terrible Three returned into the house, Tom Merry carefully fastening the window after them. They made their way back to the Shell dormitory quietly.

"Found anything?" yawned Kangaroo as they came in.

"Yes. That rotter was trying to get my monkey."

"Your monkey?" chuckled the Cornstalk.

"My monkey now. I've bought him and paid for him. We gave Fur Cap a quid and a hiding."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chatter, chatter, chatter, from Mike.

"Phew! Have you got the little beast there?" exclaimed Kangaroo, sitting up in bed and blinking through the darkness.

"Yes; he's safe here."

"Pets ain't allowed in the house," grinned Kangaroo. "He won't be so safe when the prefects find him in the morning!"

"Well, Glyn's allowed to keep a silly parrot in his study, so I don't see why I shouldn't have a monkey in mine. I shall ask the Head."

"He can't refuse to let you have your own minor in your study," came Gore's voice.

"Oh, rats!"

And Tom Merry chained Mike to the leg of his bedstead, and turned in.

CHAPTER 9.

Making Himself at Home.

MIKE was sleeping quite comfortably the next morning when the rising-bell clanged out and roused the juniors. Tom Merry sat up in bed and regarded the monkey. Whether Fur Cap had returned to the shed or not the previous night, the monkey was quite safe. And Mike had made himself very comfortable during the night. He had scouted round to the length of his chain on all sides, and collected up the clothes of the Shell fellows from all the chairs within reach. With the trousers, jackets, waistcoats, and other articles crumpled up in a heap under him, Mike was sleeping the sleep of the just.

"Oh, my hat!" Tom Merry ejaculated.

"Hallo! Where are my bags?" exclaimed Lowther.

"And mine?" howled Manners.

"My clobber's vanished!" roared Gore. "What silly ass has been playing silly tricks with my clobber?"

"I'm afraid it's Mike," said Tom Merry ruefully. "He's got mine, too. They're not damaged—only a bit crumpled."

"Only a bit crumpled!" yelled Gore, as he dragged his clothes away from under Mike, sending the monkey sprawling and squealing. "Look at this! My jacket's covered with hairs, and my bags—look at them!"

"Sorry!"

"Sorry! I'll make your minor sorry!" howled Gore, picking up a boot and hurling it at the offender.

Tom Merry struck up his arm just in time, and the boot whirled away in another direction. It was said that every bullet has its billet, and certainly that boot found one. A loud yell from Kangaroo announced where the boot had fallen. The Cornstalk jumped out of bed, holding his head with both hands.

"Ow! Yow! Who chucked that boot at me?" he roared.

"Sorry!" gasped Gore. "I meant it for the other monkey. I mean—"

"Chucking it at a monkey, were you?" demanded Kangaroo, grasping the boot.

"Yes. You see—"

"Then I'll do the same!"

Whiz! Gore caught the boot on his chin, and sat down on the floor of the dormitory. He jumped up in a fury and ran at Kangaroo, and they grasped one another and pommelled furiously.

"Lot of excitement over nothing," remarked Tom Merry.

"Mike, old man, you shouldn't do that. Gerroff my clothes."

Kangaroo and Gore separated, both of them looking somewhat damaged. Gore made a rush towards the monkey, but Tom Merry interposed.

"Hands off!" he said quietly.

"He's mucked up my clothes!" yelled Gore.

"Well, he didn't know any better. I'm going to teach him to behave himself. Now, let him alone, Gore, or there will be a row."

Gore thought better of it. Mike was chattering away at a great rate, and at Gore's threatening aspect, he jumped to THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 296.

Tom Merry's shoulder, a place he had evidently learned was the safest of places for him. Gore turned away, growling.

"Get down, Mike, you beast!" said Tom Merry. "Leggo my hair!"

He sat the monkey on the bed, and dressed himself. His clothes were so crumpled and hairy that he took fresh garments from his box to dress in. His everyday Etons required a good deal of brushing. Mike sat on his bed, and regarded him with his curiously intelligent eyes as he dressed.

"Hallo, look at that blessed monk!" yelled Lowther, all of a sudden.

All eyes were turned upon Mike, and there was a roar of laughter. Imitation is the strongest characteristic in a monkey, and Mike was evidently no exception to the rule. He had taken Tom Merry's discarded trousers, and was pulling them on as he had seen Tom Merry do. They were too long for him, and they trailed on the floor under him, as he stood in them. But Mike was easily satisfied. He was putting on the waistcoat now, which met twice round him easily.

Tom Merry laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks. The aspect of the monkey was irresistibly comic. And Mike was not finished yet. Monty Lowther, who always wore his trousers turned up—being a little bit of a nut—was performing that necessary operation, and Mike spotted it, and copied him immediately. He rolled up the trousers round his legs in ludicrous imitation of Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mike, you bounder, let those things alone," gasped Tom Merry, and he yanked the clothes off the monkey; and threw them into his box.

When the juniors were ready to go down, Mike jumped on Tom Merry's shoulder as he made for the door. He refused to budge, in spite of Tom's persuasions.

"He wants to go down with you," chuckled Manners. "Touching thing—family affection."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't shove your minor like that, Tom Merry!" shouted Bernard Glyn. "Don't you bully your minor, Merry major!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I suppose he's got to come down with me," said Tom Merry. "My hat! I'm beginning to think that Mike will be more trouble than he's worth. He can't come into the Form-room, anyway."

The juniors shrieked at the idea. They could imagine Mr. Linton's face at the introduction of a monkey into the solemn precincts of the Shell Form-room.

Tom Merry went downstairs with the monkey on his shoulder. There was a general yell from the fellows who saw him.

"Here they come—major and minor!"

"So that's your minor, Tom Merry?" grinned Kildare.

"That's my monkey," said Tom Merry.

"You mustn't have him in the house, you know."

"Don't turn Merry minor out of doors, Kildare," implored a dozen voices. "His major will miss him."

"Shut up!" roared Tom Merry. "I say, Kildare, there's a rotter who's been trying to steal my monkey, and I'm going to ask Mr. Railton to let me keep him in the study. He's a jolly nice monkey, you know, and won't give any trouble."

"Well, you can ask Mr. Railton," said Kildare, laughing.

Tom Merry went at once to the Housemaster's study. Mr. Railton was not there, but Tom Merry found him in the quadrangle. Taggles had drawn his attention to the fact that the padlock on the shed had been broken.

"May I speak to you a minute, sir?" said Tom Merry.

"Certainly!" said the School Housemaster, with a curious glance at the monkey.

Tom Merry plunged into the subject at once. He did not conceal anything, but related how he had come into possession of Mike, and what had followed. Mr. Railton's face was very grave as he listened.

"I had to keep him, sir," urged Tom. "That ruffian was half-killing him, and he said he was going to do worse if he got him away."

"H'm!" said Mr. Railton. "I'm afraid it was a somewhat serious step to take the monkey from his owner, Merry. However, you say that the man has accepted a sovereign for the animal now, and sold him to you."

"Yes, sir, Manners and Lowther were witnesses of the transaction."

"Then he no longer has any claim, certainly. If he sold the monkey under pressure—" Mr. Railton coughed. "In that case, he must return the sovereign if he claims the monkey. Unless he applies to the Head, and returns the

money you paid him, Merry, he can have no claim to the animal, and you are entitled to keep him."

"Thank you, sir. But—but I'm afraid the brute will try to—ahem!—steal him. May I keep him in my study, sir. I keep him chained, and he can't do any harm. And he's thoroughly good-tempered, and—and—and a ripping little beast, sir."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"You may keep him in your study for the present, Merry, so long as you take proper care of him there, and do not allow him to become a nuisance."

"I'll take jolly good care of that, sir!"

"Very well, then."

And Tom Merry marched Mike triumphantly into his study in the Shell passage. When the juniors went in to lessons, Mike was left chained in the study. Immediately morning lessons were over, the Terrible Three hurried upstairs to see how Mike was getting on in his new quarters. The length of the chain—which had been shortened—allowed him the run of half the study.

Mike had made the best use of it.

He was sitting on the floor in the midst of a mass of torn papers and books. Mike was evidently not an idle monkey. Whatsoever his hands had found to do, that he had done, and with all his heart. He had gathered up a cushion, the hearthrug, and a portion of the study carpet, and ripped them to pieces, and added to the ruin all the books and impot-paper he could collect. He was busy upon Lowther's Latin dictionary when the chums of the Shell looked in.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"That's my dic.!" yelled Lowther.

"And my 'Manual of Photography'!" shrieked Manners.

"And my 'History of Rome'!" groaned Tom Merry.

"And the cushion—"

"And the carpet—"

Manners seized a cricket-stump, and Lowther the poker. Tom Merry ran between them and the cheerful and innocent Mike.

"Hold on, you chaps!"

"I'm going to slaughter him!" roared Lowther.

"Hold on! He doesn't know any better, you know. Perhaps I had better whack him a bit," said Tom Merry ruefully. "He must learn, I suppose. Poor old Mike!"

"Better drown him!" said Manners crossly. "Look at my Photography Manual!"

"Look at my Latin dic.!"

"Well, it won't happen again," said Tom Merry soothingly. "I'll teach him manners."

Tom Merry held the monkey's head close to the torn heap, and gave him a mild cuff. Mike squealed dismally, and cowered at his master's feet and cringed. Tom Merry's heart smote him.

"Dash it all, I can't whack him!" he said. "Look here, he'll learn to leave the things alone in time!"

"And how much is it going to cost us in Latin dictionaries until he learns?" demanded Monty Lowther.

"You can have mine."

"Yours, you ass! There's yours, in bits!"

"Well, it can't be helped. If he does it again, I'll give him another hiding."

"Another hiding!" snorted Lowther. "Do you call that a hiding, fathead? You hardly flicked him!"

"It's hurt his feelings, poor old chap."

"Oh, blow his feelings!" said Lowther crossly. "If he tears up any more of my things, he'll get it in his neck, instead of his feelings."

Mike whimpered, and Tom Merry, instead of the hiding the monkey undoubtedly deserved, found himself soothing the little beast instead. But Mike was very intelligent, and he was very much attached to Tom Merry. Manners and Lowther had to admit that a look of displeasure had more effect upon Mike, when it came from Tom Merry, than any number of whackings would have had. Mike had learned that lesson already, and he did not seek to tear up anything more in the study. When Tom Merry let him off the chain, Mike curled up in the chair and went to sleep.

CHAPTER 10.

Mike Turns Up for Lessons.

FUR CAP had apparently resigned himself to the loss of the monkey. Tom Merry heard nothing from him during the next few days, and he began to think that he was done with the ruffian. The man was still hanging about Rylcombe, as some of the juniors had seen him, engaged in the laborious duty of supporting the corner of the Green Man with his shoulders. But he did not come near St. Jim's.

Meanwhile, Mike was getting on famously.

He had learned not to tear up things, and to leave people's hats on their heads. He regarded Tom Merry's study as his natural home, and he had made a comfortable abiding-place on top of the bookcase. In looking after him, teaching him, and keeping him clean, Tom Merry had a good amount of occupation for his spare time. But Mike was quick to learn, and after a time he would allow himself to be washed and brushed without raising objections. Tom Merry ventured at last to leave him off the chain. It seemed hard on Mike to be chained up all the time that Tom Merry could not spend with him, and he had grown so well-behaved that Tom thought he could trust him.

"We shall find the study a giddy wreck when we come back," Manners prophesied, the first day Mike was left at complete liberty.

Tom Merry shook his head.

"He'll be all right," he asserted. "I never saw an animal learn so quickly."

"Majors don't often take so much trouble over their minors," Lowther agreed.

"Ass!"

Tom Merry closed the study door when he went down. It did not occur to him that Mike, intelligent as he was, knew how to turn the handle of a door. The juniors went into the Form-room for afternoon lessons, and Tom speedily forgot all about Mike, in the deep interest of Julius Cæsar and the Gaelic war.

Mr. Linton was a little cross that afternoon. Gore had been worrying him with false quantities, and if there was anything that Mr. Linton could not stand, it was a false quantity.

So Tom Merry was very much on the alert when the Form-master turned a gleaming eye upon him.

But just then there came a rattle at the handle of the door.

Mr. Linton turned round irritably.

"Come in!" he called out.

The door-handle rattled again, but the door did not open. The juniors glanced in that direction in surprise. If anybody had business in the Form-room, he might have been expected to knock and come in.

Mr. Linton frowned darkly. The idea of anybody venturing to bother him during lessons by rattling the handle of the Form-room door was more than enough to rouse his ire. He strode to his desk and picked up a cane.

"Come in!" he repeated angrily.

The door-handle rattled once more.

"Who on earth is it?" muttered Kangaroo. "Some silly ass is going to get it in the neck. Look at Linton's chivvy."

The Shell-master's brow was like a thundercloud.

He strode towards the door, grasping the cane.

But before he could reach it the door opened.

A peculiar figure entered.

It looked like a junior, only it was too small to be a human being at all. It was clad in trousers very much turned up, and an Eton jacket that nearly reached the floor behind. Round its neck was a collar at least five or six times too large, and on its head was a silk hat, pushed well back, so as not to engulf the head that was very much too small for it.

Mr. Linton gazed at the apparition speechlessly. From the Shell came a hysterical giggle.

"Mike!"

"Tom Merry minor!"

"Oh, my hat!"

It was Mike. He had taken advantage of his new-found liberty to carry out an idea that had probably been working a long time in his active brain.

The monkey advanced gravely into the Form-room.

Mr. Linton staggered back, the cane dropping from his hand. It was the first time he had seen Mike—and it was a surprising meeting.

"G-g-goodness gracious!" gasped the Form-master.

From the juniors came a wild yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mike!" gasped Tom Merry. "Get out! Oh, dear!"

Mike grinned cheerfully, and hopped along to Tom Merry's desk, Monty Lowther gurgled and made room for him, and Mike calmly seated himself on the form beside his master. Tom Merry had a book in his hand, and Mike promptly picked up a book, and held it open, as Tom Merry was doing. He held it upside down, but that did not matter to Mike. Even Mike, intelligent as he was, could not read Latin, so it did not matter.

Mr. Linton seemed to come out of a dream.

"What—what—what is that?" he spluttered.

"It's Tom Merry's minor, sir," came a half-dozen replies at once.

"What!"

CHAPTER 11.

A Mysterious Disappearance.

"It's my monkey, sir," stammered Tom Merry.
 "Your—your monkey!"
 "Yes, sir. I—I didn't know he would come here. Shall I take him away, sir?" murmured Tom Merry.
 Mr. Linton gazed at the monkey. Mike's silk hat had fallen off—it was very much too large for him. The sight of the monkey, in baggy Etons, sitting on the form with the book in his hand, was too much, even, for the grave and severe master of the Shell. He tried to frown, but he could not, and his severe face gradually relaxed, and he smiled—and the smile became a laugh.

"Dear me!" ejaculated Mr. Linton. "This is—is too absurd! What an extraordinary creature. Surely you did not dress him like that Merry!"

"No sir. He watched me dressing the other day, and he's learned to do it by himself. He must have got the clothes out of my box in the dorm." said Tom Merry ruefully.

