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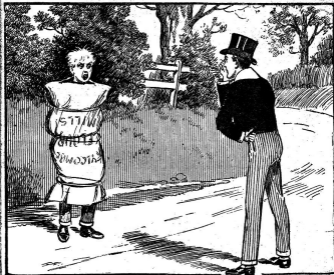
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A DANGEROUS DOUBLE

A Splendid New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's.

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**



The justice in the sack glared ferociously at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Help me out of this!" he panted. D'Arcy stood surveying him through his monocle, in a state of great astonishment. "But I've! What have you fixed yourself up like that for, dear boy?" he asked. (See Chapter 2.)

CHAPTER I.

In the Hands of the Philistines!

TOM MERRY

"Great Scott!"

"That takes the cake!"

Gordon Gay & Co., of Rylcombe Grammar School, halted in the lane in sheer astonishment.

To say that they were surprised would be putting it too mildly.

They were astounded.

It was a Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday both at St. Jim's and at the Grammar School. And as St. Jim's and Rylcombe Grammar School were in a state of perpetual warfare—as far as the justices were concerned, at least—Gordon Gay & Co. had determined to improve the shining hour by

making a harmless and necessary run with the St. Jim's fellows.

As Gay ruminated, with the hearty concurrence of his comrades, how could a half-holiday be better spent than in ragging the St. Jim's fellows, and getting to them beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Grammar School was top dog? With that noble intention the Co. came along the lane, their eyes open and alert for the enemy. So it was that they came to spot the justice who was sitting on the stile, half-way between Rylcombe and St. Jim's.

They recognized him at once. There was no mistaking the handsome face, the wavy blue eyes, and the curly hair, though, as it happened, the justice was not in Rylcombe, and was not wearing a St. Jim's cap.

That was not so much a matter of surprise, as the way in which the justice was occupied.

Next Wednesday:

"A CHANGE OF IDENTITY!" AND "PLAYING THE GAME!"

He sat on the stile, shaded by a big tree from the spring sunshine, with a pink sporting paper on his knees. As he glanced down the column of the paper he was rolling a cigarette, and smoking it slowly as fast as he could. Several other fellows leaned over the stile, there were half a dozen cigarette ends, and in many bursts matches. A thin cut of Shoboo rose from the cigarette the junior was smoking at present.

He wondered the Grammarian were astonished. He was in full view of the junior on the stile, but he was deeply engrossed in his sporting paper and his cigarettes that he did not observe their approach.

Gordon Gay & Co. exchanged several glances.
 "It's Tom Merry," said Gay, in a whisper out of way.
 "Tom Merry of St. Jim's, and—look at him!"
 "Blasted! I've overlooked he was that sort of cheap!" remarked Wootton major.

"What an awful snob, too!" said Frank Monk. "Why, any reader or perfect from St. Jim's might pose at any moment and spot him!"
 "And then he'd get it in the neck!" said Carboy.
 "Yes, rather."

The junior on the stile rolled a fresh cigarette, and lit it. The Grammarian juniors watched him with a back, astounded gaze. They simply could not understand it.

It was not only that smoking was strictly forbidden among the juniors of St. Jim's. It was considered bad form also. "Bottlers," like Leveson and McEish, and Cutts of the Fifth, indulged in that kind of thing, but Tom Merry—never! His own pals—Mazzers and Lovewell—the Head himself, if they had seen him. And the pink paper, too. The Grammarians could see what that was. It was an astounding revelation of a side of the junior's character they had never suspected or dreamed of suspecting.

The most reckless of the "black sheep" at St. Jim's kept some sort of caution when they were indulging in that kind. But the staid respectability of the junior visiting those smoking on the stile was the most astounding part of the affair. Anybody might have seen upon him there, just as the Grammarian had done. And such conduct meant a flogging, if not the "sack," if it were discovered. It seemed to the Grammarians that Tom Merry of the Shell must have taken leave of his senses.

"Simply ailing for the sack!" said Gay thoughtfully.
 "Blamed if I understand it," said Wootton major. "He must be off his rocker—right off his giddy rocker! That's the only explanation."
 "Looks like it!"
 "Not even keeping his eyes open!" said Gay. "He hasn't seen us yet."

"He's going to see us soon!" grinned Frank Monk.
 And the Grammarians chuckled. They had been seeking St. Jim's fellows for a year, and here was the great chief and leader of the St. Jim's juniors right in their hands. Gordon Gay glanced round at his fellows.

"Guinevere," he said, "I think this is where we chip in."
 "Hear, hear!" murmured the Co.
 "That silly snob is ailing for the sack. We came out for a reg; but this is a serious business. It's up to us to save this fellow. Anybody might have seen upon him like a giddy breeze from the burning. We are going to teach him better manners."

"Pie in!" said Wootton major.
 "He's ailing for the sack, isn't he?" said Gay.
 "Seems like it?"
 "Then I propose that we give him the sack!"
 "Oh!"

"As a warning of what he may expect if he doesn't mend his manners, and become a good, nice little boy like—like us!" said Gay loftily. "It's up to us. When we passed the Green Man just now I noticed a heap of loose nails in the east in the yard. They won't be wanted just yet. We're going to borrow one of them. Cut off, one of you, and get a sack!"

"But—but what—" began Wootton major.
 Gordon Gay waved his hand contemptuously. He was leader of the Grammarian juniors, and like all great leaders he liked to have his commands obeyed without question.
 "You cut off and get the sack!" he said.
 "Yes; but—"
 "If it isn't returned we'll pay for it. I know the cost. But we've got to have the sack, for the benefit of that misguided youth yonder. Cut off, and don't jaw!"

Wootton major said no further dunn. He hurried back along the lane towards the Green Man. The juniors knew the miller to whom the cart belonged, and Wootton knew that there would be no difficulty raised about borrowing the sack, but he wondered what on earth Gay wanted it for. However, with Gordon Gay's following, the case was the same as with the famous Light Brigade. "Their job to reason why, their lot to make reply." As Gay frequently remarked, he was ready to do all the thinking that was required.

As Wootton departed, the Co. walked on towards the stile. The junior sitting there did not raise his head from the pink paper. He blew out little clouds of cigarette smoke, and read on loosely. Over the trees, in the distance, rose into view the grey and white spire of St. Jim's. The reckless fellow was almost within sight of the school. His nerves were amazing. It was only, as Gay remarked, as if he were deliberately asking to be sacked from the school.

"Hello, Tom Merry!" exclaimed Gordon Gay, halting before the stile.
 Then the junior looked up.
 He did not seem to be taken aback. He held his cigarette between his finger and thumb, and glanced carelessly over the pink paper at the Grammarians.

"Hello!" he replied.
 "Enjoying your little smoke?" asked Gay sarcastically.
 "Yes, thanks."
 "Isn't it sweet to meet us?" asked Gay.
 "No; why should it?"
 "How are Mazzers and Lovewell and V'Arcy, and all the old folks at home?" asked Frank Monk stably.

The junior stared at him.
 "I don't know what you're talking about," he said.
 "Please don't bother me. I'm rather busy."
 The Grammarians exchanged glances. The junior seemed to have no suspicion that a reg was intended. And that was very odd, too, because Tom Merry was always the leader in the little altercations and quarrels between the St. Jim's fellows and the Grammarians.

"Bury—oh!" said Gordon Gay reflectively. "Looking out winners—oh?"
 "Yes, if you want to know."
 "Rather a new departure for you, isn't it?"
 "Not at all."

"Oh, you're used to this kind of thing, are you?" asked Gay, in surprise.
 "Certainly!"
 "You've kept it jolly dark, then. I never had an idea of it, for one," said Gay. "I and I envy the other fellows at St. Jim's don't know anything about it."

"I don't see how you could have any idea of it, as you've never seen me before, and I don't know you," said the junior calmly. "And I don't see what business it is of yours, anyway. Perhaps you're taking me for somebody else?"
 "Oh, don't be funny!" said Gay, a little testily. "I suppose we knew you well enough, Tom Merry!"

"Tom Merry!"
 "Look here, I suppose you're not going to pretend that you're not Tom Merry?" exclaimed Gay, almost beginning to believe that the junior was really out of his senses.
 "He, he, ha!"

"What are you ailing at?" demanded Gay sharply.
 "I remember now," said the junior lazily. "I was taken for a fellow of that name before by some fellows belonging to St. Jim's. Some are called Piggies or Wiggins, or something. I'm not Tom Merry!"

The Grammarians stared at him some blankly then over. The whole affair was a surprise to them; but for Tom Merry of St. Jim's to deny his own identity, to fellows who knew him perfectly well, was the most surprising of all.
 "Do you think we're going to swallow that?" gasped Gay, at last.

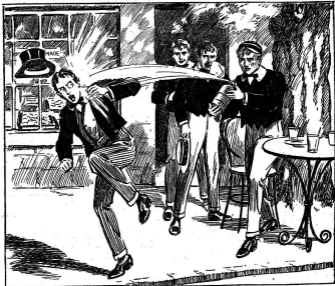
"I don't care whether you do or not," said the junior, removing his cigarette. "I don't know you, and don't want to. Good-bye!"
 "Well, we know you!" said Gay gleefully. "As you've forgotten us, I'll introduce myself. I'm Gordon Gay from Australia—"

"I don't see who you are, or where you're from. I'd be obliged if you'd leave me alone to read my paper!"
 "I dare say you would!" chuckled Gay. "But I'm not

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A flood of cold water seizes the swirl of St. Jim's, and he staggered back with a yell. Tom Merry grinned through the jam, and followed him up until the water in the syphon was exhausted. "Ow! Urrook!" spluttered D'Arcy. "Cheek! Tom Merry!" (See Chapter 4.)

going to oblige you like that. To get on with the introducing, this chap with the face is Frank Monk—"

"Look here—" began Monk wrathfully.
 "The fellow with the nose is Carboy."
 "You let my nose alone!" howled Carboy.
 "My dear chap, I wouldn't touch it with a post-pole!" sneered Gordon Gay. "This other chap, with the mouth, is Lane—"

"Why, you silly rump, what about your own gap?" sneered Lane.

"And the kid with the freckles is Wootton reiser. And here comes Wootton major, with the sack!" added Gordon Gay. "Tom Merry, you are in the hands of the Philistines. I thought you would try to cut and run, and I thought you'd try to dodge us somehow. But I never thought you'd tell such a shocking lie as to deny your own name. You see, you can't expect fellows who know you to take that in. It's too thick!"

"I suppose it's a job," said Frank Monk. "But I'm blessed if I see where the joke comes in. Are you going penny, Tom Merry?"

"I tell you I'm not Tom Merry!"

"And I tell you you're an Ananias, a Manasse, and a cropper, all rolled into one!" said Gordon Gay. "Moreover—that's a good word—we have formed ourselves into a Committee of Public Morality, for this occasion only, to deal with a sad case of backsliding—you, you know! These bad habits you are cultivating will get you the sack. Take warning in time—"

"Look here, you fool—"
 "Easy does it!" said Gay, lifting a warning finger. "I don't like being called names like that, Tom Merry!"

"You cross idiot—"

"You are going on the way that leads to the sack, and we're going to give you the sack—this sack—as a warning in time," said Gay immovably. "As the proverb says, a stick in time saves you from getting it in the sack. Collar him!"

"Hands off!" yelled the junior. "I tell you—yarruk!"

The pink paper flew in one direction, and the cigarette in another, as the junior came down off the stile in the grasp of many hands, and rolled on the ground.

CHAPTER 2.

Sacked!

"SIT on him!"

"Collar him!"

"Bump him!"

"My hat! Hold him, the beast!"

The junior who had been so unceremoniously collared by the Grammarians was fighting like a wild cat. There were eight galore among the Saints and the Grammarians, and hard knocks were often given and received; but they always "played the game" in their most excited moments. But the struggling junior seemed to have no idea of playing the game. He was kicking, bearing, even smacking, as he fought furiously in the grasp of the Grammarians. Frank Monk gave a yell of pain as nails scored down his face, leaving a red streak behind. And Carboy howled like a hyena as his head was bitten savagely.

"My word!" panted Gay. "He's a blessed wild beast! Hold him tight! And now bump him hard! Blessed if I

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ever expected Tom Merry to play the giddy jake like that! Shows that you never know a fellow till you find him out! Bump him!"

The Grammarians were angry now. They had meant to rag their prisoner, but not, of course, to hurt him. But the courage renegade of the captured junior, and the reckless injuries he inflicted, exasperated their tempers.

They grasped him, and lifted him clear of the ground, and slapped him hard. There was a roar of rage and pain from the victim.

"Ow, ow! You only! Oh!"

"Give him another!"

"Ow! Yarosh! Help!"

"Now," shouted Monk, "perhaps you'll behave yourself, you cad! You've scratched me like a cat, you rotten rotter!"

"Ow, ow!"

The junior was still struggling, but feebly. The Grammarians were too many for him, and they were not handling him gently, either. He did not deserve to be handled gently.

Gordon Gay drew a length of whipcord from his pocket, and tied the prisoner's wrists behind his back. Then he was allowed to rise to his feet.

His face was white with rage, and his eyes were gleaming. "You rotter!" he panted. "You hounds! I'll pay you out for this! Hang you!"

He was looking very dirty and disheveled. His cap was gone, and his hair was wildly ruffled—his collar was torn out, and his clothes were rumpled and smothered with dust.

"Now give him the sack!" said Gay cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The big Bear sack was drawn over the head and shoulders of the junior, covering him from his head almost to his feet. A muffled howl was heard from within the sack.

"Enough!"

Gordon Gay opened his pocket-knife, and slit an opening in the bottom of the sack. The head of the imprisoned junior emerged through the slit, the sack settling down over his shoulders. The Grammarians roared as they saw his face. It was smothered with the flour that clung to the interior of the sack. Fans and snags and hair were snowy white. The junior, as he panted for breath, blew out little clouds of flour.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Gordon Gay. "What a giddy ghost!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me go at once!" shrieked the junior. "You hounds! Let me go at once!"

"No hurry!" said Gay calmly. "We're not quite finished yet. When we're quite finished, we'll let you go with pleasure!"

He tied a length of whipcord round the sack, knotting it lightly, and drawing it into the junior's figure. With his hands tied behind his back as they were, the prisoner had no chance whatever of getting out of the sack.

Then the Grammarians stood back, and regarded him with roars of laughter.

The aspect of the captured junior was certainly very funny. Only his boots and trouser-ends appeared below the sack; and above it was the white and foxy face, with two eyes blazing with rage from amid the coating of flour.

"I think he'll do!" commented Gordon Gay.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That sack won't be much use afterwards," Frank Monk remarked. "We'd better call on the miller and pay for it!"

"Worth a couple of bob, to give Tom Merry this valuable warning about the error of his ways!" said Gay.

"Yes, rather! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you I'm not Tom Merry!" shrieked the prisoner.

"And I tell you you're a whacking whopper-merchant!" said Gordon Gay.

"Let me go!"

Gordon Gay waved his hand airily.

"You can go!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha! Merch!" yelled Frank Monk. "It will cause a bit of a stir at St. Jim's. But you can explain that you met some 'Innocent on the road.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The prisoner panted with rage.

"You—you don't seem to have me like this!" he cried.

"You've guessed it!"

"I—I can't go away like this! I—I—"

"You've got to! You needn't go into the school like it, you know—walk about the road till you meet another chap from St. Jim's and ask him to let you out," shrieked Gordon

Gay. "We have performed this painful duty as a warning to you—"

"Let me out!"

"Rate!"

"I—I'll make you suffer for this—"

"Any time you care to drop in at the Grammar School, I'll be pleased to see you, with or without gloves," said Gay politely.

"Save here!" said Monk, rubbing the scratch on his face. "I'll jolly well like to have the millstone on with you, you rotter!"

"Gentlemen," said Gay, "we have done our duty. I suggest that we go and pay the miller for his sack, and then adjourn to Mrs. Murphy's for liquid refreshment. It's my treat!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the Grammarians, yelling with laughter, trooped off down the road, leaving the junior struggling in the sack. He was struggling fiercely to release his hands, but Gay had bound his wrists too securely for that. The Grammarians disappeared in the distance, and the "seceded" junior was left alone.

It was about five minutes later that an elegant figure came in view along the road from the direction of St. Jim's. That elegant figure was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's. The swell of St. Jim's was ambling elegantly down to Ryelombie, his silk hat and his eyes gleaming in the sun.

He passed in astonishment at the sight of the peculiar figure in the road.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, and he jammed his monocle a little more tightly into his eye. "Great Scott! I wonder what that is! Must be somebody from a circus!"

And he approached the strange figure with considerable curiosity.

The junior in the sack had been struggling for five minutes, and he was now as breathless as he was furious, and as far from release as when the Grammarians had left him. He glared at Arthur Augustus through the powdering of flour.

"Help me out of this!" he panted.

Arthur Augustus stood holding his monocle between finger and thumb, surveying him, in a state of great astonishment.

"Bai Jim! Who are you, dear boy?" he ejaculated.

"Help me out, will you?"

"Fray, what have you done that for?"

"B—blame what?"

"Fixed myself up like that, I mean?"

"You silly idiot!" roared the unhappy prisoner of the sack. "Do you think I did this of my own accord! Help me out of it!"

Arthur Augustus regarded him deliberately. He was offended. The swell of St. Jim's was quite willing, at any time, to extend a helping hand to a stranger in distress. But he required to be addressed with civility. He did not particularly care to go too close to the soaked stranger, at the risk of getting flour smeared upon his elegant "clobber."

But he would have run even that dreadful risk, if the boy had asked him civilly. But politeness was the first requirement.

"Fray what did you call me?" inquired Arthur Augustus urbanely.

"Silly idiot! Help me!"

"I refuse to take the slightest notice of a fellow who addresses me in that utterly wicked and disrespectful manner."

"Will you help me? I've been tied up in this sack by a gang of young scoundrels!"

"I refuse to help you in the slightest degree unless you apologise for your wicked way of addressing me," said Arthur Augustus frigidly.

"Oh, you fool! You cheap!"

"Very well, I will pass on. I leave you to weep on the value of common politeness to a stranger," said D'Arcy loftily.

He was about to walk on, with his aristocratic nose a little higher than usual in the air, when he passed, and looked once more closely at the foxy features.

"Bai Jove! I seem to know you!" he remarked. "Your voice sounds like Tom Merry's, too!"

"Will you help me?"

"I cannot quite recognize you with that flax on your chin. Are you Tom Merry?"

"Yes," panted the boy in the sack desperately. "I—I'm Tom Merry of St. Jim's. Now help me out of the sack!"

ANSWERS

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The junior in the sack turned quickly at the sound of his name. Evidently it was a familiar voice to him.

"Oh, it's you, Goring!" he exclaimed, in a tone of relief. "Come and get me out of this!"

The man stood staring at him. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy glanced curiously at the man. He was a tall, slim fellow, dressed fashionably, though with a somewhat fussy air about him. His tupper was as glistening as D'Arcy's own, and he carried a gold-headed Maltese cane in a delicately-gloved hand. His hair was dark, as if from sunbath in a salubrious climate; his hair black and curly, and his upper lip was adorned by a black mustache pointed in the French manner. An Egyptian swag on a silken cord round his neck, and he raised it to his eye and stared at the flour-mocked figure precisely as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had done.

"Don't stand there staring like a hellock!" howled the junior in the sack. "Come and help me, can't you?"

"God!" exclaimed the oppressed stranger. "How did you get into that pickle?"

"Help me out, man!"

"As you seem to have met a friend, I will leave you in his hands, my dear boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You might have been released several minutes ago, Tom Merry, if you had been civil. But I always make it a point to refuse to be treated with gross disrespect!"

The junior in the sack gave a snarl, and made a sudden dash for D'Arcy. The swell of St. Jim's jumped back.

"Hush, keep off!" he exclaimed. "You will smother me with that wretched foam!"

But the irritated junior did not keep off. He lifted right into D'Arcy, and a shower of flowers from the sack scattered itself over the elegant person of the swell of St. Jim's. Arthur Augustus gave a shriek of horror and wrath.

"Oh! Keep off! But Jove, if you weren't tied up, I'd give you a faithful thrashing!" he howled. "You horrid woman!"

D'Arcy fairly took to his heels. His elegant clothes were in danger of being quite spoiled. The junior in the sack grinned, as if consoled somewhat for his many troubles. But he snarled again as he turned to the man with the eyeglass.

"Help me out of this, Gerald Goring, do you hear?" Goring nodded, and came towards him.

CHAPTER 3.

A Painful Misunderstanding.

"A NOTHER ginger, Manners?"

"What ho!" said Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry was standing there. The Terrible Three of the Black Force at St. Jim's were seated under the old tree outside Miss Murphy's little shop in the High Street of Rylcombe village. They were looking very cheerful. It was beautiful spring weather, and the chimes of the Bell had been for a ramble by the river, and on their way back to the school they had rested there for refreshment in the shade of ginger-beer, doughnuts, and jantaries. Tom Merry had lately received a visit from Miss Priscilla Fawcett, his old governess, and the old lady had left him several bottles of medicine, a great deal of hygienic advice, and a handsome tin of soap. The medicine he had buried in the kitchen garden at St. Jim's, the hygienic advice he had promptly forgotten. But the tin was being carried safely, to the eminent satisfaction of Manners and Lowther, his inseparable chums, and himself.

"These were gingers, please, Mrs. Murphy!" said Tom.

"Yes, Manner Merry!"

"And a dozen more jam-puffs!" said Monty Lowther.

"And a pound of doughnuts!" said Manners loudly.

"Yes, young gentleman!"

Monty Lowther tilted back his straw hat—the first straw of season—and leaned lazily and contentedly against the big gnarled trunk behind the seat.