"Dear me! You had better take him away, Merry."
 But Mike, in spite of his training, had not wholly learned the lesson of obedience, apparently. He clung to the desk, and declined to budge, and when Tom Merry jerked him off, he skipped away, and darted to the easel supporting the blackboard, and climbed to the top of it. Tom Merry paused in dismay. Mike chattered away at a great rate at the top of the easel, out of reach.

Mr. Linton laughed heartily.
 "Never mind, Merry," he said. "He will do no harm there. You may leave him, and take him away after lessons, but you must take care that he does not come into the Form-room again."

"Oh, certainly, sir," said Tom Merry. And he went back to his table—considerably uneasy in his mind as to what Mike's next antic might be.

The lesson proceeded, Mike remaining an interested spectator on top of the easel.

Presently, finding himself undisturbed, he hopped down, and sat in a more comfortable posture on the Form-master's desk. Then he blinked and grinned at the juniors, disturbing their gravity considerably.

Mr. Linton, who was expounding Roman History just then, did not notice him. He had his back to Mike. But the juniors were looking directly towards him, and they could not help seeing the monkey's antics.

Mike was imitating every movement of the Form-master. When Mr. Linton raised a hand, Mike raised a paw—when he opened his book, Mike opened his book—when he talked, Mike chattered. Mr. Linton had a way of moving to and fro, his gown rustling behind him, when he was expounding a subject. Mike hopped down off the desk, and, keeping in the wake of the Shell-master, moved to and fro after him.

The sight was so utterly ridiculous that the juniors suddenly burst into a roar of laughter.

Mr. Linton started. He did not understand for a moment. Certainly, Roman History was not a laughing matter!

Then he spun round and saw Mike.
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Mike, encouraged by the laughter, strutted up and down, holding the book with his left paw, and making gestures with his right.

"G-g-goodness gracious!" gasped Mr. Linton, turning quite purple. "What—what—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Merry, take that absurd animal out of the Form-room at once!" exclaimed Mr. Linton, in a thunderous voice.

Tom Merry pounced upon Mike, and dragged him squalling out of the Form-room.

He returned a few minutes later, having locked Mike in the study, and resumed his place. But it was in vain that Mr. Linton endeavoured to restore the proper gravity of the class. The juniors persisted in breaking out into hysterical giggles every few minutes. They could not help it. Every gesture of Mr. Linton recalled the antics of Mike, the monkey, and they simply could not keep serious.

By the time the Shell were dismissed they had earned quite a rich crop of lines, but, as Lowther said tearfully, it was worth it. And after lessons the juniors visited Mike in the study, and fed him on nuts till he could eat no more.

"WEALLY do not approve of jokes of this sort."

Thus Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth. Blake and Herries and Digby, who were doing their preparation in Study No. 6, a few days after that peculiar incident in the Form-room, raised their heads, and looked inquiringly at their elegant chum.

"Hallo! Who's been pulling your noble and titled leg now?" demanded Blake. "Have you been trying the lasso again, and getting walloped?"

"Weally, Blake—"
 "Or has Tom Merry's minor borrowed your topper—remarkable how like you he looks in a topper, isn't it?" Blake said reflectively.

"I refuse to weply to such a fwivolous wemark, Blake. I wepeat that I do not approve of jokes of this sort."

"What sort, fathead?" asked Herries.

"I refuse to be called a fathead. Suppose you should lose it, or bweak it?" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy exclaimed indignantly.

His chums regarded him with an expression of bewilderment that almost amounted to idiocy.

"Lose it!" murmured Herries.

"Break it!" said Digby.

"Lose or break a joke," said Blake. "How can you lose or break a joke? Are you going right off your silly rocker? Quite dotty?"

"I was not alludin' to the joke, you silly chumps. I was alludin' to my watch."

"Your watch?"

"Anything happened to your watch?" yawned Blake. "I believe I noticed once that you had a watch—a Waterbury, wasn't it?"

"You uttah ass! You know vewy well that it was a wippin' gold tickah that my patah gave me one birthday. You are perfectly aware—"

"Well, what's the matter with it?" demanded Blake.

"Won't it go?"

"It has gone."

"Gone! Well, watches were made to go," said Blake, comfortingly. "Your watch has simply fulfilled its destiny. No good crying over spilt milk or gone watches. Shut up, and let's do our prep."

"I refuse to do anything of the sort. I wequire to wind my watch to-night, and therefore it must be returned to me. I wepeat that I do not approve of these jokes. A chap's toppah or his tickah ought to be respected."

"Quite dotty," murmured Herries. "Let him run on."

"I refuse to be wegardad as dottay; and I insist upon my watch bein' wefurnad at once by whichevah of you boundahs has hidden it."

"Oh," said Blake. "I underconstumble at last. You've lost your watch?"

"I left it here when I changed my waistcoat," said D'Arcy. "I left it lyin' on the table. One of you silly wottahs has hidden it, of course. I do not weally wegard that as a joke. I wegard is as asinine."

"For goodness' sake produce his watch, or he'll run on all night," said Blake plaintively. "Blessed if he isn't worse than Tom Merry's gramophone. Give him his watch, and he may dry up in the course of time."

"I haven't got his silly old watch," said Herries.

"And I haven't, either," said Digby.

"Ass!" said Blake. "We don't know anything about your Waterbury—"

"My gold tickah—"

"Well, it isn't on the table now, and it isn't hidden by anybody belonging to this study," roared Blake. "If it's been hidden, the joker has come along the passage and done it. Go and look for it. You were jawing the other day about your wonderful powers as a giddy Sherlock Holmes. Go and track down the watch."

"Weally, Blake—"

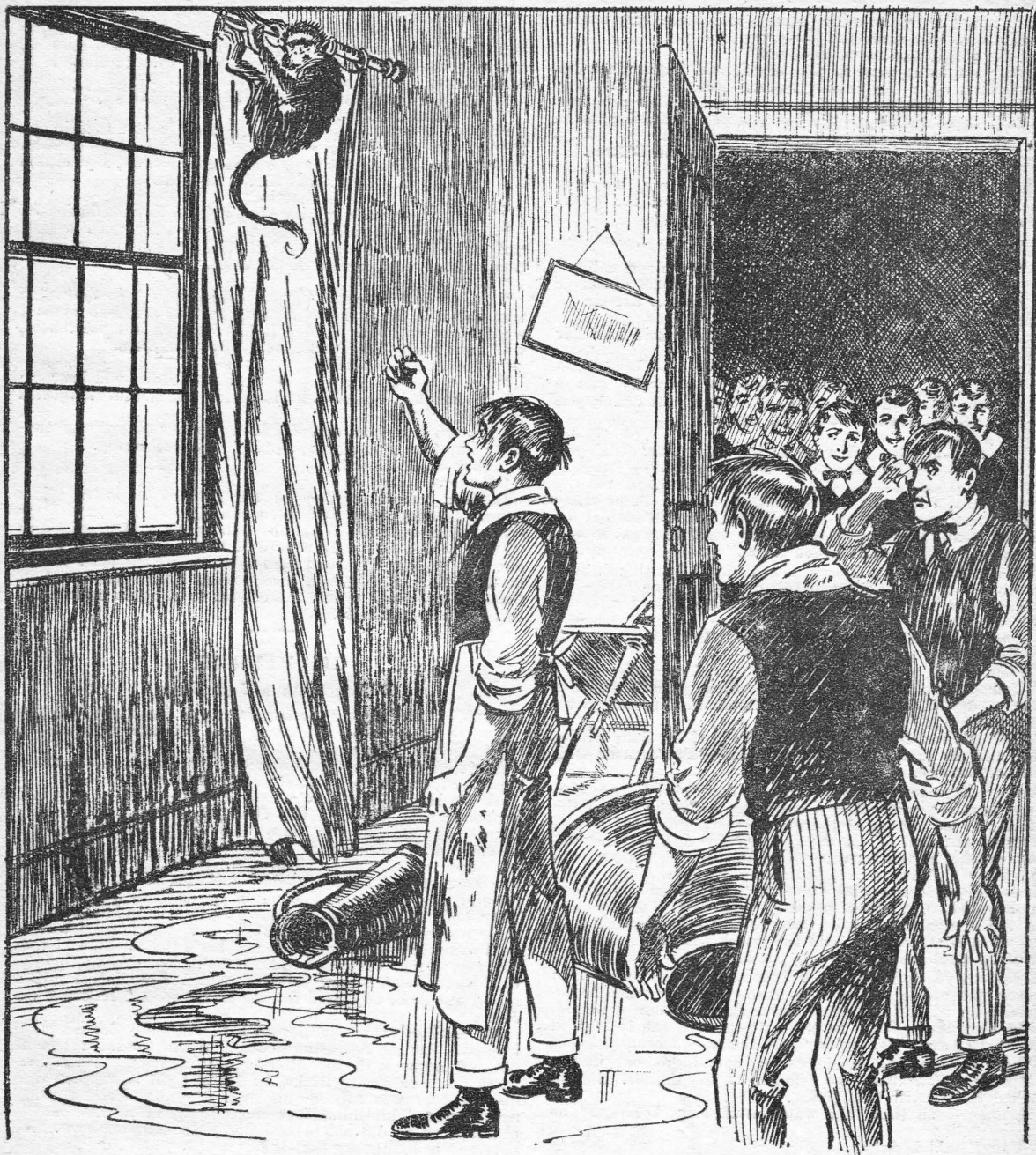
"A jolly good idea," said Digby heartily. "When you see the thief you can tell by the colour of his whiskers whether he likes fried onions—and then you can trail him down by the smell of onions. That's how Sherlock Holmes does it."

"Welly, Dig—"

NEXT
WEDNESDAY :

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Tom Merry with soap and water running down his face, made a bound to the window. Mike slithered up the curtains in a twinkling, leaving a trail of soapy water and dirty claw marks. He sat on the curtain pole, and chattered and grinned down at the infuriated juniors. Tom Merry shook his fist at him. "Come down, you rotter! Come and be caught!" (See Chapter 5.)

"Run away and look for your watch, Gussy!" implored Blake. "It may have taken a stroll along the passage. It may have jumped out of the window. Every watch has a spring in it, you know."

"If you fellows assuah me that you have not played any silly twick with my tickah—"

"Upon my word of honour as a man and a brother," said Blake solemnly.

"These hands," said Herries, holding them up for inspection. "These hands have not lighted upon thy watch, I swear it by my halidom. The only hands that have been upon thy watch are the hands provided by the watchmaker."

"Jamais!" said Digby, with equal solemnity. "Jamais je n'ai touche votre montre. Shall I put it in Latin?"

"I wegard you as thwee silly asses," said Arthur Augustus

witheringly. "But I suppose it was some othah silly ass who had hidden my watch. I will go and inquiah aftah him—"

"Hurrah!"

"And when I discovah him, I considah that I had bettah give him a feahful thwashin'."

And Arthur Augustus marched wrathfully out of the study.

It was true, as Blake had said, that watches were made to go, but Arthur Augustus did not like his famous gold ticker going in this manner. And he inquired after it up and down the whole length of the Fourth-Form passage.

But nobody seemed to know anything about the watch.

Levison, indeed, suggested that D'Arcy had omitted to pay the instalment due upon it, and that the hire-purchase firm had taken it back, a suggestion which was received with

yells of laughter by the other juniors, and which very nearly caused a case of assault and battery.

But the watch was not to be found.

Arthur Augustus went further afield, and inquired of the Shell fellows after the missing ticker. But the Shell knew nothing of it. The Terrible Three were doing their preparation with Mike sitting on the bookcase and watching them solemnly, when the swell of St. Jim's looked in.

"Have you seen my watch, deah boys?" asked D'Arcy.

"Certainly," said Lowther.

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!" exclaimed D'Arcy, in great relief. "I was beginnin' to think it was lost for good. Where did you see it, Lowthah?"

"In your hand," explained Lowther blandly.

"Wha-a-t!"

"You told me the time by it this morning, you remember."

"You uttah ass! This is not a time for wotten jokes. I left my watch on the table in my study, and it has disappeared."

"I hope you're taking care of the ticket," said Lowther seriously.

"The ticket! What ticket?"

"When a chap's watch disappears, he generally gets a ticket in exchange. If you don't take care of the ticket, you won't be able to get the watch out again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You feahful ass; shouted Arthur Augustus. "If you insinuate that I have pawned my beastly watch—"

"Then you haven't?" asked Lowther, in surprise.

"Of course I haven't, you fwightful chump. Some sillay ass has taken my watch off my study table and hidden it for a wotten joke. I am twyin' to find out what sillay ass it was. I thought it might be one of you chaps."

"Thanks," said Tom Merry, laughing. "But there's only one silly ass in this study—and he's only just come."

"Then you haven't seen anythin' of my watch?"

"Not a hide nor a hair."

"It may have rolled away somewhere," Lowther suggested.

"Wats! How could it wolla away?"

"Well, rolled gold would naturally roll, I suppose—"

"You silly chump, it was not wolla gold!" shrieked Arthur Augustus. "I wufuse to discuss that mattah with you any furthah."

And he retired from the study, and closed the door with a slam; and the chums of the Shell chuckled and went on with their preparation.

Arthur Augustus's next visit was to the Third Form-room. It was hardly possible that a mere fag would have had the audacity to play jokes on the elegant Augustus; but he left no stone unturned in his inquiry. Wally & Co., however, knew nothing of the watch, and all the inquiries were fruitless. They had one effect, however—to acquaint the whole of the School House with the fact that Arthur Augustus's famous gold ticker was missing, and that whoever had removed it from his study declined to own up and produce it. And when bedtime came, and the watch was still missing, a somewhat unpleasant effect was produced.

To hide a watch for a joke was foolish enough; but to take it away and refuse to give it back to the owner when he inquired after it, laid the joker under the suspicion of intending to keep the article. In other words, it began to look as if D'Arcy's twenty-five guinea gold ticker had been stolen.

When Kildare, the head prefect, saw lights out in the Fourth-Form dormitory, he referred to the matter. It had reached his ears by that time.

"I understand that your watch is missing, D'Arcy?" he said.

"Yaas," said D'Arcy.

"How did you lose it?"

"I didn't lose it, deah boy. I left it on my study table after changin' a waistcoat. You see, I was twyin' on some new waistcoats—"

"You should not be so careless with a valuable watch," said Kildare, frowning. "Leaving such a thing about is tempting a dishonest person to steal."

"Oh, bai Jove! That's wubbish, deah boy!"

"What!" roared Kildare.

"I—I mean it's wubbish to think that there could be a thief in the school, deah boy. I never thought of such a wotten thing for a moment. It is a wotten joke, that's all."

"In that case the joke is being carried too far. Let me know to-morrow whether you have found your watch or not. If not, the Housemaster must be told about it."

"Vewy well, deah boy."

And Kildare put out the lights, and left the dormitory frowning.

"My hat!" said Blake, in a hushed voice. "It does look rotten, now Kildare puts it that way. There was a thief in the school once—but he was a New House chap, and they expelled him. Nothing of that sort in the School House."

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"Wathah not."