"This is happiness," he murmured dreamily.

"First chop," said Tom Merry. "Manners's coughing again, and the crier of the brown meadow is heard in the land! And we're going to lick the New House hollow and wrick!"

"And the Grasses School. And Abbotford. And everybody!"

"And this is how we're getting ready for that!" grizzled Manners. "We ought to have been at practice this afternoon!"

"Oh, no hurry—no good attending it!"

"Gordon Gay and his crowd have been at practice some time now," Monty Lowther remarked. "I bided past the Grasses School yesterday and saw them at it."

"Oh, they need a more than we do!"

"Ha, ha, ha! They wouldn't admit that!"

"Fact, all the same. Hallo!" said Tom Merry, straightway.

up on his feet. "Talk of angels, and you hear the rook of their giddy waltzes. Here come the Grammar boys."

The Terrible Three lost all trace of jealousy in an instant. They were on the alert at once. Six Grammarian juniors had crossed the village street, and were heading for Mrs. Murphy's shop.

And as the odds were two to one on the side of the Grammarian party, the Terrible Three prepared for trouble. Monty Lowther carefully laid his hand on a soda siphon that stood on the little round table. Manners lovingly creased an empty ginger-beer bottle. Tom Merry pushed back his sofa in a careless sort of way.

"Gordon Gay & Co. halted at the little table. They did not show signs of hostility, as it appeared. They showed signs of astonishment instead. Six pairs of eyes were fastened upon Tom Merry at once.

"Tom Merry!" exclaimed Gay.

"Or!" ejaculated Frank Monk.

"You his giddy ghost!" said Carboy.

"He doesn't look so much like a ghost as he did!" Wootton major remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three stared blankly at the new arrivals. They had expected chipping, or perhaps a frontal attack, but that chorus of astonishment amazed them—especially Tom Merry. So far as he could see, there was nothing surprising in finding him drinking ginger-beer outside the village tuck-shop on a half-holiday.

"Have you gone off your rookers?" Tom Merry demanded.

"Why shouldn't I be here? Is this a rare variety of Grammar School business, or are you party?"

"No reason why you shouldn't be here," Gordon Gay replied. "But how did you get here?—that's the queer thing."

"I ain't had no beer ago," said Lane. "We've only been to the miller's store."

"Changed his clothes, too?" remarked Wootton minor.

"He's in Brown now."

"Well, he is a quick-change artist, and no mistake!" commented Gay.

The Terrible Three exchanged glances of bewilderment. Unless it was some mysterious rag on the part of the Grasses School juniors, they did not know in the least what to make of it.

"Would you mind explaining what you mean?" asked Tom Merry politely. "It sounds to me as if you've just come from a heroic exploit."

"Grammar School—sure thing!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"You know jolly well what we mean," said Gordon Gay.

"Perhaps you haven't told your pals—they don't know how you get the sack, perhaps."

"The sack!"

"My hat! First he was pretending he wasn't Tom Merry, and now he's pretending he don't know what the sack was!" ejaculated Gordon Gay. "Tummy, my boy, you're going on the downwood path with a giddy run—fairly looping the loop. Smoking, reading pink papers, and telling whoppers—oh, Tommy?"

"Oh, Tommy?" said all the Grammarians together, and six scrawled forefingers were shaking at the Shell fellow at once.

Tom Merry relaxed angrily.

"Look here; if you're not petty, what do you mean?" he exclaimed. "I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about, and if you say I told whoppers, I'll dot you in the eye."

"Don't you!" exclaimed Gay, in surprise.

"You know I don't."

"I jolly well know you do," said Gordon Gay, his own temper beginning to rise. "Didn't you deny that you were Tom Merry when we met you in the lane?"

"You didn't meet me in the lane."

"What! Not less than an hour ago?"

"No!"

"No! my hat!"

"And if you had I shouldn't have denied my own name, I suppose," snarled Tom Merry. "Why should I? I'm no party, if you are."

"I suppose you had some idea of taking us in, and stopping us from sagging you," said Gordon Gay. "I suppose that was your reason, though it was the silver and claimed by I've heard both."

"No!"

"Yes. What else do you call it?" demanded Gay, "when a chap denies his own name! That's a No, isn't it? You can call it, or a whopper, or a terminological inexactitude, if you like, but the plain English name is—a lie!"

Tom Merry jumped to his feet.

"I repeat that you didn't meet me in the lane," he said.

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A REPRINTED New Lond. Complete School Tale by Tom Merry & Co. by MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"You may be making some idiotic mistake, and in that case I can excuse it—"

"Don't trouble about excusing it," said Gay drily. "I suppose we know you when we see you. We've seen you often enough. I suppose you'll say next that we didn't rag you, and so you up in a snit!"

"You certainly didn't!"

"Well, that beats the band!" exclaimed Wootton major. "I must have some ginger-beer after that, to take the favour away."

And he picked up the glass Mooty Lowther had filled for himself, and emptied it.

"Manners and Lowther could prove what I say, if it were necessary," Tom Merry added, his eyes blazing. "They've been with me all the afternoon."

Gordon Gay whistled.

"We haven't been separated," said Manners. "We've been up the river, and we stopped here on our way back. We haven't been through the line at all. We started by way of the towing-path."

"Does Lowther say the same?" asked Gay satirically.

"Of course I do," said Lowther. "It's of no consequence, that I can see, but it's quite true."

"Then I can only say that you are a good pair of seconds to Tom Merry, in the Amateur line; but Tom Merry is an easy feat."

"So you don't believe it!" exclaimed Tom.

"Of course I don't."

"No fear!" said Wootton major. "How can you believe fearful whoppers that we know are not true?"

"Nobody's going to call me a liar without putting his hands up afterwards," said Tom Merry deliberately. "Are you ready, Gay?"

"Quite ready, my gipper," said Gay.

"Leave him to me," said Frank Monk, pushing his leader aside. "I own the matter and for the scratch he gave me."

"That scratch!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "I—"

"You'll say now you didn't do it, I suppose?" Monk asserted.

"Certainly I didn't do it. Do you think I'm mad enough to smash anybody in a scuffle?"

"Well, I never thought so before, but now you've done it, I can't help thinking so, can I?" said Monk.

"Yes rather."

That was enough for Monk. He rushed to the attack. In a moment more he was writing to and fro in close conflict with Tom Merry. Gordon Gay and Wootton major were engaged with Manners and Lowther in a second race. Mrs. Murphy, in the doorway of the back-shop, held up her hands in horror.

"Young gentlemen—young gentlemen!" she protested.

"Bump them!" shouted Lane. "They ain't worth fighting—wash and lann! Give 'em a bumping, and let them go!"

"Stand back!" shouted Gordon Gay.

But his followers did not stand back. Gay was down, with Lowther's support, and the other Grammarian seized Lowther, and dragged him off, and rolled him in the grass under the tree. Tom Merry and Manners were collared as promptly, and rolled over. With two to one against them, they had no chance.

"Fair play, you cottons!" shouted Tom Merry.

Lane chuckled.

"This ain't a fight—this is a ragging," he explained. "File in, you chaps. Here are the jam-tarts, all ready!"

"Hurray!"

"Give 'em the toasts and the ginger-beer!"

"Grough!" gasped the unfortunate Saints, as the jam-tarts were plastered over their perspiring countenances.

"Doo-oo-oo-oo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" said Gordon Gay, gasping with laughter.

"It's time we got in to tea, and I decline to remain in such disagreeable company any longer. Those fellows don't look respectable."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you want us, you chaps, you know where to find us, with or without gloves, just as you prefer!" added Gay.

And the Grammarians trooped off, laughing, leaving the Terrible Three simply squirming, and dabbing frantically at the jam that clogged their eyes, their noses, their mouths, their hair, and, in fact, everything that was theirs.

CHAPTER 4. Doubles!

"GROUGH!"

"Grough!"

The Terrible Three sat up, under the tree, dazed and dishevelled, and sticky. Everything about them was sticky. THE GEM LIBRARY—No. 323.

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Their stickiness was something awful. There was jam all over them—jam and ginger-beer.

"Oh, the rotten!" gasped Tom Merry.

"The beast!"

"The oak!"

They staggered to their feet. It was only a quarter of an hour since they had been feeling cheerful and contented, at peace with themselves and with all the world. But what a change was there!

They looked at one another, sticky and delirious and infuriated, and then they looked round for the Grammarians. But the Grammarians were gone. Their yells of laughter had died away in the distance.

"Well, this takes the cake," said Manners, wiping his face with his handkerchief. "I feel beastly—yes!"

"Look beastly!" retorted Lowther.

"Grough! So do you, for that matter!"

"I think we all look beastly," said Tom Merry. "We'll make those oak sit up for this. Not that I care much for a rag-union they called us here."

"They seemed to think so, too—that's the curious thing," said Manners. "I can't quite make it out."

"They made some idiotic mistake, talking somebody else for you, Tommy," Mooty Lowther remarked, as he rolled away at the jam in his hair. "That's the only way to account for it. But they had no right to doubt our word."

"We'll make them sorry for it!" growled Tom Merry.

"They said I was speaking in the lane, and you fellows knew I wasn't there at all!"

"Of course we know it."

"Grough! This is simply beastly!"

"We shall have to get a wash somewhere!" growled Lowther. "All these jam-tarts wanted too! Grough!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated a startled voice, as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came up. "What have you chaps been doing with yourselves?"

D'Arcy fixed his monocle in his eye, and regarded the Terrible Three in great astonishment. Certainly their aspect at that moment was sufficient to startle and astound anyone that knew them.

"Oh, go and eat cake!" growled Tom Merry, whose temper was not improved by jam in his hair and down his neck.

"Wally, Tom Merry—"

"Why couldn't you come along sooner, and lend us a hand with the Grammarian oak?" asserted Lowther.

"I was waiting about, dear boys, I had to step into Wigg's shop for a brush down, which the usually was Tom Merry's reward me with fresh!" said Arthur Augustus.

"And old Wigg showed me some new waistcoats, so—"

"Another dolly duffer," said Tom Merry. "When did I cover you with flour, you ass?"

"I wouldn't be called an ass."

"When did I cover you with flour?" roared Tom Merry.

"About half an hour ago, dear boy, when I found you tied up in a sack in the lane."

"Mad as a March hare, or Gordon Gay," said Tom. "I haven't been in the lane at all, and I haven't been tied up in a sack."

"Great Scott!"

"You were dreaming, you duffer."

"I was not dreaming, Tom Merry, and I decline to be called a duffer. If you were not too beastly sticky to touch, I would thrash you for applying such wretched epithets to me," said Arthur Augustus, with a great deal of dignity.

"As for your statement that you were not in the lane, that is a whoppah."

"What?"

"A whoppah—a fearful whoppah!"

"Are you looking for a thick cut, you duffer?"