"Then what's become of the watch?" asked Levison, who had a marked taste for anything of the nature of a scandal, and was more disposed to stir up trouble than to allow it to settle down. "Somebody must have taken it?"

"I suppose you didn't take it, Levison, deah boy?"

"I!" yelled Levison.

"Yaas. What I mean is, you are the biggest wascal in the House, you know," Arthur Augustus explained innocently. "If anybody turned out to be a dishonest wottah, I pwesume it would be you. You admit that, I suppose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you—you idiot!" spluttered Levison furiously.

"I wufuse to be called an idiot. I was only statin' a fact, and all the fellows will beah out that you are more likely than anybody else to do a dirtay twick."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Levison. "As the watch was stolen in Study No. 6, it's up to that study to explain what's become of it. And if it doesn't turn up, the fellows will want Blake, or Herries, or Digby to explain."

"What!" roared Blake.

"I'm only stating a fact, and all the fellows will bear me out," chuckled Levison, in imitation of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's remark.

"I won't bear you out—I'll kick you out, if you say anything like that again, ye spalpeen," growled Reilly.

"Shut up, Levison!"

"Rotten! Dry up!"

Levison "dried up"—he was content to do so. His poisonous suggestion had been made, and it would bear fruit, he knew that. When the fellows came to think about it, they would naturally regard it as the business of Study No. 6 to explain what had become of the watch, since it was in that study that it had disappeared. And the chums of that famous study settled themselves to sleep in an uncomfortable frame of mind.

CHAPTER 12.

A Dog With a Bad Name!

THE next morning Arthur Augustus found that the disappearance of his watch was the one topic in the School House.

As a subject of conversation among the juniors, it surpassed even the forthcoming football match with Greyfriars.

All the House knew how it had happened, and when it had happened, Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, called the four chums of the Fourth into his study after morning lessons, and questioned them. Arthur Augustus had left the watch and chain on the study table, and ten minutes or so after he had left the study, Blake and Herries and Digby had gone in to do their preparation. They had not seen the watch. It had disappeared during those ten minutes. It came out further that D'Arcy wore a gold sovereign-purse on the end of his watch-chain, and that the said purse contained four sovereigns. Altogether, it would have been a very valuable prize for a thief, if such a rascal was to be supposed to exist in the School House of St. Jim's.

Mr. Railton rated the elegant junior soundly for his carelessness. Arthur Augustus listened to him meekly; but he did not agree with the Housemaster's views. As he remarked afterwards to Blake, he had a right to suppose that his property was safe in his own study, and it naturally never crossed his mind that there could be a thief in the place. And he did not believe that there was one now. He persisted in his theory that it was a silly practical joke.

"That's all rot," said Blake decidedly. "A joker would have handed back the watch before now. He wouldn't let the matter come before the Housemaster."

"He may have lost it, deah boy, and may be afraid to own up, for feah of bein' supposed to have stolen it," said D'Arcy sagely.

"Rats! How could he lose it? Only you are idiot enough to lose a gold watch."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Somebody's taken it for keeps," said Herries. "It's rotten, but there must be a thief in the place. I suppose it was Levison."

"Bai Jove, that's wathah a wuff thing to say, Hewwies!"

"Well, I don't trust Levison. You know once he imitated Brooke's hand, and got him into a fearful row. That was practically forgery. A fellow who would do that would do anything. Then he's cruel to animals, too."

"A chap might be ewel to animals without being a thief, deah boy."

"I don't know. If a chap's one kind of a rotter, why shouldn't he be another kind of a rotter as well?" demanded

Herries. "Towser never liked him. Levison was expelled from Greyfriars for some dirty trick or other, that came out after he had come here, though he kept it a secret at first. If I'd been the Head I wouldn't have let him stay. You remember that the day he came Towser went for him—wanted to bite him."

"But weally, Hewwies—"

"You can always trust a dog. Dogs know!" said Herries oracularly. "Towser knew that he was a rotter through and through."

"And you know what happened only last week," said Blake thoughtfully. "Levison pinched that fossil belonging to old Lathom, and tried to make out that Tom Merry had taken it. When it came out he tried to pass it off as a joke on Tom Merry, but he was flogged for it; and serve him right! I couldn't help thinking that if it hadn't come out he would have kept the thing and sold it. It was worth a lot of money."

"Bai Jove! It does look wathah black against Levison," said Arthur Augustus. "Of course, as I remarked in the dorm. last night, me is naturally the chap who would be suspected first. He is certainly a wottah."

"Better wait for some proof before we say anything like that outside the study," said Digby uneasily. "Give a dog a bad name, and you may as well hang him, you know. And Levison is a dog with a bad name, and no mistake! But it's an awfully serious thing to suspect a chap of stealing."

"Yaas; even Levison ought to be given a chance," agreed Arthur Augustus.

"I suppose you're quite sure the watch is really lost?" grunted Blake. "You're ass enough to put it in another pocket and forget all about it."

"I thought of that, deah boy. I've gone through all my pockets and all my boxes and things this mornin'. The watch is weally gone."

"If it doesn't turn up, Railton will very likely send for a detective," said Blake, with a shiver. "It will be horrible! The New House rotters will chip us about having a thief in the house, too!"

"Yaas, it's beastly!"

The Terrible Three looked into the study. They were looking serious enough now, and even Monty Lowther no longer saw anything humorous in the matter.

"Not found the watch?" asked Tom Merry.

"No, deah boy."

"I've been thinking about it," said Tom abruptly. "There's one chap in the School House that suspicion must fall upon, considering what happened last week about old Lathom's precious relic."

"Levison?"

"Yes."

"We were just jawing over that," said Blake uncomfortably. "There isn't any proof, but—"

"There's a lot of what a policeman would call circumstantial evidence," said Manners. "Levison is a bad character. If he hadn't the djekens' own luck he would have been expelled long ago for some of his tricks. He was expelled from another school before he came here."

"We know what he did last week," said Lowther.

"Lathom's fossil is worth fifty pounds to the scientific asses who take interest in that rot. Levison pinched it, and tried to make out that Tommy had done it. If the truth hadn't come out, what was Levison going to do with the fossil?"

"He said it was a joke, deah boy."

"We jolly well know it wasn't! My belief is that he intended to keep it, and sell it as soon as he had a chance. And I fancy the Head thought so, too. He flogged Levison for it."

"Yaas, wathah! But—"

"We've been talking it over," said Tom Merry. "If anybody took the watch it was Levison. Mellish isn't any better than he should be, but I don't think he'd do a thing like that; and he hasn't nerve enough. Levison has nerve enough for a Raffles. I don't like to be down on a fellow without proof, but if it wasn't Levison, who was it?"

"He was trying last night to throw suspicion on our study," said Blake, frowning.

"Yes; that's what he would do. I was going to suggest that we talk to Levison, and put it to him plainly. If he gives the watch back, we'll agree to treat it simply as a jape, and say no more about it. That's better than a disgrace."

"Good egg! We can try, anyway."

And the chums of the School House looked for Levison. Levison was in the quadrangle, talking to a group of juniors, when they found him. There was a grin of enjoyment on Levison's face. He was speaking on the subject of the purloined watch, and explaining that it was obvious that Study No. 6, or some member thereof, must know what had become of it. He ceased as the Co. came up.

"Go on, Levison!" said Kangaroo of the Shell. "You were just saying—"

"Ahem!" murmured Levison. He did not care to go on with what he had been saying in the presence of the chums of Study No. 6.

"We want to speak to you, Levison!" said Tom Merry abruptly.

"I don't know that I want you to, particularly," yawned Levison. "But you can go ahead. Has the watch been found?"

"Not yet."

"We're aftah it, deah boy," said D'Arcy. "We want to speak to you about it. Pway come up to the study."

"Rats!" said Levison. "If you've got anything to say to me, you can say it here, I suppose? I don't mind the fellows hearing."

"Better come up to the study," said Tom Merry quietly. "We only want to have a jaw with you. It's not a rag, honour bright!"

"Oh, rot! Say what you've got to say, and don't be so jolly mysterious about it!" said Levison. "I'm not afraid of speaking out before the fellows, for one. I don't see what you've got to be afraid of, either."

"We're not afraid, you ass!" said Blake angrily.

"Looks to me as if you are," sneered Levison. "Out with it!"

"We'll speak out here, if you like," said Tom Merry. "But I warn you it would be better for you to have it in private."

"Rats!"

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"Well, if you want it before all the fellows, you can have it!" he exclaimed. "We want to know what you have done with D'Arcy's watch, Levison."

"Wha-a-at!"

"If you like to hand it back now, without any more fuss, D'Arcy is willing to look on the whole matter as a jape, and we'll do our best to make it all right with Railton. But it's gone far enough, and you've got to hand over the watch!"

"Yaas, that's how it is, Levison!"

Levison staggered back against the School House wall, his face growing deadly white. For the moment he seemed overwhelmed, and in his white, startled face it seemed to the juniors that conscious guilt was only too clearly written.

CHAPTER 13.

Taken for Granted!

THERE was a grim silence, while Levison gasped for breath.

It was some moments before he found his voice.

"You—you accuse me?" he panted at last.

"I'm not accusing you. We've talked it over, and we've come to the conclusion that you have taken the watch. We're willing to look upon it as a silly jape—one of your rotten tricks—if you hand the watch back. D'Arcy doesn't want to accuse you of stealing it."

"No feah!"

"But the joke, if it is a joke, has gone quite far enough. It's becoming a regular scandal. The New House fellows have got hold of it, and Mr. Railton will be sending for the police, very likely, if it isn't cleared up soon. I know you like causing trouble and worrying people, and stirring up unpleasant things; but I want to warn you that if you do it this time it will mean trouble. If the watch is searched for, and found where you've hidden it, you will be accused of stealing."

"You can't expect anything else," said Blake, with a shake of the head.

Levison panted.

"I've not seen the watch!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Yaas, wats, deah boy! Don't play the giddy goat. Hand ovah the watch, and we'll agree to call it a joke."

"Better hand it over and own up, Levison," said Kangaroo. "It's the most sensible thing to do, you know."

"You fool, I haven't seen the watch! How can I hand it over when I don't know where it is?" howled Levison.

"Sure, if you didn't take it, who did, intirely?" asked Reilly.

"One of the chaps in Study No. 6 took it, of course! You all know it!" screamed Levison. "Blake or Herries or Digby has it, of course!"

The three juniors named clenched their fists, but Tom Merry interposed.

"Hold on—hold on!"

"Do you think I am going to let that worm call me a thief?" demanded Herries furiously.

"No; but—"

"You're calling me one!" yelled Levison.

"That's different. You are one!"

"Yaas, wathah! You see, Levison, you are the only chap in the House who's wottah enough to do such a thing."

"There are lots of fellows who might have taken it!" exclaimed Levison. "There's Brooke! You all know he's hard up."

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom Merry. "It's no good throwing round rotten accusations. There isn't any actual proof against you, but it's pretty clear that you did it. It's just like you."

"Exactly like you," said Blake.

"Not much different from what you did last week with Lathom's giddy fossil," said Monty Lowther.

"That was a— a joke on Lathom."

"Yes, and you'll say this is a joke on Gussy when the watch is found in your trousers' pocket, or hidden up the chimney of your study," said Blake, with a sniff. "That is, if you don't try to make out that it was Mellish or Roak or Lumley-Lumley who hid it there, as they share your study. But we shall know what to believe."

"If you've shoved that stolen watch in my study—" began Levison.

Blake burst into a roar.

"What!"

"Hold on, Blake! I tell you this isn't a matter for punching," said Tom Merry. "It's got to be cleared up. Look here, Levison, if the watch is found, and you say it was a joke on Gussy, nobody will believe you. If you hand it over now we're willing to drop the whole matter where it stands."

"And that's a jolly good offer!" growled Herries.

"I tell you I don't know anything about the watch," said Levison desperately. "If it's found it will be found where the thief has hidden it."

"Yes; and you're the thief!"

Levison cast a wild look round. There was condemnation in every face. Against any other fellow in the school, mere circumstantial evidence would not have been regarded. But Levison, by his own conduct, had prepared this pit for his own feet. The fellows knew what he had done on previous occasions. This was a piece with the rest. As for his protestations, they went for nothing. He had protested before, with equal excitement, when he had been proved to be lying. Levison was a dog with a bad name with a vengeance, and he was so false that he could not expect his word to be taken.

"It's some of those rotters have done this, for revenge on me!" he panted at last. "They've planned it among them to get me sacked!"

"Bai Jove!"

"No good talking rot like that," said Kangaroo. "We all know that they wouldn't do anything of the sort. What I can't understand is, why you don't own up, now that it's quite clear against you."

"Yaas, wathah! Own up, deah boy."

"I've got nothing to own up to. I tell you—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Bosh!"

"Rubbish!"

"It will be too late soon," said Tom Merry quietly. "When the matter comes before the Head it will be too late to try to pass it off as a joke."

Levison set his teeth.

"You're welcome to search me if you like, and my study, and all my things," he exclaimed. "If you find the watch I'll eat it!"

"You mean you've hidden it where it can't be found?"

"Pewwaps in some other fellow's box, as you did Mr. Lathom's fossil!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus scornfully.

"I haven't—I didn't! I—I—"

"Well, if you choose to let the matter go on you will have to take the consequences," said Tom Merry. "We've done our best for you. The best thing you can do is to own up now, and save trouble. The Head will suspect you first of all when he knows about it."

"I say, you chaps"—Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth, joined the excited group of juniors in the corner of the quadrangle—"I suppose none of you has been borrowing anything out of my study?"

"Oh, gweat Scott! Have you missed a watch, too, deah boy?"

"Not a watch," said Lumley-Lumley. "But I guess somebody's pinched my pocket-book."

"Anything in it?"

"Only letters. I shouldn't have left it lying in the study, I guess, if there had been any money in it. I'm not a howling ass like Gussy!"

"Weally, Lumlay—"

"But it's a jolly valuable pocket-book, and it cost my pater six guineas," said Lumley-Lumley. "Blessed if I know what a thief could do with it. It's valuable leather, but it's got my monogram stamped on it as large as life, and it couldn't be sold. I've left it in the study often enough, when there

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was nothing in it. But it's gone now. I just looked for it because I've had a remittance, and I carry paper money in my pocket-book when I've got any. But it's gone."

"You've searched for it, I suppose?" said Tom Merry, with a troubled look.

"You bet! It's not in the study now, unless—" Lumley-Lumley paused.

"Unless what?"

"Unless Levison may have locked it up in his own desk by way of a joke. He's very fond of playing little jokes of that sort with other fellows' things."

All eyes were turned on Levison again. Levison shared Lumley-Lumley's study, and in the case of D'Arcy's watch he had himself declared that suspicion naturally turned upon the occupiers of the study where an article was lost. His hasty accusation was another piece of evidence against himself now.

"Well, what have you got to say, Levison?" demanded Tom Merry.

Levison gave a choked cry.

"You rotters! You're putting all this on me to ruin me!" he shrieked. "I've got this to say, I'm going to the Head to ask him to investigate."

And Levison rushed excitedly towards the house.

"Gammon!" said Herries contemptuously.

"I guess he's not going to any old Head!" remarked Lumley-Lumley.

But Lumley-Lumley "guessed" wrong. For Levison hurried directly to the Head's study, and Wally of the Third, who saw him go in, brought out the news to the juniors.

"Sheer cheek!" said Herries. "Taking the bull by the horns, that's all. He knows the Head will take the matter up, and he wants to have first whack."

And that was the general impression.

CHAPTER 14.

The Discovery!

DR. HOLMES was surprised, and still more displeased, when the excited junior burst into his study, hardly troubling to knock before he entered.

The doctor rose majestically to his feet, fixing a severe glance upon the intruder.

"Levison, how dare you—"

Levison panted almost hysterically.

"I had to come to you, sir. They all suspect me—"

"What!"

"D'Arcy has lost his gold watch, and Lumley-Lumley his pocket-book, sir, and the fellows all say I've stolen them!" gasped Levison. "I—I want you to find out who did it."

"Calm yourself!" said the Head quietly. "This is the first I have heard of the matter, Levison. There has been a theft?"

"Yes, sir; and all the fellows say—"

"They suspect you of the theft?"

"Yes, yes. And I—"

"Why do they suspect you?"

"I—I—I—"

"Have the things been found in your possession?"

"No!" shrieked Levison. "They haven't been found at all, sir. They suspect me without an atom of proof."

"Then it can only be from their knowledge of your character, Levison."

"I—I— It's not fair, sir. I don't know anything about the matter. I haven't seen the things. I believe it's a plot against me—"

"Nonsense!"

"I'm innocent, sir. I—"

"I hope you are innocent, Levison," said the Head coldly. "I cannot, however, forget your past conduct. Last week you abstracted an article from Mr. Lathom's study and concealed it in a trunk belonging to Merry, of the Shell."

"It was a joke, sir."

"I did not believe at the time that it was a joke, and I do not believe it now. If a theft has been committed, it is only natural that your schoolfellows should suspect you, Levison, after what you have done, and the record you have earned for yourself in the house. However, you shall have justice. I promise you that."

"That's all I want, sir."

"You shall have it. I will investigate the matter immediately."

The Head rang and sent for Mr. Railton. The School Housemaster came into the study looking very grave.

"Levison tells me that thefts have been committed in the House, and that the boys suspect him, Mr. Railton," said Dr. Holmes.

Mr. Railton coughed.

"I must say, sir, that my own thoughts turned upon Levison," he said. "He is the only boy in the House whose character—ahem!—justifies such a suspicion."

"I'm innocent!" gasped Levison. "I'm ready to be searched, and to have all my belongings searched, sir."
 "When you abstracted an article belonging to Mr. Lathom, you concealed it in Tom Merry's trunk," said the House-master coldly. "My firm belief is that you intended to disgrace Merry with a charge of theft, and had no intention of stating the truth, although you declared that it was merely a joke upon him. Your belongings might have been searched then without danger to you, and the same may be the case now. It will prove nothing in your favour."

Levison felt almost sick.

It was only too true. His feet were caught in the snare he had made by his own falseness and duplicity.

"I suppose there had better be a search, sir," said Mr. Railton, glancing at the Head. "The lost articles must be found."

"Undoubtedly."

"I understand that to-day Lumley-Lumley, of the Fourth, has missed a valuable pocket-book. Levison shares his study. The search had better begin with Levison's property, I suppose."

"Quite so. If nothing is found, I suppose it must be extended. For the sake of all the boys, the matter must be cleared up. Pray oblige me by taking charge of this very distressing affair, Mr. Railton."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Railton made a sign to Levison, and left the Head's study. The cad of the Fourth followed him with a wretched face.

In the passage Mr. Railton paused, and fixed a sharp and scrutinising look upon the pale face of the Fourth-Former.

"I suppose you persist in denying any knowledge of the missing articles, Levison?" he asked quietly.

"I don't know anything about them, sir—on my word!"

"Unfortunately, your word cannot be relied upon," said the House-master drily. "If you are innocent, Levison, you may see now the result of dishonourable conduct on other occasions. You have made a bad reputation, and you cannot expect to be believed, even if you are telling the truth. Follow me."

Levison followed him in miserable silence.

Ten minutes later the Fourth Form passage was crammed with fellows, while Taggles the porter was engaged in searching Levison's study.

Nothing was discovered there.

But no one was disappointed—no one had expected anything to be discovered there.

They all knew that Levison was too cunning to have concealed the stolen articles in his own quarters, if he had indeed taken them.

Followed by the excited crowd of juniors, Taggles moved along the passage from study to study, but in the Fourth-Form quarters nothing was found.

"Shell studies next!" murmured Kangaroo. "Tremble, ye Shell-fish!"

But no one smiled. The matter was too serious. Study after study was ransacked by the industrious Taggles without result. As the search-party came to Tom Merry's study, there was an alarmed chattering from Mike the monkey. He blinked and grinned at them from the top of the book-case, apparently alarmed by the sudden excitement at the study doorway.

"Quiet, Mike, old man!" said Tom Merry. "Sherrup!"

Chatter, chatter, chatter!

Taggles began the search of the study.

He looked in the boxes and the drawers, and as he pulled open the drawer of the table a sudden peculiar change came over his rugged face.

"There's a watch 'ere, sir," he said.

"Oh, that's mine!" said Tom Merry. "It doesn't go—and I've left it there till I send it to be repaired."

"Is your watch a gold one, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton, looking into the open drawer.

"No, sir; silver."

"There is a gold watch here as well as a silver one."

"Wha-a-at!"

There was a buzz from outside the doorway. It was a find at last. No one of the Terrible Three possessed a gold watch. If there was a gold watch in the study, it did not belong to them.

"Look at that watch, D'Arcy, and say whether it is yours," said Mr. Railton, handing out the timepiece to the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus nodded as he took the watch. It was undoubtedly his famous gold ticker; all the juniors knew it by sight.

"Yaas, sir; that's mine."

"There is a Russia-leather pocket-book here also, stamped with the monogram of 'J. L. L.'" said Mr. Railton.

"I guess that's mine, sir," said Jerrold Lumley-Lumley.

"They were hidden under these 'ere papers, sir," said Taggles.

"That will do, Taggles. I need not trouble you further," and Taggles departed.

Mr. Railton fixed his eyes upon the Terrible Three of the Shell, who were looking red and indignant.

"The stolen property has been found," he said. "Can you explain how it came to be in your study, Merry—or you, Manners and Lowther?"

"Yes, sir," said Monty Lowther hotly. "I can account for it quite easily. The thief put them there, sir!"

"That is certainly the case," said the House-master. "The only question is, who was the thief?"

"We all know who it was, sir," said Blake.

"I suppose no one will suspect Lowther and Manners and me of stealing the things?" said Tom Merry disdainfully.

"We all use that drawer in the table at times, and if one of us put stolen things there the others would know. I don't think anybody present would like to say that we stole the things."

"Wathah not. It would be widelicious!"

"Utter rot!" said Kangaroo. "The things might just as well have been found in my study, or anybody else's—only Levison has a special dislike for this study. He hid Mr. Lathom's fossil in Tom Merry's trunk in the box-room last week."

"What have you to say, Levison?"

"I don't know anything about the things, sir," said Levison. "I—I don't believe Tom Merry stole them. It's a rotten trick of somebody's. But I didn't put them there—I swear that!"

"It would be exactly the same as the wicked trick you played upon Mewwy last week, and for which you were flogged by the Head."

"But I shouldn't be idiot enough to do it again, even if I wanted to," gasped Levison. "I'm not a fool! I should know that nobody would believe Tom Merry had taken them."

"If the things were not deliberately placed here by the thief to inculpate the owners of this study, Levison, they can only have been stolen by one of these three juniors."

"And we know that's rot!" said Blake.

"I don't know who did it, sir," groaned Levison; "but I didn't."

Mr. Railton looked at him hard.

"I hope that is the truth, Levison. But if you are innocent, there is another boy in the School House who is guilty."

"Nobody else would do it, sir!" exclaimed Blake.

"You're all down on me," muttered Levison. "But I—I'm innocent; I don't know anything about it."

There was a long pause.

"I cannot decide immediately," said Mr. Railton at last.

"I will go now and consult with the Head, and acquaint him with what has been discovered. I do not condemn you, Levison. The matter must remain in abeyance till some decision is reached."

And Mr. Railton strode away.

Levison looked round at the juniors.

"You believe I did that?" he muttered.

"We know you did!" said Tom Merry.

"I swear—"

"Oh, dry up!" said Blake. "What's the good of that?"

"On my honour—"

"Your honour!" said Blake. "Don't be funny!"

Levison did not reply. He staggered out of the study, white as a sheet. Innocent or guilty, he was condemned by all the House—and, innocent or guilty, he had only himself to thank for it.

CHAPTER 15.

Condemned!

THE rest of that day was like a nightmare to the cad of the Fourth.

He had half expected to be ragged by the School House juniors, but there was nothing of that kind. Tom Merry & Co. would have stopped it. They had not the slightest doubt of Levison's guilt, but his punishment was likely to be heavy enough. He had done exactly the same kind of thing only a week ago, and he had been flogged.

The Head was pretty certain to expel him this time—if he was certain in his mind as to his guilt. There could not be much doubt, though actual proof was lacking. But even if the Head neither flogged nor expelled him, his punishment would be severe enough in the scorn and contempt of all his school-fellows. He was already sent to Coventry—even his own chum Mellish turned his back upon him.

"He'll have to go," said Blake. "He's been a disgrace

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to St. Jim's long enough, and now he's got to get out. If the Head doesn't sack him, we'll make him glad to go; but let the rotter alone till we know."

And that was agreed upon.

The Terrible Three came in from football practice to tea, looking more serious than usual. They could not be sorry for Levison, and yet his downcast looks affected their spirits somewhat. He had brought it upon himself certainly, but it was their way to feel for a fellow who was down.

"Well, it's no good looking glum about it," said Monty Lowther, as he jammed the kettle on the fire for tea. "It will be better for him, as well as us, if he clears out. He may take this as a lesson, and start better somewhere else."

"I wonder—" said Tom Merry.

"There's no doubt he did it, if that's what you mean. I suppose we can't suspect ourselves of having done it?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Well, hardly," he agreed. "Where have you shoved Mike's nuts, you bounders?"

"Table drawer," said Manners, who was busy opening a jam-jar.

"Right!"

Tom Merry opened the table drawer, and then uttered a sharp exclamation:

"My hat!"

"Hallo! What's the matter? Somebody pinched Mike's nuts now?" demanded Lowther.

"No. But look here!"

Manners and Lowther hurried over to him. In the table drawer lay a large ivory paper-knife, which all the juniors knew belonged to Mr. Railton. The Terrible Three gazed at it in wonder.

"My only hat!" said Lowther at last, with a deep breath. "Isn't Levison satisfied yet? What has he done that for?"

"He must be balmy in the crumpet," said Manners. "Why, he's left it lying plain in view, not even hidden under the papers. He must have known that we'd find it the minute the drawer was opened."

"It must have been Levison, I suppose."

"Who else?" said Lowther.

"Might be some silly ass's idea of a joke," said Tom Merry. "Levison is a rotter, but I can't understand his being such a crass idiot as this. I'll take this back to Mr. Railton—the sooner the better."

Tom Merry picked up the paper-knife, and took it out of the study. Blake met him as he went down the passage to the stairs.

"Hallo, been borrowing Railton's giddy paper-knife?" Blake exclaimed, in astonishment. "I hope you mentioned it to him first."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"We've just found this in our study," he replied.

Blake whistled.

"Levison again, of course? But what—"

"I suppose so," said Tom Merry. "I'm beginning to think he's out of his senses."

"He's in his study," said Blake. "Come in and ask him."

He opened the door of Levison's study. Levison was alone there, sunk in an attitude of utter dejection in the armchair. He looked dully at the two juniors.

"Did you put this into my study, Levison?" asked Tom, holding up the ivory knife.

Levison grunted.

"Of course I didn't! What do you mean?"

"I've just found it there!"

"I've been in this study ever since lessons," growled Levison.

"And everybody else out of the house," said Blake significantly. "I'm blessed if I understand you, Levison. What did you do it for?"

"I didn't do it!" howled Levison. "There's a thief in the house, I know that!"

"We all know that!" said Blake drily.

Levison sprang to his feet.

"I tell you there's a thief in the house, and he's trying to put it on me. I've missed something myself now. Somebody's taken my fountain-pen."

Blake sniffed.

"Think of something better than that," he suggested contemptuously. "Do you expect anybody to swallow such a yarn as that?"

"No," groaned Levison, "I don't! But it's true. I wasn't going to mention it—I knew nobody would believe me. But it's true all the same."

Tom Merry looked at him curiously. It seemed to him that for once there was a ring of truth in the voice of the Cad of the Fourth.

"Have you really lost a fountain-pen?" he asked.

"Yes; it was a birthday present, and cost a guinea," said

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Levison. "It was the most valuable thing I had. I left it here on the inkstand, and now it's gone. Of course, nobody will believe I've lost it."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brows in thought.

"There's a thief in the place, and he's taking advantage of my being in the Head's black books, to pile it on me," said Levison bitterly.

"Rot!" said Blake. "A thief takes things to keep, I suppose. What would be the good to him of stealing things and sticking them where they're sure to be found? I'll bet your fountain-pen will turn up in Tom Merry's study, if you've really missed it—and you're the chap who put it there. Why should anybody else do it?"

"I'm going to see," said Tom. "Come with me, Blake!"

"Right you are!"

They hurried to Tom Merry's study. Manners and Lowther were getting the tea. Tom Merry pulled open the table drawer.

"This seems to be Levison's favourite place for putting things," he remarked. "I'll look here first."

"What are you looking for?" asked Manners.

"Levison says he's lost his fountain-pen."

"Rubbish!"

"Hallo! Look here!"

Tom Merry had turned over a heap of old papers in the drawer. Underneath them reposed a fountain-pen.

"Not ours!" said Monty Lowther.

"Regular receptacle for stolen property, this study," chuckled Blake. "Lucky for you fellows we know it's Levison."

Lowther knitted his brows.

"Isn't he fed up with it yet?" he exclaimed. "My hat! I'll jolly well hammer him for shoving his things in this study."

The Terrible Three and Blake returned to Levison's study. Tom Merry threw the fountain-pen on the table.

"Is that yours, Levison?" he demanded contemptuously.

Levison nodded glumly.

"Yes, that's mine! Where did you find it?"

"Where you put it—in my study," said Tom Merry wrathfully.

Levison passed his hand across his brow.

"I don't understand it," he muttered. "I can't understand it. I'll swear I never put it in your study. I just missed it—that was all!"

There was a shout from the passage.

"Look out, Levison!"

"What's the row?" asked Tom Merry, looking out of the study. Wally of the Third had dashed upstairs in a state of wild excitement.

"The police!" he gasped.

Levison gave a cry.

"The police!"

"Yes; Inspector Skeat from Rylcombe!" yelled Wally. "You ass, why didn't you own up when you had a chance?"

Levison flung himself into his chair with a sob.

"I'm innocent—I'll swear I'm innocent!"