"I was to verify to such a ridiculous question. You certainly were in the lane and you asked me to release you from the sack. You smashed me with flour—"

"I tell you I wasn't there!" yelled Tom Merry. "You mistook somebody else for me."

"Wally! I suppose I know your chivvy! I didn't recognize you at first, as your face was smothered with flour, but I know you when I looked at you. Besides, you told me you were Tom Merry when you asked me to help you."

"It was somebody else."

"Wally!"

"Look here, Garry—"

"Pray don't ask me to believe a fearful whoppah, Tom Merry. I am sorry to have to doubt a gentleman's word, but I suppose I can rely upon the evidence of my own senses," said the woad of St. Jim's indignantly.

"If you had any—yes!" granted Tom.

"Wally, you wretch—"

"You mistook somebody else for me, as Gordon Gay did, and if he borrowed my name—"

"He must have borrowed your face too," said Arthur

Augustus daily. "Wee!y, Tom Merwy, I fail to see your reason for tellin' those widdish whoppahs."

Tom Merwy did not reply. He was led up with argument. He seized the soda siphon from the table, and turned the nozzle upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. That elegant youth jumped up in great alarm.

"Tom Merwy, you wottah, don't—oh, my clabbah! Ow! Bai Jove!"

Swish-sh-sh-sh!

A flood of soda-water smote the avell of St. Jim's, and he staggered back with a yell.

Tom Merwy grinned through the jam, and followed him up, keeping up the stream till the siphon was exhausted. Arthur Augustus executed a series of frog-like leaps in the attempt to escape the shower, but in vain.

"Oh, Goo-coo! Yah! Oh, Stoppo! Tom Merwy! Chack! Ow! I will give you a fashal throwash! Ow! Yawwoh!"

Goo-gag! went the siphon, and Tom Merwy slammed it on the table.

"There!" he panted. "That's some for you, and some for Gordon Gay; only as he's gone, you're welcome to the lot."

"Goo-coo!"

Arthur Augustus presented a shocking sight. His face was streaming with soda-water, and his collar was quite limp. Soda-water was running in streams down all over his accessories.

"Oh, you wottah!" he wailed. "You fashal wuffan! You have uttably spoiled my clothes! Oh, dear, Oh!"

"I'll wash your silly face, if you doubt my word again!" growled Tom Merwy, by no means appeased. "I don't allow anybody to do that!"

"Then, you shouldn't tell whoppahs! Ow! Hands off, you wuffan!"

Tom Merwy did not "hunch off." His hands were on, and hard. He got the elegant junior's head into captivity.

"Now, you tailor's dummy, he said. "You're going to apologise, or I'll possess your chivvy till your tailor won't know it!"

"Ow—ow! Walease me!"

"Are you going to apologise?"

"Certainly not! You have told whoppahs!"

"Then I'll jolly well—"

Monty Lovthah grasped his chin by the arm, and dragged him back.

"Leave me alone!" shouted Tom Merwy, whose temper was at boiling-point now. "I'm going to lick the silly one!"

"Hold on!"

"Rats! Let go!"

Arthur Augustus wrenched himself away, as Lovthah dragged Tom back. His noble face was as red with rage as it was wet with soda-water. All the repose which stamps the count of Vere de Vere was gone from Arthur Augustus now. He poked back his soaking cuffs, trembling with excitement.

"Let him come on!" he shouted. "You uttah wottah! I'm ready for you! I'll give you a fashal throwash, and—"

"Cheese it!" said Lovthah, waving him back with one hand, and holding on to Tom Merwy with the other. "No need to scamp! There's been a mistake made, and I think I know how to explain it. I've just remembered."

"What do you mean?" growled Tom Merwy.

"Don't you remember?" Lovthah exclaimed, his face full of excitement now. "Last term, you got into a row, because a fellow like you was seen gab-basing, and playing the giddy god generally round this place. He was so like you that lots of the fellows took him for you. His name was Clavering. I think I remember. Well, it's the same Johnny turned-up again, that's all."

Tom Merwy started.

He had forgotten that incident, which had caused him a great deal of trouble at the time it had happened, and had, indeed, placed him under a cloud for a time. But now that Lovthah recalled it to his mind, he remembered the reckless young blackguard, Reggie Clavering, whose surprising resemblance to himself had caused so much confusion and misunderstanding.

"Clavering?" he repeated.

"Your double!" said Lovthah.

"By Jove!"

"That's it!" exclaimed Manners. "I remember him! You got into rows at that time, Tommy, because the cad was taken for you. Don't you remember?"

"I remember now."

"And he used to do just such things as Gordon Gay mentioned—smoking, and reading sporting papers, and so on," said Mistry Lovthah. "He's come back to Rykcombe for some reason—that's the truth of it. There can't be another party in the world so like you. It must be that chap Clavering again."

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I wottah now! Lovthah, dear boy, I am quite surprised that you should have thought of that! I did not think of it myself."

"Go on!" said Lovthah.

Tom Merwy closed his hands.

"That must be it!" he exclaimed. "And the Grammarian code must have cugged him, taking him for me. Boves him jolly well right, if he was doing what Gay said."

"Yess wottah!"

"But Guray says the fellow gave him my name—"

"Yass; but I wottah now it was atah! I had addressed him as Tom Merwy," said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "Perhaps he thought I should be more ready to help him if he said he was a St. Jim's chap. The awful wottah, to borrow another chap's name!"

"I'll jolly soon stop him doing that, as soon as I run got near him!" growled Tom Merwy. "He's caused me trouble enough already without doing that. I suppose that is the explanation?"

"That's it!" said Manners. "All the more, Gay ought to have taken our word."

"Yass, wottah! It's wottah had fern to doubt a chap's word!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with a huge shake of the head. "I wottah Gay as havin' acted wottah like an outsidah if he waded to take your word, dear boy."

"Why, as did you, you see!" exclaimed Tom Merwy.

"Bai Jove! Ahem!" stammered Arthur Augustus, taken aback. "Well, you—you see, dear boy, I—I thought you were tellin' whoppahs. I'm awfully sorry. I apologise most sincerely. I take back all I said."

"Then I take back the soda-water!" grinned Merwy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy cast a useful downward glance at his dishevelled collar.

"It was really a most unfortunate misapprehension," he said mournfully. "It has led to my attah hair" wined. These clothes will never be the same again. I would give them to Tobey, but Tobey isn't allowed to dress in Eless. It is really very unfortunate, indeed. However, I am very glad the matter is cleared up. I should have felt howrid if I had been compelled to regard an old friend as a liab!"

"You'd have felt worse if you hadn't taken it back!" growled Tom.

"Wee!y, Tom Merwy—"

"Anybody but a cat idiot—"

"I walease—"

"Peace, my children, peace!" said Monty Lovthah. "We are want now in a rush, got a row. And after that there's business to be attended to."

"Business," said Tom Merwy. "What business! De you mean going for the Grammar code?"

"That can wait! I'm thinking of Master Reggie Clavering, who's got the cheek to have a face just like yours, and the same melodious voice, and the awful nerve to borrow your name when he's speaking to a born idiot."

"Woe!y, Lovthah—"

"That chap caused enough trouble last term," went on Lovthah. "I think it's up to us to see that he doesn't cause any more. I don't see that he's got any business in Rykcombe at all, and I suggest that we don't allow him to stay here."

Tom Merwy started.

"That's rather high-handed, isn't it?" he said. "I suppose he's got some business here, or he wouldn't have come here, would he?"

"Well, he can go and do his business, whatever it is, anyhow else," said Lovthah. "We're not going to have him here spoiling things for us. I vote that we find out as soon as we can where he is, and go for him. We'll rag him so much that he'll be glad to pitch his tent in some other spot more favourable to his health. What?"

"Well, I—"

"He's a rotten scurvey, as we're bound to go for him, or principle," asked Lovthah. "If he was a decent chap it wouldn't matter his being here. No harm if he was taken for you going into the Hovey or the bun-shop."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"That's a jolly lot of harm if he's taken for you going into the Green Man or the tobaccoist's," said Lovthah sagely.

"Therefore we are justified in using strong measures. He can put it all down to his own naughty ways. I suggest that we call all the Co. together and put it to them, and that every fellow undertakes to rag Master Reggie Clavering whenever and wherever he meets him, and to make it a point to meet him as often as possible. Then, I fancy, Master Clavering will make himself considerably scarce in the neighbourhood. What?"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners.

"Yass, wottah!" said Arthur Augustus thoughtfully. "I

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ward that as a brilliant ideal, Lowthah, and I must say I am surprised at its grossness! I've seen you."

"True!" said Tom Merry. "And so it was settled. There was a decidedly warm time in store for Master Reggie Clavering, who had the check, as Lowthah expressed it, to be as respectable like Tom Merry of St. Jim's. And the charm of the School House kept their eyes open for Master Reggie as they returned to the school, quite prepared to begin operations again on the spot if opportunity offered. But Tom Merry's double was not to be seen."

CHAPTER 5. The Plotter.

THE man with the black moustache and the epaulet opened a package, and out the wispard that secured the sack round the imprisoned junior. Then he jerked the four-walk off the boy, taking care to keep it clear of his own clothes.

"Now my hands," grunted the junior aggressively, "and they seem to have made pretty sure of you," said Gerald Goring, with a smile, as he cut the cord.

"Who were they? I'll make them sorry for it." "Who were they?" "Fellows belonging to the Grammar School, I think, by their caps, that red-brick building near the village."

"But why did they handle you like that?" Goring asked, in surprise, watching the boy curiously as he dusted down his clothes. "They can't know you."

"They took me for Tom Merry of St. Jim's" Goring started. "Tom Merry?"

"Yes! I was taken for him before, when I was staying here, the time I was sacked from my old school. It was some of his friends that time who took me for him. The chap seems to be very like me. Blessed if I know why. I don't suppose we're related in any way. Those Grammar School boys thought it was Tom Merry."

"Good?" "The junior stared at him. "Good, is it?" he started. "I don't see anything good in it. I know I'll pay them out somehow for the way they've handled me."

"You let those think you were Tom Merry?" "No, I told them I wasn't; but they wouldn't believe me. The chap is really very like me. I've seen him."

"Yes, I know how like you he is." "Do you?" said the junior, looking at him. "Have you seen this fellow Merry, then? Do you know him?"

"Quite well," he said. "He doesn't know me, but I know him. This is a stroke of luck, the young asses taking you for Merry. It is a pity you told them you weren't Merry; but you say they didn't believe you?"

"No; they ragged me all the same." "Good?" "Look here!" exclaimed the junior irritably. "I don't understand you, and if that's all you've got to say you may as well clear off, Gerald Goring. You said you wanted to see me on business. But—"

"Keep cool," said Goring sally. "I do want to see you on business. Reggie—good business. But let's get out of this. We don't want to be seen."

"Why not?" growled Clavering. "I'm not afraid of being seen."

"But I am. Get into the wood."

Goring climbed over the stile, and the dusty and sooty junior followed him. Clavering was looking puzzled and sally. He evidently did not understand the necessity for concealment, and his temper was at its very worst just then. But he followed the man with the black moustache into the wood.