The juniors looked at him. They felt no desire to rag him now. They left the study quietly, and Tom Merry took the paper-knife to Mr. Railton's room. The Housemaster was not there, so no explanation was needed—and Tom Merry was glad not to have to say anything more against Levison at that moment. Mr. Railton was at the door, speaking to the burly police-inspector from Rylcombe.

Inspector Skeat and Mr. Railton passed into the Head's study together. In the hall, the fellows clustered in excited groups, seniors and juniors. There was no doubt in any mind that the Head had telephoned for the police—and that Inspector Skeat had come in response to look into the matter of the thefts in the School House. The fellows waited in anticipation of Levison's being sent for.

The Head's bell rang—and a few minutes later, Toby the page came along. There was a general exclamation.

"Levison's in his study, Toby."

"The 'Ead don't want Levison," said Toby.

"Not Levison!" exclaimed Blake. "Who, then?"

"Master Merry!"

There was a gasp from all the juniors.

"Tom Merry!"

"Me!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in amazement.

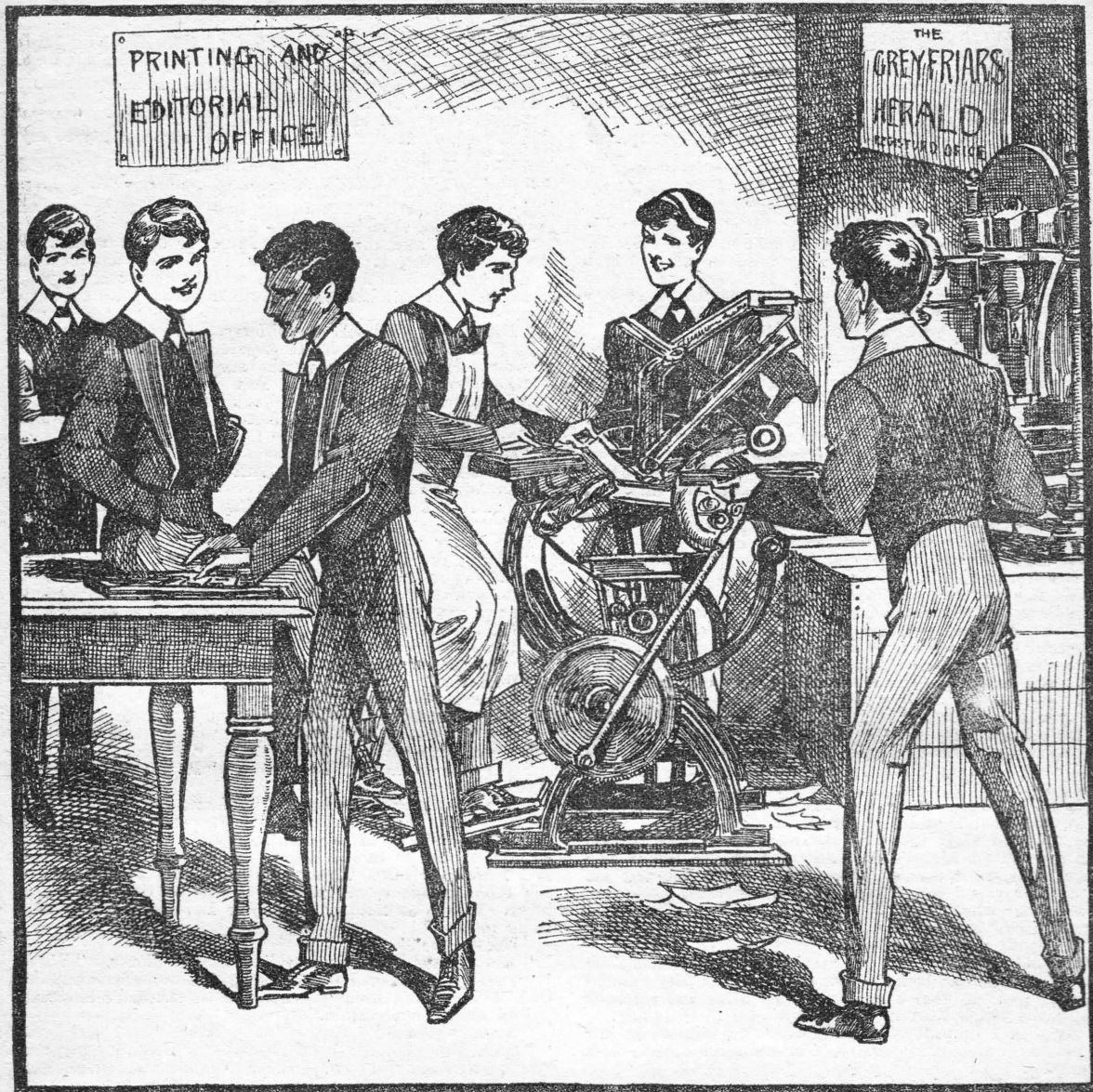
"Yes, Master Merry; you're to go to the 'Ead's study at once! Inspector Skeat wants to see you."

"My hat!"

Tom Merry's countenance was crimson now. Levison, who had come downstairs, with a face like chalk, turned on him with a snarl.

"You—you—" he cried. "It's you, Tom Merry! The Head doesn't want me—Inspector Skeat doesn't want me! They want you!"

"Bai Jove! It's vevy queeah!"



The amateur compositors of "The Greyfriars Herald" proceeded with the operation of setting up type at a great rate, under the directing eye of Fisher T. Fish. (This picture appears on the cover of this week's issue of our companion paper, THE MAGNET LIBRARY, which contains a splendid, long, complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD," by Frank Richards, Now on Sale. Price One Penny.)

"And, please, Master Merry, you're to take your monkey," said Toby.

That was the climax! The juniors simply yelled with astonishment. They could understand the Head wanting to see Levison, or even Tom Merry—but what in the name of all that was miraculous did he want to see Tom Merry's monkey for?

"My only chapeau!" said Digby. "It's Tom Merry's minor who's in trouble, then."

"I—I think I guess," muttered Tom Merry. "Fur Cap has gone to the police about the monkey, perhaps. But he can't claim him—he sold him to me."

"And we're witnesses of it," said Manners and Lowther together.

Tom Merry went up to his study, and came down with Mike on his shoulder. And the crowd buzzed with eager excitement in the passage, as Tom Merry passed into the Head's study with Mike.

All sorts of suggestions were put forward as to the probable consequences to Tom; but Tom Merry was not worrying.

CHAPTER 16.

Light at Last!

TOM MERRY entered the study with perfect coolness. Mr. Railton and the fat inspector were with the Head. Tom Merry had no doubt that the inspector's visit was in connection with Fur Cap and his claim to the monkey. If it had been in connection with the thefts in the School House, Mike would hardly have been sent for. Tom Merry was glad now that he had confided the whole matter to Mr. Railton.

"Toby says you wanted to see me, sir, and my monkey," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, Merry," said the Head, while the inspector glanced curiously at the little creature on Tom Merry's shoulder. "Mr. Railton tells me that you explained to him how you came into possession of the monkey. Kindly explain to Merry, Inspector Skeat."

"You had that monkey from a man named Michael Hadd, Master Merry?" the inspector asked.

"I don't know his name, Mr. Skeat. We called him Fur

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Cap. He was a ruffianly-looking rotter—ahem—I mean person—and wore a dirty fur cap."

"That's the man," said the inspector, with a smile. "His name is Hadd. He is a criminal, and the police in the next county have been looking for him for a long time. He came this way to carry on his little game with his monkey in a new quarter—but we've spotted him from his description. He sold you that monkey—eh?"

"Yes, sir. I made him."

The inspector smiled.

"He declares that you took it by force."

"So we did, in the first place, Mr. Skeat. He was ill-treating it in a brutal way. But I offered to pay for it, and afterwards I paid him, when he tried to steal it, and he agreed that the monkey was mine. If he claims it—"

"He won't be likely to claim anything for the next two years," said the inspector, laughing. "He was very keen to get that monkey back, wasn't he?"

"Very keen, indeed, sir."

"His living depended on it," the inspector explained. "The monkey was trained to steal. He carried him about on an organ, under pretence of his being an ordinary performing monkey; but the animal was an expert thief. He would nip into open windows, or run into rooms in places where the rascal stayed, and steal things and take them to his master. We have found a good deal of stolen property on Hadd, especially watches and handy things like that."

Tom Merry started.

"We learned from Hadd that you had the monkey," said the inspector. "I have come for him, but as you have bought him, your claim will hold good. A rather dangerous pet, however, I should say, unless he has got out of his old habits. Has he stolen nothing while you have had him?"

The Head and Mr. Railton exchanged a quick glance.

The same thought occurred to both of them at once.

Inspector Skeat smiled, and took out his watch, detached it from the chain, and laid it on the table near which Tom Merry was standing. The monkey's eyes were upon it at once.

"If you turn your heads, he will nip up that watch and run for it," said Mr. Skeat. "If you have lost any property here, as I suppose from your expression, gentlemen, you will most likely find it in the same place as that watch, when he has taken it away."

"Good heavens!" murmured the Head.

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry involuntarily.

They turned their backs on the monkey. Mike slipped down from Tom Merry's shoulder, and as the junior also turned away, in a twinkling the monkey had pouched the watch and scuttled out of the study.

"Find out where he puts that watch, Merry, please, and bring it back," said the Head.

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

Mr. Railton also followed the monkey. They reached Tom Merry's study, Mike being out of sight; but as they entered the study doorway they saw him again. Mike was carefully packing the watch away in the table drawer in the study.

"My word!" murmured Tom Merry. "I suppose he saw me put my watch there, and he's as imitative as—as—as a monkey."

Mr. Railton smiled.

"I think this explains the mystery of the thefts, Merry," he said. "This very fortunate discovery clears Levison."

Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

"Yes, sir; but who could have guessed this!"

"Certainly no one could have guessed it," said Mr. Railton.

They returned to the Head's study, Tom with the monkey on his shoulder again. The Head listened with obvious relief to what they had to tell him.

"Your visit here has come at a very fortunate moment, Inspector Skeat," he said cordially. "There have been thefts

in the house, and one of the junior boys was under suspicion. The stolen articles were discovered in the same drawer as that in which that remarkable monkey just placed your watch. I am very grateful to you for this. It had prevented a great injustice from being done."

"I am very glad of it, sir," said the inspector. "After this, I suppose Master Merry will raise no objection to my taking the monkey away."

Tom Merry looked blue.

"I could teach him better, sir," he said, looking appealingly at the Head. "I've taught him lots of things, and I could teach him to be honest now I know."

"Perhaps," said the Head. "Inspector Skeat must take the monkey now, as he is required in the case against this ruffian Hadd; but, doubtless, he will be returned to you, and if you can cure him of his peculiar habits you may keep him."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom Merry.

And when Inspector Skeat departed, he took Mike the monkey with him, much to the surprise of the crowd of fellows who watched him go. Tom Merry was surrounded by an excited throng simply thirsting for information.

"What's happened?" roared Blake. "What were you and Railton trotting up to the study for?"

"Doesn't the Head want Levison?"

"What have you let Skeatey take your minor away for?"

"Explain, you ass!"

"You're not going to let Fur Cap have your minor, are you?"

Tom Merry waved his hand.

"Silence for the chair! Skeatey came here for Mike. Fur Cap is in prison waiting for trial, and Mike is wanted in the evidence. The rotter trained Mike to steal things. That was why he wanted him back so badly."

"Bai Jove!"

"It was Mike who stole those things and planted them in the table drawer in my study," announced Tom Merry.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Draw it mild!"

"G'weat Scott!"

"Rot!"

Levison gave a violent start.

"The—the monkey!" he panted. "It was the monkey! Oh!"

"Yes, and jolly lucky for you we found it out," said Tom Merry. "It's quite true, you fellows. Skeatey knows all about him. He let Mike pinch his watch, and Mike scuttled off and shoved it in the drawer in my study, and Railton and I watched him. There isn't any doubt that Mike put the other things there now. Of course, I didn't think of Mike. It was so natural to suspect Levison of doing anything rotten!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I'll say I'm sorry now," said Tom Merry. "We've been pretty rough on Levison, though he brought it on himself. If he hadn't been such a rotter we shouldn't have suspected him, that's certain."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Still, I'm glad it's been cleared up. Levison, my son, you depart from this court without a stain on your character, excepting the old stains, which won't wash out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison stalked away scowling. That was all the sympathy he received. It wasn't much, but it was as much as he deserved. It was his own fault that he was a dog with a bad name, as Blake remarked. He had only himself to thank for what had happened, though, as it turned out, he was, for once, quite innocent. Which was a greater surprise. Monty Lowther solemnly declared, than the discovery that the real author of the mischief was Tom Merry's Minor!

THE END.

For Next Wednesday!

"A DISGRACE TO HIS HOUSE!"

Another grand, long, complete school tale, dealing with the further adventures of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

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"THE CORINTHIAN!"

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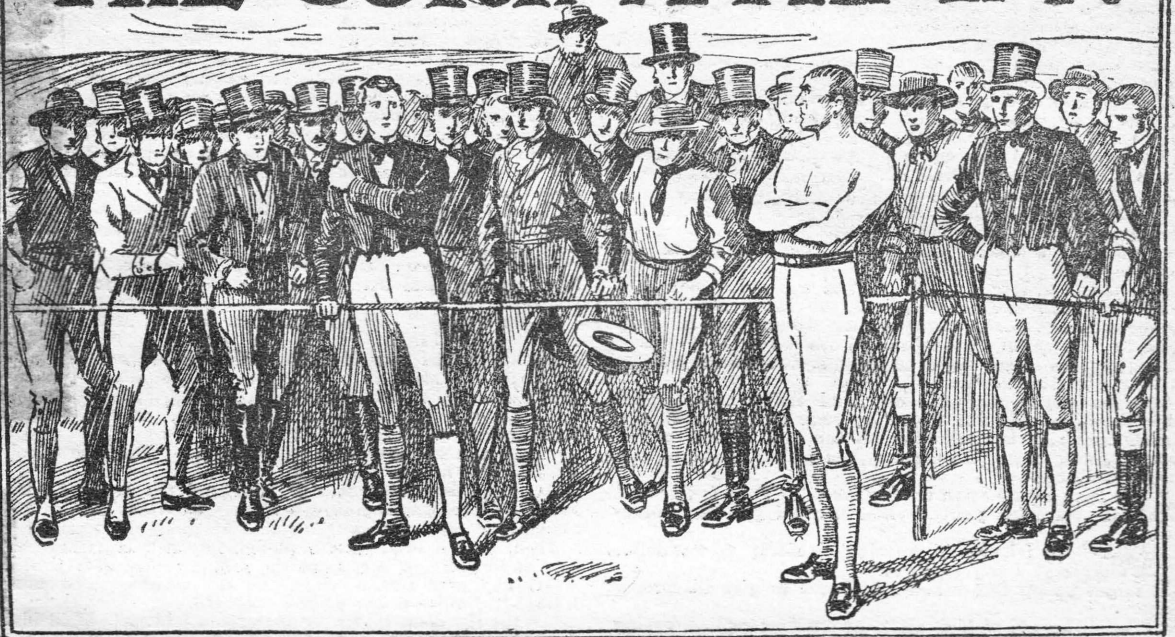
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THE CORINTHIAN.



A Magnificent New Story of the Old-Time Prize-Ring.
By **BRIAN KINGSTON.**

READ THIS FIRST.

Hilary Bevan, a sturdy young Britisher of gentle birth, who has been living in the country, walks to London

TO SEE HIS FATHER,

Sir Patrick Bevan, whom he has not met for three years. Arriving at his father's house, Hil learns that the latter has been absent for three days at the house of Sir Vincent Brookes, one of the leading bucks of the time. He also learns that Sir Patrick has earned the nickname of

"PLUNGER" BEVAN,

and is heavily in debt, having dissipated his fortune.

Bending his steps to Sir Vincent Brookes' house in Grosvenor Street, Hilary

FINDS HIS FATHER AT THE GAMING-TABLES,

where he has been for three days and nights.

Sir Patrick rises from the table an utterly ruined man. Hilary's next act is to accept a challenge offered in the prize-ring at Moulsey Hurst. His opponent is a Jew pugilist, Barney Isaacs by name, while Hil, fighting under the name of Harley, beats him, and awakens the interest of a young Corinthian named D'Arcy Vavasour.

Hil decides to adopt the prize-ring as a career, and at a supper which is attended by the leading patrons of "The Fancy" Vavasour matches him for a thousand guineas against any boxer of his weight that Sir Vincent Brookes may select.

Other wagers are also to be decided between the two bucks by a cock-fight and a shooting-match.

In the latter, Vavasour's nominee fails to turn up at the appointed time, owing to an accident, and but for Hil's presence, the buck would have had to pay forfeit. Hil, however, shoots for him, and beats Sir Vincent Brookes' man. Immediately after the contest, Sir Vincent tells Hil that his father is lying dangerously ill at Burnham. Without hesitation, Hil springs on a horse and makes for Burnham. On the way he falls in with a man riding to the same place, and they continue their journey in company, pushing on at their utmost speed.

(Now go on with the story.)

Disappointment!

Hil had good reason against delay, while the other professed disagreeable consequences did he not arrive before daylight.

"I am not my own master, sir, as you; and, to tell the truth, ought not to be where I am now. But Burnham is devilishly dull and work is slack, and with a pretty girl whom I know living at Epping, you will understand. Yet 'tis no pleasure to sit this awkward brute, I assure you."

Burnham was reached, a miserable village with never a light to be seen amid the pitchy darkness as the two riders clattered into the cobbled street.

Suddenly it occurred to Hil that he had not learned where in Burnham his father was lying. At an inn, the one where he had stayed; but at three o'clock in the morning distinguishing between the habitations was out of the question.

"How many inns?" repeated his companion, in answer to Hil's query. He seemed amused. "Why, in the name of old junk, how many do you expect to find in this forsaken hole? There is but one—the Hoy Inn. Is it there you wish to go?"

"There can be no choice," said Hil. "Can you guide me, sir, as a favour?"

"Ye'll think in the morning I've done ye an injury," chuckled the other. "But I'll show ye there, though 'tis with sorrow."

A minute later he indicated they stood outside the Hoy Inn, and then abruptly said "Good-night," adding that he hoped to see Hil later.

For a while Hil stood listening to the clatter of his departed companion's horse's hoofs, wondering who he could be, and where he had found a lodging, smelling the salt in the sharp, moist breeze; and then he caught his breath sharply.

Somewhere within a few yards of him his father was lying. A sudden chill fell upon his whole body, and the fear that behind the inn walls the worst was awaiting him entered his heart. Was his father still alive, or had the last summons come to him even while his son was hastening to him?

And so acute was the fear that it was a long time before Hil was able to overcome his irresolution and knock with his knuckles upon the inn door. The fact that no light was discernible in any of the windows upstairs caused him to dread the answer to his questions.

No answer to his loud knocking! The house was as quiet

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NEXT WEDNESDAY—**"A DISGRACE TO THE SCHOOL!"**

A Magnificent, New, Long, Complete School Tale of The Chums of St. Jim's. By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

as a church. He hammered again. Still no reply, although the hollow sound of his blows echoed down the silent and scarcely visible street. A third time his fist fell, a hurried and impatient summons. During the intervals between the lad listened with his heart noisily thumping.

A fourth assault—he brought a foot into play—at last procured an answer. An upper window was thrown up, and a head and shoulders thrust out.

"What do 'ee want this time o' night, whoever 'ee be?" demanded an anything but pleased voice. "'Tis a din enough to waken the dead!"

"Come down and let me in," Hil replied.

"'Tis likely, when I don't know who 'ee are! Who beest ye?"

"A traveller. A lodging, and a question or two answered. There is nothing to be afraid of!"

Hil was impatient.

"Fine time o' night—morning, rather!" grumbled the person up above. "I'm coming down!"

Hil heard the words "Bad luck t' 'ee!" added as the window closed.

Presently the door was opened, and a bearded man in a woollen nightcap peered suspiciously at Hil. He held a rushlight in one hand, examining the disturber of his sleep critically. Apparently satisfied, he asked the lad to enter, adding that the horse might be brought through the passage to the stable at the back.

The inn was a miserable one, and Hil wondered what could have brought his father to such a mean and outlandish spot. A boy, sleeping on the floor in one of the rooms opening out of the passage, was kicked awake to take care of the horse.

"You have a gentleman staying here, Sir Patrick Bevan?" asked Hil, when the partly-dressed landlord gave him attention.

"Anan?" the fellow said, opening his sleepy eyes widely.

"A gentleman is staying here."

It might be his father had not chosen to give his proper name.

"I bain't heered of him, sir," the landlord replied, eyeing Hil with something very like fear.

"A gentleman staying here!" Hil repeated impatiently, raising his voice. "He has been here some time, I understand; and he is ill—wounded."

But this statement merely added to the landlord's apprehension. He looked at his visitor fearfully from head to heels, and then broke into a visible denial. There was no gentleman staying there. Gentlemen did not come to his inn. He wished they did. He served none but fishermen, and such like. As for any wounded gentleman, he could assure his honour that he had never had one at the inn. He was an honest man—never mixed himself with anything of the kind; and his honour was welcome to search the entire house, did he not believe the information to be correct. He was never agin the law. He would never even think of being so. The police—

"The police! I have nothing to do with the police," Hil interrupted. "But I can tell you, you very shortly will if you are lying to me!"

"I assure your honour there bain't no one a-stopping i' this inn for six months, least of all any gentleman," the man affirmed. "Plague take me, sir, if I bain't saying aught but what be true!"

Hil stood dumbfounded. Not for a moment did he believe the landlord to be lying; but, with the circumstantial story Sir Vincent Brookes had related only too fresh in his mind, little wonder if he felt unsatisfied.

"Is there another inn here?" he asked at length.

The landlord shook his head.

"Not even an alehouse, your honour."

"Is there another Burnham in Essex?"

Again the headshake.

"Not as I ever heered tell on, sir."

"Find me somewhere to sleep, there's a good fellow," said Hil wearily.

Puzzled of mind, physically tired, he suddenly felt an overwhelming desire for sleep.

Hil's Pleasant Acquaintance Again!

With what object had Sir Vincent Brookes concocted the lie that had sent him on a fool's errand to Burnham?

A lie, wilful and deliberate, was the story of his father's approaching death, so Hil was convinced; but with what object it had been told the lad couldn't conceive. Rising from the miserable apology for a bed, while a breakfast of which he was not hopeful was preparing for him, Hil left the inn, and strolled aimlessly through the village, puzzling himself to evolve some solution to the foregoing question.

Was it that Brookes was anxious to get him away from the training cottage at Leigh? The suggestion was not

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unlikely. Perhaps Brookes had learned of the failure of the attempt to destroy Vavasour's birds, but intended a second attempt, and had schemed to remove the principal obstacle against success.

Suddenly he ceased to think, his attention attracted. Chance had led his steps along the creek into which emptied itself the river Crouch, and, looking along the muddy water, he saw a six-oared boat being rapidly driven towards a landing-stage. There were four men in the boat besides those at the oars, and in one of these, sitting in the stern sheets, was a broadly-built, brown-faced young man, in the uniform of a naval officer. The rest wore the short jackets, small, hard, round hats, and pigtails of ordinary sailors.

Catching Hil's eye, the stout young man waved his hand to him, halloaing in a rich voice that it was a fine morning. Hil recognised the officer as his companion during the last stages of his overnight ride.

"Glad to see you, sir!" cried the officer jovially, jumping upon the stage and coming towards Hil. "Met again sooner than I expected!"

"You are ashore early," replied Hil genially, taking the tough brown hand extended to him. "Have you breakfasted?"

"Like a whale!" laughed the other. "And now for some exercise to help it digest!"

He had placed himself so that Hil was between him and the creek, and his back thereto; hence Hil could not see what the sailors were doing. His hand was still gripping Hil when the latter was suddenly seized from behind. A sturdy sailor was hanging on to either arm.

"Easy does it!" the officer said quickly. "Don't be a fool, sir, and give us—Rrughh!"

He ended with a grunt, for Hil's hand was dragged from his grip, clenched, and driven sharply into that part of his anatomy where his recently-acquired breakfast was resting.

Then, with a heave and a plunge forward, Hil freed one side of himself, got a grip of the second sailor, and, with a smart trip, sent him reeling upon the ground. The next instant half a dozen men rushed upon Hil.

"What the deuce! Lively there, you lubbers! Hold him fast!" roared the officer, finding his voice again. "You can take him easily!"

But this was precisely what the seamen could not do. The men got in each other's way, and those who reached arm's length of Hil were driven back, or dropped to well-planted facers or heavy body blows. For a bit an exceedingly lively nill was in progress. The sailors were strong enough, and tough as mahogany, but the short, loaded bludgeons they carried were worsted by the swiftness and force of Hil's blows.

"A blessed Corinthian fighting man, shiver me timbers if he ain't!" mumbled one fellow, spitting out a tooth.

"Down him, ye swabs! Eight to one, and ye're getting licked!" shouted the officer, who was taking no actual part in the fray.

A big bluejacket cannoned against him, propelled by Hil's right hand; another was lying on the ground; and though the rest got in a blow now and again, Hil guarded his head from a blow. All at once the officer ran forward towards the boat. He was back in a few seconds, and, shouting to the sailors to go in, he stole behind Hil.

Hil was retreating, his left hand threatening, jobbing at any who came within his reach, "milling on the retreat," in pugilistic parlance, when suddenly darkness fell upon him. A jerk and a wrench followed, and he fell over backwards.

"Lively and hold him!" cried the officer, both hands gripping fast at the boat-cloak he had used so effectively.

Unable to see, and half smothered, Hil fell an easy prey. With practised hands, the sailors trussed him up. He felt himself lifted, carried, and deposited in the boat. The dulled footsteps of the men came faintly to him, and he was left alone.

Grumbling among themselves at the handling they had received, the sailors followed their leader along the deserted creek to the inn, and found consolation in a tot of grog apiece, while their officer engaged in conversation with the landlord. Then all returned to the boat. There were no more likely men to be picked up in Burnham village.

The return of the press-gang relieved Hil of the suffocating cloak. It was pulled off him; he sat up, and found himself beside the officer. The latter smiled shamefacedly.

"Upon my soul, sir, I'm sorry for you!" he said at once. "You fought like a trojan! 'Twas a villainous, scurvy trick; but what can I do? The King wants sailors. I'm given orders to pick 'em up wherever I can—any likely-looking man I see. I've been here a week; got four men, and a wiggling for doing no better. I hope you bear no malice, sir?"

This was cool—so cool that Hil could not forbear laughing outright. He had been knocked down, half suffocated, and was now going to be put aboard a ship to go heavens knew

where, and to serve for heavens alone knew how long! And the man responsible for it quietly asked him to bear no malice!

"That's the way to take it," said the officer. "Nothing gained by grumbling. You're going to be a King's sailor now, my hearty, and good luck to you!"

"And my own affairs?" asked Hil.

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "King's business comes first. But it's rotten work to ask of a gentleman. Upon my honour, I'm ashamed of myself! I could see last night you were big; you looked strong, and I knew you for a gentleman of courage; you can shoot. The very man for the King—bless him!—thought I. So I came bright and early looking for you."

Hil said nothing. There was nothing to say. The infamous system of forcibly taking men to serve aboard ships of war was a legal act, and the pressed man might appeal—he could he find anyone to listen to him—in vain against the injustice of the act that tore him from home and occupation without a moment's warning. A man had to grin and bear it.

"Little good bearing you any malice," Hil said slowly. "But isn't it possible that I can buy my freedom, if there's no other way of escaping service?"

"Afraid not, sir. We're too short-handed. You're a gentleman, I can see that. I'll do what I can for you."

"More like a blessed milling cove," one of the sailors muttered, tenderly feeling a damaged eye.

The officer heard and laughed.

"You did knock my fellows down," he said to Hil. "If you can do the same to the Yankees the Lords of the Admiralty will be in my debt, I can give you my word."

"And I can give you mine, sir, that I will do no more fighting than is necessary," Hil answered. "I am no sailor. It is not right I should be forced thus to become one; though I am not blaming you."

Hil meant escaping at the first opportunity, but as soon as he got aboard the tender lying at the mouth of the estuary it was plain to him that opportunity would not come easily. He and the other unfortunates, three fishermen and a young lad, were closely guarded. Shut up in the 'tween-decks, without tools, the breaking of a way out was impossible. One of the fishermen had a bad wound upon his head. He told Hil that he had a wife and three children in his cottage, and how they were going to live during his absence he did not know. Another of the fishermen was the only support of a crippled mother.

Truly the pressing of sailors was a cruel institution.

When Hil and the rest were allowed to go on deck the tender was well out at sea. He was looking over the vessel's side in the direction of land when the stout young officer came up to him.

"Put a good face on it, my buck," he said cheerily. "'Tis hard lines for ye, but there's no going back now."

In spite of the damage they had suffered at his fists, the men of the press-gang bore no ill-will against Hil; indeed, they and the others who had heard the story of his capture treated him with good-humoured respect. But although Hil would have enjoyed a cruise afloat in different circumstances, in the present enjoyment was wholly lacking. Mr. Vavasour could not know what had happened to him. The important issues hanging to the fight with Fennel must result disastrously unless he could escape.

It was at the Nore Hil was informed that the impressed men would be transferred to the ships on which they would serve, but towards evening a fierce, south-westerly gale was met, and the lieutenant's face took a serious expression. The tender was cranky; an attempt to drive her threatened disaster. Finally, her head was put about, and she scudded before the wind without a sail set. Huge seas chased her, washing over the stern, and to Hil it seemed as though the craft would be blown out of the water. Drenched to the skin, he remained on deck. As a first acquaintance with a sailor's life it was not encouraging.

"Where are we going?" he bellowed in the ear of one of the fishermen, like himself, hanging on for dear life to the shrouds.

"Sand banks, Holland! Have mercy on us!" was all he caught of the reply.