Goring did not stop till they were in a deep glade a considerable distance from the road. He halted at last, however, and Reggie Clavering stopped, too, looking sulkier than ever. The man leaned against the trunk of a big tree, and lighted a cigarette, regarding the sullen junior with thoughtful eyes.

"Now, what do you want?" demanded Clavering. "I'm getting fed-up with this. I don't see any need for all this dashed mystery."

"I'll explain." "The sooner the quicker, then. I want to get cleared," growled Reggie.

"Where are you putting up?" asked Goring. "The Green Man."

"That's an awful hole of a place, isn't it?" "It suits me," said Clavering aggressively. "Besides, I'm not stopping long, I suppose."

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"No, you can't stop long in Rylcombe. You must keep out of sight," said Goring. "That's a most important point."

"I don't see it." "You'll see when I've explained."

"You're jolly well mixed about it," said Clavering. "Give me a cigarette. We can smoke while we talk, if you've got a long lay to get through."

Goring extended his case, and Clavering helped himself to a cigarette, and lighted it.

"Now, what's the whoose?" he said. "Anything about the green?"

"Not this time. Something more important than that. It's because you are Tom Merry's double that I want you."

"Blessed if I see it!" "Let me see," said Goring meditatively. "You were expelled from your last school, I think, because of your taste for smoking and horses and hanging about with bookies."

"You ought to know, as you helped to get me into that kind of thing," growled Clavering. "What are you raking that up for?"

"And since you were sacked from school you've been living with an uncle?" Goring pursued, unheeding.

"Yes; and I've got a tutor now, instead of going to school," said Clavering. "I make the tutor let me do as I like, though; and as uncle is away most of the time, I generally manage to do as I choose. Only it's rotten dull at Clavering Lodge. I get some shooting, and go to the races sometimes, but I miss the fellows. I don't like it. If I could I'd book it."

"Then you'll be glad of something to fill up the time," said Goring, "something that will put money into your pocket too. How are you off for it?"

"Better! I've had bad luck, and uncle doesn't shell out too much, either. I shan't have any of my own money till I'm twenty-one," said Clavering sulkily.

"And you won't make it last long, then, I fancy." "I mean to have a good time, anyway."

"But at present—"

"I'm jolly now story now, and I'm in debt. If you've got any tip for making a little I'd be jolly glad to hear it," said Clavering, looking a little more good-humoured.

"I can help you to make a good deal, and you can help me. You've met this fellow Merry of St. Jim's, you say. Did you like him?"

Clavering gritted his teeth. "No, I don't."

"Why not?" "He handled me, the cad! There was a girl—Eh! I think they called her—took me for him, and I chummed up with her, not knowing she'd made a mistake, you know. She didn't like the way I talked—"

"I'm not surprised at that!" commented Goring dryly. "Well, I thought she had picked up with me, a stranger, you know; and then we ran into the very fellow himself she'd taken me for, with some some of his friends. He went for me."

"And liked you?" "Well, I—I didn't have much chance, and—"

"And you don't like him?" "I hate him! If I ever got a chance to do him a bad turn I'd make him sorry that he laid his paws on me," said Clavering violently.

"Good! I'm going to give you the chance."

"You are?" ejaculated the junior. "Yes. I've got something up against Tom Merry too!"

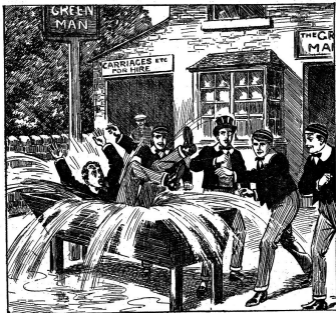
"Yes! What has he done to you?" "Nothing."

"Does he know you?" "No."

"Then how can you have anything up against him?" asked Clavering irritably. "Seems to me you're talking out of the back of your neck."

"I mean what I say. It's a question of money—a big sum of money," said Goring. "If I succeed in what I've been planning I shall be a rich man. Instead of putting with a few quids on horses I shall be able to run horses myself if I choose. I shall be the richest chap you know, Reggie, if all goes well. It all depends on how this works out. What would you say to a hundred quid in your pockets?" Clavering opened his eyes wide. "A hundred quid!" he repeated. "Yes; and more to follow whenever you wanted to borrow a little of an old chum who's rolling in money."

"Rolling in money?" repeated Clavering, his eyes opening wide. "Yes!" "Well," said Goring coolly. "Yes, it sounds all right, if you're not pulling my leg," said Clavering suspiciously. "Is this what you wanted me to meet you in Rylcombe for—to tell me this?" "Exactly!"



Splash! Tom Merry descended into the middle of the full-flowing trough, and the water on all sides of him rose with the occasion. There was a yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arvy as a wave swamped his chest. "Ow swamps!" he shouted. "Look at my waistcoat!" (See Chapter 9.)

"Well, pile in. How are you going to get rolling in money?"

"With your help—and Tom Merry's. Your help will be part of the game; Tom Merry's will be quite unconsciously given," said Goring, with a peculiar smile. "There's no need for me to give you all the particulars—now, as all events—but if Tom Merry were disgraced and expelled from St. Jim's I should be a rich man."

"Gammum!"

"It's a fact!"

"Oh, rot!" said Clavering. "I can't swallow that. How could Tom Merry's being disgraced get money in your pocket?"

"No need for you to know that," said Goring coolly. "But it's a fact—a solid fact! I shall roll in quids if that can be brought about. I've got certain information. I've seen it down in black-and-white."

"Where?"

"Never mind where!"

"Look here, if you can't trust me—" began Clavering, whose eyes were gleaming with curiosity now.

"I trust you exactly as far as I can see you," said Goring steadily. "We're old pals, Reggie, but I'm not going to put it in your power to give me away and stop my little game for good, if it should fail this time. You see, I'm talking plainly to you. I'm going to tell you just enough to make it possible for you to help me. And if you help

me I'll make it worth your while—more than worth your while. You have an eye to grind yourself too. You don't like the fellow, and you'd be glad to see him sacked."

"Jolly glad!" said the amiable Reggie.

"Then it's a go!"

"But how on earth see you thinking of working it?" demanded Clavering. "How can I possibly have any influence so what happens to a fellow I hardly know? I shall probably never see him again."

"That isn't necessary."

"Then how—"

"You've forgotten how like you are to him. No need for you to see Tom Merry; all you've got to do is to let people see you, and take you for him."

Clavering started.

"That's easy enough," he said. "I've been taken for him several times already. But even then, what—"

"Under circumstances that will lead to his being disgraced," continued Goring. "Don't you understand?"

"That happened before," growled Clavering. "I was squiffy once, and some of the St. Jim's fellows took me for him, and were in an awful way about it."

Goring frowned.

"It's unfortunate that they discovered that Tom Merry had a double," he said. "But it's some time ago, and the matter's probably forgotten by this time. You must be careful never to be caught in his company; he resents never

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be seen at the same time as you. That would spoil everything. And when you are playing your little game it doesn't do at a time when you could prove an alibi. But if you are seen riding out of a pub at eleven at night—Merry will be in bed then—they'll hear about it at the school the next day, and he won't be able to prove that he was in bed."

"I see!" said Clavering slowly.
 "And then there's those Grammar School fellows," said Goring thoughtfully. "Something may be done through them. They are at a distance from St. Jim's, but they all know Tom Merry well, and have already taken you for him. Suppose Tom Merry should turn up there and do something utterly outrageous—squiff, for instance, and insult some of the masters—these would be complaints to the Head of St. Jim's, and the shopper would come down—what?"

Clavering frowned.
 "That would be the safest way," he said. "I shall have to keep away from St. Jim's, anyway, or the fellows would soon spot the fact that there's a chap just like Tom Merry hanging about the place. But at the Grammar School they couldn't have any suspicion. I should be glad to go for those rotten, too, after the way they've handled me."

"Good, then," said Goring. "Look here. Are you able to stay away from Clavering Lodge for some time?"
 "My uncle's away. He won't be back for three days. He never asks me what I've been doing."

"Your tutor—"
 "I can manage him. I lead him money," sneered Clavering.
 "Then that's all right. You mustn't stay in Ryeborne; it's too near, when I come to think of it. Besides, I'm staying there myself, and we mustn't be seen together. You must keep in some quiet place."

Clavering granted disinterestedly.
 "I don't like quiet places. I'll stay in Wayland, if you like."

"That would be worse. The St. Jim's fellows are often there, and you would be spotted sooner or later."
 "Look here, where do you want me to stay?" demanded Clavering restlessly.

"In some lonely place where you can't possibly be spotted," said Goring easily. "Look here, Reggie, it's worth while. It means a fortune to me and a handsome wage for you. You know Wayland Moor, I suppose?"

"Yes."
 "There are some cottages on the moor where visitors from London come down sometimes in the summer for a quiet stay and for the air. You can put up at one of these. I know one, kept by a deaf old woman—a Mrs. Bell. You can stay there. It's a mile away from any other building, and quite safe."

"Do you think I'm going to be harried alive in a lousy cottage, with only a deaf old woman to talk to?" sneered Reggie.

"You must! You can get off to the rectory sometimes. I'll call for you," said Goring soothingly. "It's necessary, Reggie. It means a hundred quid, and more to follow."

"How do I know it does?" snarled Reggie. "I've only got your word for that. And suppose the plan fails after all? Where do I come in?"

"There'll be something done."
 "How much?"

Gerald Goring fished a ten-pound note from his pocket-book, and tossed it to the junkie. Clavering caught it, and looked at it in surprise.

"Ten quid!" he said.
 "Yes. That's good enough—what?"

"Well, you, that's good enough," said Clavering, quite good-humouredly. "I shall be able to have a bit of a flange with this. I'll do as you like."

"Agreed, then! I'll take you to the cottage now—"
 "My bag's at the Green Man."

"You can have it sent. Better not go back there. I'll pay your bill there, and have the bag sent on—no, rather, I'll bring it myself. I know the landlord. What name did you give there? I told you not to use your own name in this place."

"Montgomery," said Reggie.
 "You young ass! What did you give a name like that for?" said Goring irritably. "Why couldn't you call yourself Smith or Jones—some name that wouldn't attract attention?"

"I'm not going to call myself Smith or Jones," said Reggie sulkily.

Goring made an angry gesture.
 "Well, it can't be helped now. Let's get along."

Reggie Clavering lit another cigarette, and followed his precursor frantically through the wood. His face was quite ashy now, and his thoughts were busy; and every now and then he put his hand in his pocket to feel the crisp banknote with his fingers.

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CHAPTER 6.

Figgins's Friends.

F IGGINS of the New House at St. Jim's whistled. He was standing on the steps of the New House with a card in his hand.

That card had just been handed to him by Toby, the School House page, who had then disappeared, grinning, in the dusk of the quadrangle.