But good seamanship saved them this fate. The long night wore through, the gale abated, and at dawn they were still afloat on a surging, tumbling sea with no land in sight. Wind and sea were still too high for the tender to be brought about. A small sail was rigged that steadied her, but she would not answer to her helm. Presently it was discovered the rudder was damaged, and there was water in the hold.

At the work at the pumps Hil lent a willing hand, glad of something to do. Then the gale recommenced, and for five weary days and nights the vessel was a helpless victim to its force. They were days of desperate work, scanty food

hastily snatched at irregular intervals, and sleep only when men dropped from sheer exhaustion. Other vessels were sighted, but assistance was out of the question.

At length the coast of Norway was sighted. The gale had blown itself out, the weather became fine, and it was possible to effect some kind of repair to the tender. Twelve days after Hil's capture the vessel's head was turned towards England.

"You're blooded now to a sailor's life," the lieutenant said to Hil, stopping near the lad, who was idly watching the water creaming about the forefoot. "You'll be glad of our meeting."

But Hil shook his head. He had hoped to fight for his country, but not in the manner Fate seemed to have decided.

"What is it of such vast importance you have left ashore?" the officer asked suddenly.

"The fulfilling of an obligation; the carrying out of a pledge to one to whom I owe much."

The officer whistled.

"That is awkward for a man of honour," he said. "It is an affair of honour?"

"I am to fight for Mr. D'Arcy Vavasour in the ring. I am a boxer," Hil said quietly.

"A boxer!" The officer stared. "D'Arcy Vavasour. I have heard of him. So you are of the Fancy. I have seen one or two battles when ashore. With whom do you fight, and when?"

"Against Fennel of Birmingham, and in five days' time."

An exclamation escaped the officer. He bit his lip. Then he said something uncomplimentary of the work on which he was engaged. It was not fit for an officer. He was sorry for Hil. If he had known he might— But his orders.

"The fault is not yours," said Hil; "but the result is the same."

"Of course, I might lose you," said the officer musingly, after a pause. "You have done something, after all, for your country. Without your muscles and the example you set this tub might not be afloat now, and his Majesty the loser by a couple of dozen stout seamen. As we near land you might steal a boat. It could be done. One more or less—"

He broke off quickly, for a sailor came to him to report a vessel coming up with the wind, all sail set.

"And main ugly she looks, sir," the man added. "A Frenchy, an' meaning mischief, I'll be bound."

So Hil and his affairs went into the background, the on-coming craft taking all attention. The sailor was right. A Frenchman she was, and a privateer at that. The tricolour went up, and a shot skimmed the water near the tender, a summons to heave-to.

In an instant all was haste and warm language aboard the tender. Stopped in English water by a rascally Frenchman! Fight! Of course the tender would fight, although the enemy was twice the size, even if the tender had been able to run, which she wasn't, the Frenchman sailing three times as fast. Muskets and cutlasses were fetched out, the one little gun loaded, and the men cheered in sober excitement.

"A French prison instead of an English ship for you, my friend," the lieutenant cried gaily to Hil. "I'll be blown to Davy Jones before I strike my flag."

Thus was Hilary Bevan pitchforked into a naval encounter, one of the many such since the war with France began. And manfully he played his part. From the first the combat was hopeless. Struck again and again, the tender became helpless. Twice the Frenchmen tried to board, and twice were repulsed. The captain led the second attempt, and it was a blow from a broken boarding-pike in Hil's hands that laid him senseless upon the deck. Enraged at this, the Frenchman sheered off, reloaded her guns, fired, and the tender went where her commander had wished her as an alternative to surrender.

Just as a man dealt a stunning blow reels under the shock, so the tender staggered. A shiver ran through her, and from the crew rose a cry that she was sinking.

Five minutes later a boat from the Frenchman was picking up the survivors, and Hil, one of ten others, found himself a prisoner. In escaping the frying-pan he had been thrown into the fire.

Hil's Return.

Prisoners in the filthy hold of the French privateer, Hil and his comrades in misfortune spent two miserable days. During the second afternoon they had the mortification of seeing a large English fishing-boat stopped, the catch coolly appropriated, and the unfortunate fishermen informed they were prisoners. It was insult added to injury to know that they were within twenty miles of the English coast, and a day's sail of the mouth of the Thames.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 296.

Like all such ships, the privateer carried a large crew. Prisoners were a nuisance aboard. Therefore, they were put on the smack, which a half-dozen men were to take into Calais, there to be sold, while the privateer continued her cruising until, as Hil devoutly hoped, some English man-o'-war should capture or sink her.

That was the intention of the French captain; but Hil thought otherwise. He gave three hours to thinking the matter over, lying with the others in the bottom of the smack. Some of these were wounded; but, including the rightful owners of the fishing craft, he reckoned there were sufficient sound men to help him carry out the scheme he planned.

They were eight in number, in a sulky rage at having been captured, brave enough and stout enough; but they wanted a leader. The lieutenant of the tender, who had been saved, had a broken arm, and a wound in the head that caused him to be slightly delirious at times. The leader they found in Hil.

During the middle watch, one bit through the rope that bound his wrists, and then he set to work to free the rest. Unfortunately, he had released but one fellow—the Burnham fisherman with a wife and two children—when the plot was discovered. One of the two Frenchmen sharing the watch heard a noise, and came to investigate. He saw what was going on, but too late to give the alarm. Hil jerked about, saw his head poked forward, and an uppercut of which Dutch Sam would have been proud took the unfortunate Frenchman wholly by surprise, and dropped him across one of the prisoners. There was no time to attend to them.

"Secure the other fellow!" ordered Hil.

And the fisherman he had released hurried to tackle the fellow at the smack's tiller, while Hil ran swiftly to the door of the cuddy, where the rest of the Frenchmen were asleep, and slammed it fast.

In a few seconds the men realised how finely they had been trapped, and the door resounded with their battering. Vociferously they yelled what they would do when they got out. But the interval was long enough for Hil to release the rest of the prisoners, now masters of the smack. Gear was piled in front of the door, into which the imprisoned men were furiously discharging their pistols, and the tiny skylight in the roof broken through.

Through the aperture Hil informed them that unless they consented to accept the situation and remain quiet, water would be pumped into the cuddy.

The threat cooled their ardour. The first dash of cold water, a foretaste of what they could expect, completely extinguished the desire towards combat, and their weapons were passed up through the skylight.

While this was going on the smack had been put about, and, with one of the Burnham natives at the helm, was tacking back along the coast, hugging it as nearly as possible. Four hours after dawn breaking, a fisherman announced they were off the Essex coast, and Hil and the lieutenant, whose condition had improved, had a conversation.

"Begad, sir, but it's a change of positions now!" the latter said, somewhat ruefully. "What is it you mean doing?"

"Going back to Burnham. I am told another three hours will see us within the river."

"And then?"

"Why, go about my own business, to be sure!"

"Have you forgotten, sir, that you are now a King's man, lawfully impressed, and liable to serve as a King's officer may direct?"

But there was a twinkle in the officer's eyes, and Hil smiled back at him.

"I don't think this King's officer and myself are going to quarrel as to what I do," he returned. "What do you propose to do?"

"Get these fishermen to carry my fellows and me to Sheerness, to report the loss of the tender. Then, if the big-wigs will give me another ship, I'd give much for another slap at that French rascal who sank her!"

"May it happen; and I wish you luck!" Hil said

"And the same to you!" was the hearty rejoinder. And the speaker held out his hand, which Hil gripped. "Knock that Birmingham man out of time, and win Mr. Vavasour his wager. You deserve to. I wish I could be there. But for you, I shouldn't be here now!"

With a hearty handshake with the good fellows he was leaving, Hil left the smack and went straight to the inn, where the landlord was as fully surprised and disgusted to see him as he had been at their first meeting. Guessing what had happened, he had meant claiming his property in the mare. Indeed, that very afternoon a man was coming to the inn as a possible purchaser; but Hil quickly convinced him there would be no sale that day.

Then he started on his fifty-mile ride for London.

(A long instalment of this grand serial next
Wednesday.)

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 296.

"THE MAGNET" LIBRARY,
Every Monday.

Our Companion Papers.

"THE PENNY POPULAR,"
Every Friday.

A NEW FREE CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGE

The only names and addresses which can be printed in these columns are those of readers living in any of our Colonies who desire Correspondents in Great Britain and Ireland.

Colonists sending in their names and addresses for insertion in the columns of this popular story-book must state what kind of correspondent is required—boy or girl, English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish.

Would-be correspondents must send with each notice two coupons, one taken from "The Gem," and one from the same week's issue of its companion paper, "The Magnet" Library. Coupons will always be found on page 2 of both papers, and requests for correspondents not containing these two coupons will be absolutely disregarded.

Readers wishing to reply to advertisements appearing in this column must write to the advertisers direct. No correspondence with advertisers can be undertaken through the medium of this office.

All advertisements for insertion in this Free Exchange should be addressed: "The Editor, 'The Gem' Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C."

Cecil Doveton, 29, Aberdeen Street, Woodstock, Cape Prov., South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers in the United Kingdom. Age 13-15.

C. A. McKelvey, "Nourse Mines," Box 32, Denver, near Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader interested in postcards. Age 17.

H. Stride, North Arm, P.O., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in the British Isles or Australia. Age 16-17.

E. R. Stevens, c.o., T. Hurry, Bowke Street, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in all parts of the world.

The Misses G. Martin and L. Dare, 22, Elm Grove, Brighton, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy readers from all parts of the world. Age 16-18.

E. G. Patterson, 103, Clarendon Street, Ballarat, Victoria, wishes to correspond with a boy reader interested in the cinematograph pictures, living in U.S.A., England, or Canada.

R. A. Jenkins, 14, Stirling Street, Footscray, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England. Age 15-16.

A. Chisholme, G.P.O., Brisbane, wishes to correspond with readers in the United Kingdom or India.

A. H. Mitchell, "La Mascotte," 105, Nicholson Street, East Brunswick, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with boy reader in the British Isles. Age 15-16.

A. E. Hall, 10, Second Street, La Rochelle, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader about 15-18, living in the British Isles.

A. W. Peel, 146, Jorjison Street, Wanderer's View, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with a girl reader. Age 14-15.

K. Raney, 416, Lawrie Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers in the Colonies.

O. H. Rost, Post Office, Auckland Park, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps. Age 15-17.

A. Andrews, Orlando Street, Hampton, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers interested in postcards.

Masakazu Shindo, 17, Komagatani, Minamikawachi, Osaka, Japan, wishes to correspond with boy and girl readers.

L. Foley, "Broigo," Collingwood Street, Manly, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

No. 3. GRAND NEW SERIES OF FOOTBALL ARTICLES.



The one thought which occurs to me as I sit down to write about the most memorable goals I have scored, is the fact that far too much fuss is made of the people who score the goals—too much praise is for the man who puts the ball in the net. Looking back over my career, I can think of quite a lot of goals which I have obtained without working for at all. Somebody else has done all the donkey work, and then at the last moment has sent the ball to me in such a way that I could not do anything else but score. Despite this, I have got all the praise.

It is for these reasons that I would willingly see abolished the list of goal-scorers which the newspapers publish about the leading players from time to time. In a football team, the first thing that should be remembered is that it does not matter a little bit who scores the goals so long as they are scored. The man who does the work should get the praise.

Of course, goal-scoring is not as easy as it looks. Very often the man in the crowd wonders how So-and-so missed what he calls an "open goal," but I can assure the critic that it is very often much easier to miss than to hit the net. Those who have played football will agree with me that it is terribly easy to send the ball over the bar, and I am rather glad that I have been asked to talk about the goals I have scored, rather than the goals I have missed scoring. The memory of the latter is best left sleeping.

Where shall I begin to pick out the outstanding goals of the four hundred or so which I have landed since I joined a first-class club? I must start somewhere, however, so I shall give the palm to the goal which I recorded for England against Scotland at the Crystal Palace at the International in 1931. There is no need to tell you how important are these games between the two countries. As it happened, this particular contest was played on a ground which was in as bad a state as a football ground could be.

Ten minutes from the end England were losing a goal to nothing, and it seemed to everybody as if the contest was over, bar the shouting. Hardly any of the players had a run left, and I was myself waiting for the end, when the ball came to me from somewhere. I was near the half-way line, but quickly the thought came to me, "Now is your chance, Steve!" Away I went with the leaden ball at my toe. How I found the energy I do not know, but I kept plodding on—past the half-back, past the back, stumbling now and then, but going ahead and keeping possession all the time. And with a last mighty effort I landed the ball past the goalkeeper! The game was saved, and Steve Bloomer was done. They picked me up and rubbed some life into me, but I went through the few remaining minutes as one in a dream, and if ever I was tired, it was that night.

My friends sometimes chaff me about a goal I scored a few years ago for Derby County. They declare it was the best goal I ever got; anyhow, it just shows how little real merit there is in the list of goal-scorers. Our centre-forward kicked the ball well up the field, and off I raced after it. The goalkeeper came out of his goal, and, as it happened, he got there first. He gave the ball a terrific kick, but, as luck would have it, sent it right into my middle, from whence it bounded through the goal. Now you know what a good hard hit with the ball in the stomach means, don't you? A sudden shortage of wind, and a feeling that you want to die. That was how I felt; but when I came round, then my colleagues told me it was a fine goal. I don't want to get any more like that, however.

The year 1895 was before practice test matches were abolished. These, as the readers may be aware, were games between the bottom clubs in the First League and the top clubs in the Second Division. If the Second Leaguers beat the First Leaguers, they exchanged places. So when my own club, Derby County, finished at the bottom of the League I, and had to meet Notts County, who were at the top of League II., the excitement may be imagined. It was a thrilling game—played on a neutral ground, of course. The ball travelled from end to end, and there was very little in the contest. At length Notts got a goal, and, try as we would, we could not get the ball past their goalkeeper. Slowly, but none the less surely, we saw our place in the First League vanishing. Ten minutes remained, and we were still a goal behind. Still the minutes ticked off. The referee was looking at his watch.

"How much longer?" I asked him.
 "Five minutes to go!" came the reply.
 Five minutes in which to save a side from extinction! About the halfway line I pounced on the ball. Off towards goal I went with it at my feet. A big full-back came up, but I evaded him. Another



"On towards goal I went, with the ball at my feet. A big full-back dashed up, but I evaded him. Could I do it?"

pushed across the net, and he was bent on destruction. In missing his wild rush I nearly lost the ball, but managed to recover. Could I do it? There was only the goalkeeper now, and as I ran on to him I caught a passing glimpse of those thousands of people waiting and watching spellbound. Well, somehow or other I took my shot, and had the pleasure of seeing the goalkeeper beaten. It is on occasions like these that one appreciates the value of a cool head to the goal-scorer.

Although there were only about four minutes to go, we played afterwards like men possessed, and just as the referee was on the point of blowing his whistle for the finish another of our forwards got the ball home. We had won on the post, after apparently being beaten to the world. There is a fine lesson for the young footballer in our success of that day. A game is never lost until it is won. Never give up, then. Until the final whistle goes all things are possible.