Figgins of the Fourth looked at the card in surprise, and then he whistled. The card bore the inscription, in Tom Merry's clear hand:

"T. MERRY requests the pleasure of the company of G. FIGGINS to tea in No. 9 Stady; G. FIGGINS is invited to bring his friends. Seven sharp."

"Well, my hat!" said G. Figgins. "These School House boarders are beginning to do the thing in style! To go or not to go—that is the question. We've got a good tea in the study ourselves, and if we go and feed with the School House boarders, we can't rag them; and I was planning a rag."

And G. Figgins departed to his study to consult the Co. on the subject.

Kerr and Wynn, the famous Co., were in Figgins's study getting tea. The kettle was singing on the fire, and the cloth was laid. But there was not the usual appearance of harmony in the study. Kerr was looking excited, and Fatty Wynn's plump face bore a somewhat guilty and conscience-smitten look.

"Hallo!" said Figgins, surveying them as he came in, card in hand. "Anything gone wrong?"

"Yes!" growled Kerr.
 "Here's all right, isn't it," asked Figgins anxiously, "and the sandwiches?"

"Fatty's fussed them all right?" grunted Kerr. "He's scolded 'em the lot."

"Nothing but an egg each left for tea," said the exasperated Kerr, "and bread-and-butter! I came in just as he was finishing the whole sheet."

"Fatty, you beast—"
 "I—I'm sorry, Figgie!" faltered Fatty Wynn, looking more conscience-smitten than ever. "I—I really didn't mean to scold the lot. But I was famished. You see, I had hardly anything to eat at dinner—"

"I saw you wolf three helpings of beef-steak pie!" growled Kerr.

"And three of pudding," said Figgins.
 "Well, what was that to a chap like me?" said Fatty Wynn. "I get awfully hungry in this spring weather, you know."

"Is there any kind of weather you don't get hungry in?" asked Kerr sarcastically.

"Well, you see, I was very sharp set, and—and I hadn't had much dinner, and I tell you chaps, honest Injun, that I've had nothing since dinner excepting a cake, and some jam-tarts, and a sandwich or two, and a bag of doughnuts," said Fatty Wynn pathetically. "I was jolly peckish, and the bag looked so jolly nice that I thought I'd have a snack while I was waiting for you fellows, and—and somehow I got absent-minded and finished it."

"What about the sandwiches?" demanded Kerr wrathfully.

"Well, they aren't so nice when I'd finished getting them ready," said Fatty Wynn, "I just had one, and—and then another, you know, and—and—"

"And got absent-minded again, I suppose!" snarled Figgins.

"Well, there was only eight of them, and—and I was hungry," said Fatty Wynn feebly. "I forgot that we were stacy too. But—but I left the eggs."

"You wouldn't have left them if I hadn't come in!" snapped Kerr.

"Well, I—I did leave them, anyway. And you chaps can have both the eggs," said Fatty Wynn, with a saddest look of heroic generosity. "I—I won't touch them. I'll try to fill 'em with such bread-and-butter."

"You must have a lot of filling-up to do, after stuffing a piece of ham and eight aerolocs," said Figgins. "You fat bouncer, you ought to be scolded!"

"And we're going to scold him!" said Kerr. "I'm hungry, and he's wolfed all the food, and we haven't any tin."

"I'm really sorry, you know."
 "We'll make you sorer," said Kerr. "Collas him, Figgie."

But Figgins shook his head.
 "We'll let him off," he said kindly. "It's all right, Kerr."

"All right!" howled Kerr. "I tell you I'm finished, and

there's next to nothing to eat. I'm going to sculp that lot for you."

"It's all right, I tell you. I've got an invitation to tea."

Fatty Wyon's face brightened up.

"Oh, good!" he exclaimed. "I hope it's a decent spread. Not Frost, I hope. Frost thinks that a sardine sandwich and a pot of shrimp paste make up a feed. I had tea with him the other day, and ate everything there was on the table while he was making the tea. Of course, I thought there must be something more in the cupboard, as he had had the nerve to ask me to tea; but there wasn't, and Frost was quite ratty about it."

"It's from Tom Merry," said Fatty Wyon, with great satisfaction. "Tom Merry always stands a good feed."

"Only I was thinking out a rug on these School House chaps," said Figgins. "I had a scheme for making them sit up. Only if we feed with them—"

"I think those House rows can be carried too far," said Wyon, with a shake of the head. "I really think, Figgins, that—that sometimes we ought to remember that, after all, we're all St. Jim's chaps, School House and New House alike, and extend the—right hand of fellowship."

"As an instance?" sneered Kerr.

"Well, when better time for extending the hand of friendship?" demanded Fatty Wyon warmly. "No good extending it in the Form-rooms, I suppose, or while we're doing our preparation or playing cricket?"

"We'd better accept the invitation, if it's for all of us," said Kerr.

"Why, of course," said Fatty Wyon. "Why, it would be a sin to let a good feed go begging. Tom Merry is a good chap, too. And he's been ragged by the Grammar only to-day. I really think it's up to us to show our sympathy."

"Be-ee-ee!" said Kerr.

"The invitation's for all of us," said Figgins, holding up the card. "Look at that! They're doing it in style!"

"My hat, they are!" said Kerr. "You are requested to take your friends. It must be a good feed if they put on so much side as all that."

Fatty Wyon rubbed his plump hands. Apparently his appetite was still in good working order, in spite of the heat and the revels.

"This is like corn in Egypt," he said. "I always said that Tom Merry was a very decent chap—a very decent chap indeed. I wish we had him at the New House. He's wasted in this House. Let's get off."

"Hold on!" said Figgins, with a grin. "T. Merry requests G. Figgins to bring his friends."

"Well, we're your friends, ain't we?" demanded Fatty Wyon.

"Yes; but I've got some more—in fact, every fellow I show this card to will turn out to be a boson pal, I fancy," grinned Figgins. "As they're putting on so much style over in the School House, I think it's up to us to play up to it. Under the circumstances, I think I'll take a party, to do justice to an imposing invitation."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" said Figgins. "We'll gather up recruits as we go."

And the Co., grinning, followed him from the study. They held their steps in the direction of Redfern's study. Redfern and Owen and Lawrence were rivals of Figgins & Co. in the New House, just as Blake & Co. were the rivals of the Terrible Three over in the School House. But rivalry was forgotten on an occasion like this. Figgins kicked open the door of Redfern's study, and marched in with the Co.

There was a smell of frying herrings in the study. Redfern and Owen and Lawrence were scholarship boys, and not overburdened with money, and tea in their study was generally of a frugal nature. Redfern, who was cooking, turned a pink face from the fire, and regarded Figgins & Co. indignantly.

"Come to tea?" he asked. "Well, looky, there are enough of the Yarnmouth warriors to go round. Squat down somewhere."

"Bury them!" replied Figgins. "We've come to take you to an important social function."

"Bury?"

"Fact! Tom Merry is giving a feed in great style. Are you my friend, Reddy?"

Redfern looked puzzled.

"Your friend?" he repeated. "Well, I don't hold with you considering yourself out of the walk in the House, and I think it's my duty to keep you in your place a bit."

"Look here—"

"But it's all done by kindness," said Redfern blandly, "so you can consider me a friend."

"You cheeky ass—"

"You long-legged gerrils—"

"I'll jolly well—"

"Hold on!" said Kerr, interposing. "Explain what you're come for, Figgys."

"Yes; but that cheeky ass is asking for a thick pay."

"A dozen, if you like," said Redfern promptly, "if you can hand them out, you know."

"I'll show you—"

"Come on!"

"Stop it!" roared Kerr, rushing between the two belligerent juniors. "Tom Merry has asked Figgys to bring his friends to an extra special feed."

"Oh," said Redfern, "that alters the case! Figgys, I'm your friend for life!"

"Swore here, old scout!" said Lawrence promptly. "I never felt so friendly towards anybody as I do towards you, Figgins."

"Just what I was going to say!" exclaimed Owen heartily. "Figgys, I'm your old pal—your affectionate old pal!"

Figgins grinned. The atmosphere of hostility had cleared with wonderful quickness. Owen had picked up a cricket-stump, but he did it behind him as he spoke.

"Well, come on," said Figgins. "You can keep those giddy herrings for supper, and we'll help you finish them."

"Done!"

And Redfern and Owen and Lawrence joyfully joined Figgins & Co., and the whole party went down the passage together. They met a dusky janitor in the passage. It was Kausal Rao, the Jan of Bhandarpore, a princely youth from India, who had been much surprised at first to find himself a person of no consequence whatever at St. Jim's. Figgins clasped him on the shoulder.

"Are you a friend of mine, Jansary?" he asked.

"While the sun shines and the sea flows, there is no end to the friendship of Kausal Rao for his friend Figgins!" said the Indian youth impressively.

"Well, that's putting it poetically, I suppose," said Figgins. "But if you mean that you're a pal, come on."

And Kausal Rao came on.

The party descended the stairs, and ran into Thompson of the Shell in the doorway. Thompson of the Shell was sometimes "up" against Figgins & Co., regarding it as cheek of mere Fourth-Formers to set up as leaders of the House juniors. But Figgins clasped him gaily on the back.

"Are you a friend of mine, Thompson?" he asked.

Thompson stared.

"Off your rocker?" he inquired politely.

"No. I asked you if you were a friend of mine—an old pal!"

"I don't pal with fags in the Fourth!" said the Shell fellow loftily.

"Bury!" said Figgins. "I'm asked to take my friends to an extra special feed."

Thompson's lofty expression faded at once. Thompson was, as a matter of fact, expecting a remittance, and said that remittance came he was doomed to have tea in Hall. The Shell fellow beamed upon Figgins.

"Of course, I—I was only speaking generally," he said hastily.

"Sorry you're not my pal," said Figgins regretfully. "Never mind, it can't be helped. Come on, you fellows."

"But I—I say—"

"Never mind, Thompson, it can't be helped. Good-bye!"

"But I—I feel awfully friendly, you know," urged Thompson, catching Figgins by the sleeve. "I'll come with pleasure. In—in fact, I've been thinking that you ought to pull together better, Figgys, old chap—Shell and Fourth shoulder to shoulder, you know, fer—for the good of the House."

Figgins chuckled.

"Come on, then," he said. "I think we're about enough now—enough to surprise Tom Merry, at any rate. I dare say I could find a lot more friends if I showed this card round; but I ought of us will do. Come on!"

And the right juniors quitted the New House and scattered across the quadrangle, Figgins & Co. chuckling gleefully at the anticipation of Tom Merry's looks when he found what an army had accepted his kind invitation and come to tea.

CHAPTER 7.

Feasting Room Only.

Tom Merry's study, in the Shell passage in the School House, was already pretty well crowded.

The Terrible Three were there, of course, and Kaagaroo of the Shell, and Clifton Dune, and Bernard Glyn, and Betty of the Fourth. The chums of Study No. 6—Blake and Herries and Digby and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—arrived in a body, to find seven juniors already in the study. However, they came in smiling. The Shell passage was one of the latest additions to the buildings of St. Jim's, and the

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rooms were larger than the junior studies in the Fourth, but eleven fellows certainly taxed the capacity of the study.

"Wahah a crowd—what!" Arthur Augustus remarked good-humoredly. "Nevah mind! The maah the merrwah!"

"Squat down where you can," said Tom Merry cheerily. "If you can't find room to squat, stand up. Only look happy."

"Yass, wahah, old chap!"

"Rather enjoyable, crowding a bit," said Kangaroo blandly. "Only don't tread on my feet, Horrie. Your feet are a bit heavy. Is your size eight or nine?"

"Nine your feet!" said Horrie.

"Pway don't wag, deah boys!"

"We shall have to put a 'Standing Room Only' notice outside, I think," Morley Lowther remarked. "There's a whole team here already."

"Any more coming?" asked Jack Blake.

"Yes, Figgins & Co. from the New House."

"My hat! Where are you going to put them?"

"They can sit on one another's knees," said Morley Lowther, "or stand on one another's feet. I'm not particular."

"Looks like there are only three of them," said Morley. "We'll keep the doors open, and make room another. Those who can't get near the table can have things passed to them."

"Yass, wahah!"

"The eggs are done to a turn," said Tom Merry, turning a ruddy face from the fire, "and I think we'll let the fire go down now. It's warm."

"Not to say hot!" murmured Glyn, mopping a perspiring brow with his handkerchief, and in doing so driving his elbow into Clifton Dase's neck.

"There was a howl from the Canadian junior.

"Ow! Mind my neck, you son!"

"You mind my elbow," said Glyn.

"Look here—"

"Peace, deah boys! Mustn't mind little trifles like that," said Arthur Augustus soothingly. "Pway take it easy, and don't complain. Ow! Woe! Brewster, you sneak out, wessure your silly great hoof of my feet!"

"Take it easy," grumbled Clifton Dase.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You have stabbly wained the polish on my boot, Brewster, you cease duffah!"

"Bow-wow!" said Horrie.

"Open the jam," said Tom Merry hastily. "Three jars of jam—different kinds—and two whole cakes—sandy and currant. Likewise ginger-beer glasses, and jam-tarts with cut sugar. Gentleman, this is an important occasion. I have poached forty eggs—"

"Well, you're a giddy whealside poacher, and no mistake!" said Digby. "We could stand a sloop with this little lot. But what is there important about the occasion beside the feed? Of course that's important."

"I've got a communication to make."

"Something up against the New House?" asked Blake, with interest.

"No; they're coming to the feed, fathend! Hallo, here they come!"

"There was a tramp of feet in the passage, and Figgins appeared in the doorway, with a bland smile on his face. Ker and Wynne looked over his shoulders. There were others behind quite an army.

"Invitation kindly accepted!" said Figgins. "Pleas we've come."

"Walk in, old chap!"

"Aheh! Where am I to walk over?" asked Figgins humbly.

"Oh, squeeze in somehow."

"Ow! Pway don't shove into me in that wuff mazrah, Figgins."

"Jolly glad to see you New House chaps!" said Tom Merry hospitably. "Glad to see you, Kerr! Come in, Wren! Hello! Is that Reddy?"

"It is," said Reddy. "It is!"

"Aheh! Try to find yourself room to stand," said Tom Merry, with a slightly worried look. "All welcome—welcome as the girly flowers in May! And Lawrence, and Owen—ahem!—come in!"

"The cry is 'Still they come!'" murmured Blake.

"You told me to bring my friends," said Figgins blandly.

"There are only eight of us, though—"

"Eight! Ye gods!—I mean, all serene!"

"Bui Jove! That makes nineteen fellows altogether," murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, "and there certainly isn't room for a dozen!"

"Corrie is Thompson!" said Figgins affably. "Ten

The Old Linnait, No. 322.

"Perhaps he's got some business here!" suggested Blake.

"I think he might have had the decency to keep away."

"Perhaps he's got some business here!" suggested Blake.

Merry's glad to see you. Come in, Kerrie! Come in, Owen! Lots of room—if you can find it!"

"Where are you shoving?" Jack Blake wanted to know.

And Lawrence replied genially:

"I'm shoving you, Blake, old sport."

"Look here, you New House waster—"

"Order!"

"Yass, ordah, deah boys! Pway don't let your angry passions rise," said Arthur Augustus, "though really I wish you would keep your beastly elbows out of my beastly wuff mazrah."

"Your beastly ribs are in the way of my beastly elbows," Kerr explained.

"However, I consider—"

"Put some chains in the passage," said Tom Merry outside. "Burry the room isn't any bigger, you fellows! You can sit round the doorway."

"I'd like to be round the table, if you don't mind," said Fatty Wynne, with a hungry eye on the piles of eatables. "I will pass things, you know."

"Down your neck—eh!" said Blake genially.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynne did not reply. It was no time for arguing or chipping. He took on a sufficient number of sops to clear a passage to the table, and sat down there and started. There were two scores of poached eggs to start with, but under Fatty Wynne's rapid operations the number was quickly diminished.

Fortunately, good-humor reigned upon the whole. A semi-circle of chairs outside the doorway accommodated the juniors who could not squeeze into the study. Good things were handed out to them, and the feed started in good earnest. Fatty Wynne was a good starter and a good stayer. As usual on such occasions, he was, so to speak, first man in and not out at the finish.

"By the way," Blake remarked, as if struck by a sudden thought, "did you say you had something to say, Tom Merry?"

The Terrible Three had been kept pretty busy yapping on their numerous guests. Now there was a slacking down, as the keen edge of appetite was taken off. The piles of goodly viands on the table had greatly diminished.

"Yes," said Tom Merry. "Can I pass anybody the cake?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Famh, and I'm your man, intirely!"

"Jam-tarts this way!"

"Pass the doughnuts, Fatty! Don't scoff the lot!"

Fatty Wynne did not reply, and he did not pass the doughnuts. He was too busy making up for that insignificant dinner.

"Now pile in, old chap!" said Blake, seeing himself with a wedge of cake. "After a feed like this, you can eat anything you like. Even if it's one of your wheezes, we'll give you a blessing."

The generous sentiment was much applauded.

"Hear, hear!"

"Pile in, Merry, old man!"

"And pass the sops."

"It isn't a wheeze," said Tom Merry, as the voices died away, to be succeeded by the steady sound of champing jaws. "It's a very important matter."

"Yass, wahah! Brewster you had better let me explain to the fellows," Tom Merry, as I know all about it—"

"This is how it is," went on Tom Merry, apparently deaf to Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's kind offer. "You chaps remember last term there was a rotter came to Rylcombe who was mistaken for me, and caused me a lot of trouble!"

"I remember him," said Figgins. "I saw him squally once, and took care of him, thinking it was you."

"His name was Clavering, I believe!" said Blake.

"That's it. Well, he's come back to this neighbourhood, I understand," resumed Tom Merry. "I haven't seen him, but Gummy has."

"Yass, wahah! I encountered the wottah—"

"The Grammar School chaps used to have dropped on him this afternoon, and found him speaking and mistook him for me, and tied him up in a sack," said Tom Merry.

"We had a row with Gordon Gray afterwards. He wouldn't believe me when I said I hadn't been there. Now, I don't know what that fellow Clavering has come back here for, but we've talked it over, and we've decided that it's not good enough."

"Wahah not! I consider—"

"Look his cheek to come back here, after the trouble he gave us," agreed Kangaroo. "I remember you chaps yanked him up to the school, and showed him to the Head, to prove that it wasn't you who'd been publishing Merry. I think he might have had the decency to keep away."

"Perhaps he's got some business here!" suggested Blake.

"I think he might have had the decency to keep away."

"Perhaps he's got some business here!" suggested Blake.

"Perhaps he's got some business here!" suggested Blake.

"He'd hardly come to a quiet village like Rycombe for nothing."

"Business or not, he's not going to stay here!" said Tom. "He's already been mistaken for me this afternoon. It doesn't matter this time, as it was only the Grammar School boys, but it may cause trouble next time. He's a regular blackguard of a fellow, up to all his old games. Lowther thought of the scheme, and I think it's a good one, and I want you chaps to help me."

"Yes, hear it!" said Figgins. "We'll back you up!"

"Yes, rather!" said Redless heartily. "What can we do?"

"The idea is to look for the rotter and rag him on sight, and make the place too hot to hold him. Tom Merry explained. "I want all you fellows to look for him, meet him as often as you can, and go for him. Punch his head, dot him in the eye, duck him in the river, bump him in the ditch—anything you like. I'm not particular how you rag him, as long as you do rag him. Go for him bald-headed. It is bound to get fed-up."

"Ha, ha! I should say so!"

"When he gets fed-up he'll clear off, and we shall be rid of him, and there won't be any more trouble such as there was last time," said Tom Merry. "I think we're justified in handling him how we like, because he's an utter end and outsider. Your remembrance he was useful to Cousin Ethel when he was here before. Anything is good enough for a rotter like that!"

"Too good!" said Figgins warily. "Let me get a chance at him, that's all!"

"Yaaa, wraith! I wogard it as a decent fellow's duty to give a faithful thrawsht' to anybody who is wade to a lay!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll back you up, Tommy!"

"Bully as us!"

"Faith, and we'll match the shaft of the world bald-headed intirely," said Redless. "Pass the ginger-beer."

The Terrible Three exchanged glances of satisfaction.

"There was no doubt that Mervy Lowther's crooked idea would have plenty of backers. Here were nineteen juniors, the leading spirits of both Houses, prepared to go almost any length in making Reggie Clavering's life a burden to him. If Master Hoggie showed himself near St. Jim's he was seriously likely to experience a high old time.

"One thing more," said Tom Merry—""

"Dinna, if you life," said Redless.

"He, ha, ha!"

"No, only one more," said Tom, laughing. "The rotter pretended to be me to-day. He gave his name to Gussy as Tom Merry."

"The rotter spoofs!"

"Yaaa, wraith! and I really thought he was Tom Merry, you know—though now I come to think of it, pawsers he was a little battah-looker!"

"Why, you silly ass—" began Tom.

"Waddy, Tom Merry—" said Redless.

"Shut up! As I was saying, the rotter may call himself me—Tom Merry—to get out of being ragged. If he does, don't take any notice of it. Go for him all the same, and smash him!"

"Right-ho!"

"Depend on us!"

"Just go for him bald-headed, whatever he says, and make a wroth of him. I think that after one or two experiences he will be glad to clear off."

"I shouldn't wonder!" grinned Blaka. "My dear chap, you leave it to us. We'll make rags of him—anything short of wild murder. And I'm your man. Pass the jam!"

And while that famous feud progressed towards a hilarious conclusion, the crowd of juniors discussed, with much anticipation, the intended hunt for Master Hoggie Clavering, and the things that were to happen to him every time he was caught. It was agreed that the hunt was to begin the following day, and there was no doubt that the juniors were very keen about it. The scheme was, perhaps, a little lawless, but the juniors did not think much about that. And if they had known with what purpose Master Hoggie was again in the neighbourhood of St. Jim's they would certainly have thought less still of it.