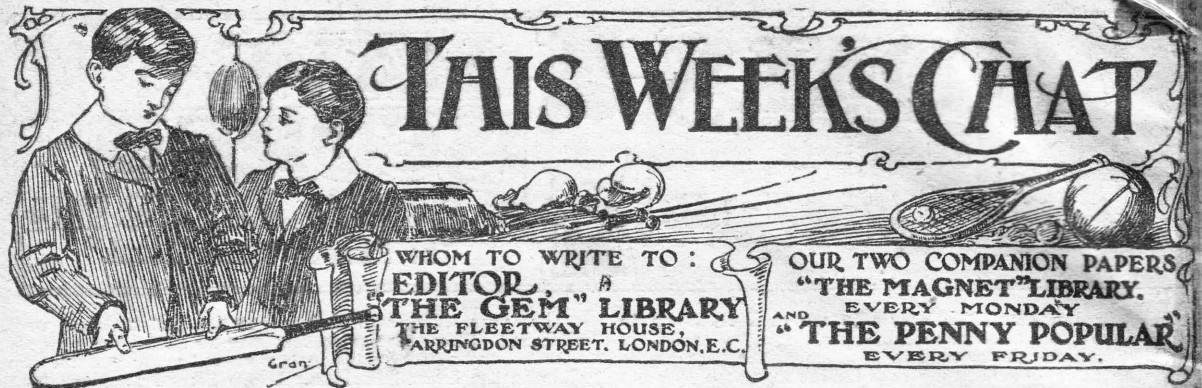
Naturally, I shall remember as long as I live the goals which I scored in my first International match. As it happened, the game was at Derby—my own town—and was against Ireland. Fortunately, too, my club-mate, Johnny Goodall, was at the last moment chosen to play centre-forward. This made me less nervous than I should otherwise have been, but, all the same, I was very anxious. I got along all right after the first few minutes, thanks to the help I received from the men on either side of me, and in the course of my first International I landed three goals. It was not a bad start. I have often been asked to explain why I got so many goals in my career. Really, however, there is little to tell. I have always made it my business to shoot on every available opportunity; because they fail to do that is the reason why so many forwards fail to score goals to-day. They want too easy chances. Shoot, and trust to luck, is a better policy. Failure to get home with one shot should never keep a young player from trying again.

Steve Bloomer

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 296.
 By J. W. BACHE,
 Captain of Aston Villa.

Next Wednesday: "MISTAKES YOUNG CAPTAINS MAKE!"

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday.

"A DISGRACE TO HIS HOUSE!"By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

In our next splendid, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's, the title role is played by a new fellow, who comes to the School.

Koumi Rao, Jam of Bundelphore, becomes an inmate of the New House, and is put in Figgins & Co.'s study—not a little to that worthy trio's dismay. The Jam soon shows that he is a true son of the East, and his passionate nature comes out in the violent enmity he conceives for Tom Merry. Matters go from bad to worse, until the dusky junior earns the title of

"A DISGRACE TO HIS HOUSE!"

When the climax comes, Tom Merry has some moments of deadly peril, but finally wins his enemy over by an act of unselfish gallantry.

ANOTHER AUSTRALIAN GIRL'S VIEWS.

One of my Australian girl-chums writes me a letter which Old Country readers are sure to be particularly interested in, since the writer comments upon the mistaken ideas about Australia which are so prevalent in the British Isles. Here is the principal part of my Australian girl-chum's letter:

"Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia.

"Dear Editor,—I am an interested reader of all three of your papers, and although we get numbers of papers every week, there are none that I look forward to so much as 'The Gem,' 'The Magnet,' and 'The Penny Popular.' In fact, as I get them all on the one day, I do not know which to start with, they are all so interesting.

"What struck me most forcibly when reading one English paper, was the idea that people over in England have about Australia. I read the letter sent by one English girl to the editor. She stated that she was going to Australia, and wondered how she should obtain the paper. The young lady said she was going to Sydney, and was sure she should not be able to get her favourite paper there.

"We in Australia read these letters with interest; it seems so ridiculous that educated people should have such perverted views of Australian conditions.

"Any English paper is obtainable in any town in Australia very shortly after the arrival of the English mail, which is generally about five weeks after publication.

"I am only a schoolgirl, fifteen years old, but my greatest ambition is to travel, and judge for myself what the world is like, and not trust to what I read to form my opinion of things. Wishing your paper every success,

"I remain, your constant reader,

"HAZEL M.

"P.S.—I am doing my best to help your papers on here. They are very popular already.—H. M."

OUR COMPANION PAPER'S BIRTHDAY.

No. 52 of "The Penny Popular," which is now on sale, is

THE FIRST BIRTHDAY NUMBER

of our grand companion paper, and many are the congratulatory letters I have received from my loyal reader-friends upon this auspicious occasion. I wish to thank the writers of all these nice letters here and now. I should much like to print a selection of the letters on this page, but lack of space precludes anything of the sort. I will, therefore, have to be contented with giving an extract from one of them—an extract which pretty well sums up the gist of them all:

"When I first saw No. 1 of 'The Penny Pop.," writes A. R. (of Leeds), in the course of his congratulatory letter, "I said to myself at once, 'This is a winner, and no mistake!' And so it has proved, thanks to you, Mr. Editor. No paper with such a contents list could fail to go well—the best of everything in the story line for a penny, as it were. I hope I shall still be reading 'The Penny Popular' on its twenty-first birthday!"

That sort of letter is one of the chief compensations of an editor's life, as it makes him feel that his days—and nights—of work and worry have not been in vain. My Leeds chum was quite right, too, in dubbing "The Penny Popular" a winner. Started in response to the urgent request of thousands of readers of "The Gem" and "The Magnet" Libraries, it has forged steadily ahead from the very first number, until now, on its first birthday, it is firmly established in popular favour as one of the "Invincible Trio" of companion papers. In conclusion, I will echo A. R.'s wish. I, too, hope that he will be reading "The Penny Popular" on its twenty-first birthday!

HOW TO WRITE A SHORT STORY.—No. 6.

By a Successful Author.

THE TOPICAL STORY.

The Topical Story, to be successful, should be written around some event that is claiming public attention at the time. It should be written quickly, and despatched quickly. Any of the bright, go-ahead weekly journals such as "Answers," will accept well-written topical stories. Your topical story, however, must not be a re-hash of newspaper accounts. Take a railway accident, for instance. In it you will merely find a peg upon which to hang your story. Give plenty of time to fundamental conception before you commence to write, and, if you can possibly manage it, include some interesting information about some phase of the railway, such as "Inside a Signalman's Box, etc."

Turning again to such an accident, you might start a theme on these lines, giving it a title such as "The Engine Driver's Child." The driver of an important express has a vindictive enemy, who is jealous of his advancement. It happens that the engine driver's child is very ill, but the father has to take a local train to the centre to board the express. As the express passes a spot half a mile from the driver's cottage, also on the line, a note attached to a stone is flung into the engine. The note appears to be from the man's wife, and says that his child is dying. Will he dare all and forsake his post for the sake of his child? Will he? That is a question which I leave you to answer yourselves.

Those of you who essay the topical story, will do well to pursue this theme further, and it should provide a parallel for many other similar stories.

Remember that most papers go to press at least a fortnight in advance, and it is no use writing a story around a subject which will be entirely forgotten by the public when your paper is published.

Just one last word. If you want to know what a signalman does in his box, do not buy a book upon the subject. Get hold of the signalman in his box—and do not forget that signalling is thirsty work.

(Another of these interesting articles next week. Order a copy now.)

The Editor



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE!

THE SCORE STILL GOING UP.

Mrs. Honey-moon (to husband in railway-carriage): "Do you love me?"

Old Party (confidentially whispering to bridegroom): "She's asked you that forty-seven times already. I get out here, but I'll leave the score with the gentleman in the corner."—Sent in by C. Hughes, Manchester.

NOT PLAYING THE GAME.

Two men out fishing one day wagered who would have the biggest catch. The day being hot, one of the men fell asleep, and, losing his balance, fell into the river.

"Nay, Bill, we'll have none of that!" shouted his companion. "The bet's off. No diving for 'em!"—Sent in by B. Hutton, Collyhurst.

A DROUGHT.

A small Scottish boy was summoned to give evidence against his father, who was charged with causing a disturbance in the street.

"Come, my wee little mon," said the magistrate kindly, "let us know all you can about this affair."

"Weel," began the laddie, "d'ye ken Inverness Street?"

"Yes," replied the magistrate encouragingly. "Well, ye gang along there, and turn to the right into the square, which you cross. An' when ye've crossed the square ye turn to the left into the High Street, and oop along it 'till you coom to a pump."

"Yes, I ken the pump well myself," said the magistrate. "Weel," said the laddie, with the utmost simplicity, "ye can go and pump it, for ye'll no' pump me!"—Sent in by D. Owen, Manchester.

THE CANNY SCOT.

For once the American had discovered something British that was better than anything "across the pond." His discovery was a fine collie dog, and he at once tried to induce its owner, an old shepherd, to sell it.

"Would ye be takin' him to America?" asked the old Scot.

"Waal, I guess so," drawled the American. "I thoct as muckle," replied the old shepherd. "I couldna part wi' Jock."

But while they sat and chatted an English tourist came up, and offered to buy the collie, for which he named a sum. This was much smaller than that which the American had offered, but, nevertheless, the shepherd accepted the offer.

As soon as the tourist had gone, with the dog on the leash, an outburst of questions assailed the old Scot.

"You told me you wouldn't sell him!" said the Yankee indignantly.

"Naw," replied the Scot, with a wink. "Jock will be back in a day or two. But he couldna swim the Atlantic."—Sent in by H. Smith, Herne Hill, London.

HE SHUT HIM UP.

A gentleman was to give a speech at a meeting, but nobody turned up except a very fat reporter. After a while the gentleman remarked:

"There doesn't seem to be anybody coming, so I may as well give you my lecture to write down."

"Very well;—I am quite ready," said the reporter.

"After a large and respectable meeting—" began the lecturer.

"But that is not correct," said the reporter, with a wave of his fat hand round the room.

"Why not?" was the reply. "You are large, and I am respectable."—Sent in by A. Wilkinson, Droylesden, near Manchester.

VERY TRUE.

Lodger: "But you advertised that one could see for miles from this room?"

Landlady: "Well, so you can. You can see the moon from this skylight. And ain't that miles away?"—Sent in by R. Stoodley, London.

EASY ENOUGH.

Brown: "Did you hear the wonderful way a man recovered his sight the other day?"

Jones: "No, I didn't. What happened?"

Brown: "Why, he went into an ironmonger's shop and asked for a mallet—and saw!"—Sent in by H. A. Smith, Manor Park.

RATHER NEAR.

Mrs. Jones was known to her boarders as being rather "near" in the portions she doled out at her table. At one dinner, wishing to be polite to a new boarder, she asked:

"Mr. Finley, how did you find your steak this evening?"

"By turning my potato over," replied the boarder.—Sent in by Miss H. Peacey, Cinderford.

JUST IN TIME.

Perturbed Diner: "What on earth's the matter with you this evening, waiter? First you give me the fish, and now you give me the soup!"

Waiter (confidentially): "Well, to tell you the truth, sir, it was 'high time you had that fish.'"—Sent in by H. West, Glastonbury.

TACT.

Miss Haskom (aged 40): "I wish to see a bonnet."

Miliner: "Marie, run downstairs and get me a hat for a lady between eighteen and twenty-five years."

Bonnet sold.—Sent in by Ian-Hart, Camberwell.

SIX MONTHS' HARD!

Parson: "Is your father working, Tommy?"

Tommy: "Yes, sir."

Parson: "How long has he been there?"

Tommy: "Three months."

Parson: "What's he doing?"

Tommy: "Six!"—Sent in by E. Hills, Lewisham, S.E.

FAIRLY PUT THE CAP ON!

Hamlet Fitzshakespeare, the author, producer, and principal actor in the thrilling drama, "The Mystery of the Half-Sucked Peppermint; or, the Dustman's Revenge," met a friend the other evening.

"Hallo, Fitz!" said the latter. "I hear you sacked the whole of your orchestra last night. What on earth did you want to do that for?"

"Yes—the silly asses!" exclaimed the great Fitz. "They went and spoiled the best scene in the whole play!"

"How did they do it?"

"Well, I told the conductor to pick out an appropriate piece of music for each scene, and you know where the judge condemns me to death?"

"Yes, yes!"

"When the judge puts on the black cap, the s-silly idiots at once struck up 'Where Did You Get That Hat?' wound up the disgusted tragedian.—Sent in by A. Sloan, Shotley Naval Barracks, Harwich.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED!

Readers are invited to send **ON A POSTCARD** Storyettes or Short, Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the senders will receive a Money Prize.

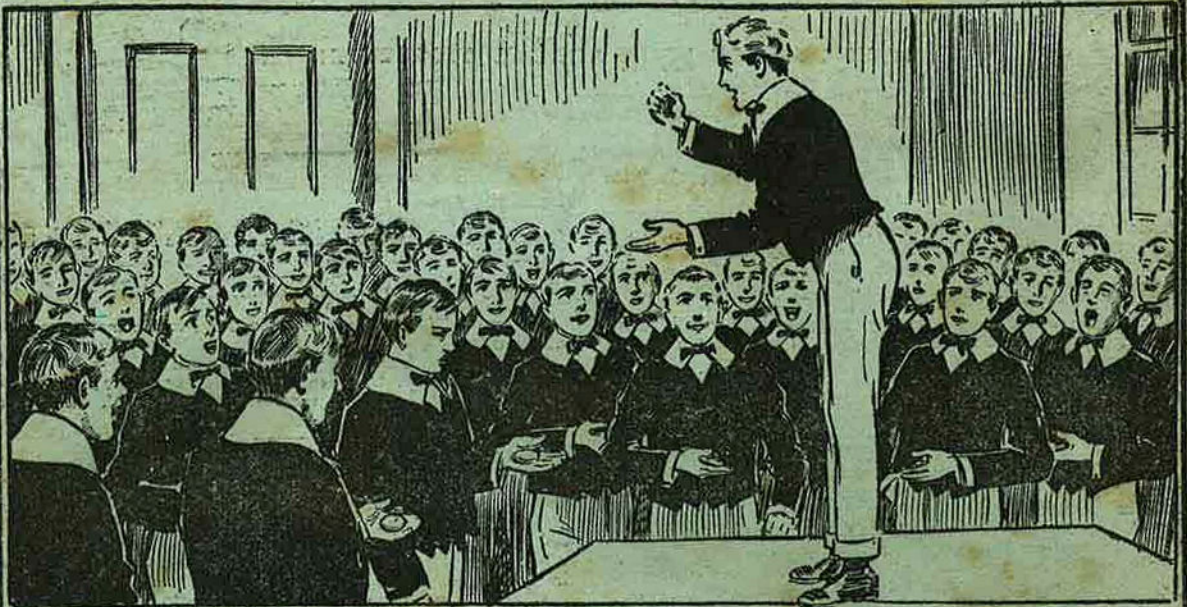
ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED The Editor, "The Gem" Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this Competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.

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OUT ON FRIDAY

PLUCK

WHAT HAS HAPPENED UP THE STAIRWAY?

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