CHAPTER 8.

Tom Merry Makes Inquiries.

THE campaign started the next day.

After morning lessons nearly a score of juniors wheeled out their bicycles, with the fanlike intention of looking everywhere for Master Hoggie Clavering.

They rode up and down the lanes round about St. Jim's, they scoured the Wayland Road and the Abbotsford Road,

they looked into barns and tea-shops, they looked every-where.

But they returned disappointed to St. Jim's in time for dinner. They had seen nothing of the young rascal.

He was staying in the village or in the neighbourhood he certainly wasn't ahead just at that time, or they would have spotted him. The intended ragging had not, therefore, come off.

"Never mind!" said Figgins. "One swallow doesn't make a summer. If he's staying in those parts, we're bound to drop on him sooner or later."

"And we'll drop on him heavy!" grinned Blaka.

"Very heavy indeed, Josh boy."

Several rows follow, besides the original nineteen had learned of the state of the case, and signalled their readiness to join in the campaign. Tom Merry & Co. made no secret of the matter. Indeed, Mervy Lowther had wisely observed that the more it was talked about the better. It was good for the whole school to know that Tom Merry had a double, and that he was in the neighbourhood, and that he was a blackguard. That made it less probable that any ill deeds of the recently double would be set down to Tom Merry's account. When the latter became a common topic of conversation at St. Jim's such a mistake was not like to arise. If a fellow looking like Tom Merry was seen smoking, or loitering about a public-house, or taking with a bookmaker, it would be known at once that it was not Tom Merry, but his double.

Before the day was out, in fact, all St. Jim's was talking about it. Arthur Augustus had to tell a score of times how he had found Clavering in the sack, owing to the mistake made by the Grammarians.

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of St. Jim's, called Tom Merry into his study after school that day. The story had reached his ears.

"What's this I hear about your having a double, Mervy?" Kildare asked, eyeing the Blak fellow very curiously.

"You've seen him," said Tom. "It's the chap who was about here last term—at least, I mistake it is. There's not likely to be two chaps in existence, looking like my twin brother, and he's the same kind of fellow as that Clavering—a blackguard!"

"Rather awkward for you?"

"Yes, that's why we're going to—" Tom Merry paused in Tom. "It was quite possible that Kildare, as head prefect of the School House, might not approve of the measures the retaliating juniors intended to take."

"Why, you're going to—what?" asked Kildare.

"Ahain! Nothing!"

"You've seen this chap?" Kildare asked.

"Not this time, but Gussy has. And the Grammarians ragged him yesterday in mistake for me," said Tom.

"Well, it's a good thing it's known," said Kildare, "and a good thing your double has been seen, too, otherwise it might have been suspected that you started the story to cover up something of other—"

"What?"

"If you were seen in any place out of bounds, it would be useful to have a double to lay it on."

Tom Merry flushed crimson.

"Kildare! Surely you don't think—"

"Of course I don't!" said Kildare, laughing. "I know you too well to think you would do anything rotten, I believe that might have been suspected, all the same—only it hardly happens to be known that you have a double. It's all right for you now. If the fellow gets up to any tricks, it will be known that it is he, and not you—we shall all know what to think. In fact, I'm going to mention the matter to the Headmaster, in case there should be any mistake made."

"Thanks!" said Tom gravely. "You're a good chap, Kildare. I hope the rotter won't stay in these parts, though."

He quitted the St. Jim's captain's study, and rejoined Lowther and Mervy, who were waiting for him in the School House doorway. Brookes of the Fourth, the day-boy at St. Jim's, passed them, and nodded pleasantly. Lowther called to him.

"Hold on, Brookes!"

Brookes halted.

"We'll get Brookes up to it!" said Lowther. "He goes a long way home—over Wayland Slope—and he may happen to see the chap. One never knows."

"I've heard about it, if it's the double you mean," said Brookes, with a smile. "I'll keep my eyes open for him. Not likely, though. I'm likely to see him—my horse is in a rather lonely place. But if I spot him I'll tell you!"

"Right-ho!"

And Brookes went his way.

"I've got an idea," said Tom, as he left the School House.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 285.

A Southport Nov. Leaf, Caxton School Tale #

Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIPPOLE.

NEST

WEDNESDAY—

"A CHANGE OF IDENTITY!"

with his chains, "the last time Clavering was down here he put up at the Green Man; that awful job in Rylcombe; I don't say he's there again. Why not go and see if he is?"

"Out of branch!" said Leather. "Trouble for us if we're seen in the Green Man."

"Yes, I know; but to get at that broader it's worth the risk," said Tom. "He's more likely to be there than anywhere else—the cotton there are just his mark. No need for the three of us to go in, either. I'll go in, and you fellows can wait for me down the street."

"Well, we may as well try it," said Marnock. And the three of the Shell walked down to Rylcombe. Marnock and Leather walked on to the bus-stop, to wait there for their chums, and Tom Merry, after a glance up and down the street—his eye did not want to be seen entering such a place as the Green Man—went in.

Mr. Joliffe, the landlord, met him with a surprised look. Mr. Joliffe had regular dealings with some of the "blades" of St. Jim's—like Cotts of the Fifth, and Knox of the Sixth, but he had never expected to see Tom Merry within the precincts of his delectable inn. But all was quiet that came to Mr. Joliffe's mind, and he was ready to welcome a stray sheep into the fold.

"Afternoon, Master Merry!" he said genially. "Come into the parlour!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"Thanks, no; I only want to ask you a question, Mr. Joliffe. Is there a chap named Clavering staying here?"

Mr. Joliffe looked at him curiously. Tom Merry was evidently, after all, not a sheep for his fold.

"No, there ain't," said Mr. Joliffe shortly.

"Been here lately?" asked Tom.

"I ain't got scraps of that name 'ere at all," said Mr. Joliffe. Mr. Joliffe, as a matter of fact, had been given the name of Montgomery by his late guest, but as he remembered his previous visit perfectly well, he knew that the right name was Clavering. But he was not disposed to place that information at the disposal of Tom Merry. "Friend of yours?" he added.

"Oh, no?" said Tom. "Only a chap I want to find."

"Well, you won't find his 'ere," said Mr. Joliffe.

"You're sure he hasn't been 'ere?"

"I s'pose I ought to know!"

"Y'wy well. Good-evening!"

And Tom Merry turned on his heel and walked out of the place. The Green Man had been drawn blank, after all. Tom Merry did not know that from a window of the inn a pair of keen eyes watched him as he went. Gerald Goring, in an adjoining room, had seen him come in, and had heard his talk with the landlord.

Goring turned the end of his amiable nose.

"So he knows Clavering is in the neighbourhood!" he muttered. "Or does he only suspect it? As all events, I'm glad I get rid of Reggie from here; and he will have to give St. Jim's a wide berth. The game can be played out at the Green Man. That's the idea!"

And Gerald Goring smiled and lighted a cigarette, and walked away in search of a whisky-and-soda.

CHAPTER 9.

Study No. 6 Distinguishable itself.

"GREAT SCOTT!"

"Hullo, Garry!"

"What's being you?"

"Nothing's being me.

Make you silly as! Only five minutes ago!"

"What's the matter?"

"The wretch wretch; he's even been a St. Jim's up from somewhere! Look!"

The chains of Study No. 6 were just entering the village—out on the last once more.

The Green Man was on the outskirts of Rylcombe, and the four juniors were about to pass it, when Arthur Augustus's eagle eye spotted a junior coming out of the building.

The noble forehead of the Hon. Arthur Augustus was raised to point. His eye was gleaming with excitement behind his monocle.

"My hat!" exclaimed Blake. "We're in luck!"

"Got him!" said Herries, with satisfaction.

"Fairly lagged?" grizzled Digby. "Collar the cad!"

"Hold on!" murmured Blake. "Wait till he's fairly out. Don't give the cad a chance to dodge back into the house—

we can't follow him there; it's out of our bounds. Wait till he passes the horse-trough, and then follow your wade!"

"Yess, wathah! Fancy the wretch havin' the cheek to sport a St. Jim's cap!"

"The awful nerve!" said Digby indignantly.

"There can't be any mistake this time," said Blake.

"The fellow is simply the living and breathing image of Tom Merry!"

"His blessed double, and no mistake!" said Herries.

They watched the junior keenly, keeping back behind the big elm-tree that grew before the public-house. The way he was coming he had to pass close to the tree, and then they would have him. There was no doubt that he was exactly like Tom Merry. He was Tom Merry to the life; and he was dressed in Knox, and wore a cap that bore the unmistakable badge of St. Jim's. And he was coming out of the Green Man—walking out of that disreputable public-house in the full light of day!

"Now then!" murmured Blake.

The junior had passed the horse-trough and was in a line with the tree. Blake sprang out suddenly into full view, with his comrades at his heels. With a whoop they surrounded the startled junior.

"Hallo!" said the junior, staring at them. "All right—you've got me—if you want me! What's the little game?"

"Bei Jove, he's a cool beggar, and no mistake!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Nothing to get excited about, is there?" asked the other.

"What's the little game, Blake, old son?"

Blake stared.

"Oh! You know my name, do you?"

"Of course I do!" said Tom Merry, staring. "Look here—"

"You want to know what the little game is?" grizzled Blake. "Well, you're the little game, my pipkin, and we're going to play it!"

"I don't quite see—"

"You will soon. Collar him!" shouted Blake.

Four pairs of hands grasped the Shell fellow on all sides. Tom Merry struggled frantically and amazingly in the grasp of his captors. But they were too many for him. He was helpless in the grip of the four. They janneted him against the big tree, and held him there, gasping and panting.

"Fwannah of wath!" said Arthur Augustus. "D'Arcy—"

"Now, you wretch, this is where we wag you! What!"

"Bag me!" gasped Tom Merry. "What for, you say?"

"If you call me an ass, you wretch—"

"I'll explain," said Blake blandly, while his knuckles were grinding into Tom Merry's neck. "We're fed up with you!"

"What!"

"You're too numerous about here. You've got to get out!"

"Get out!" repeated Tom dazedly.

"Yes; travel, you know!"

NEXT WEDNESDAY:

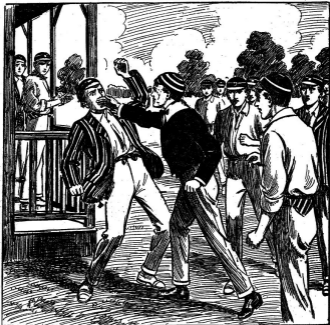
A CHANGE OF IDENTITY!

A Magnificent Long, Complete Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's.

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD.

PLEASE ORDER EARLY!





The justice in Frons made a sudden spring forward, and struck out, and his open palm came across Gordon Guy's cheek with a crack like a pistol shot! "You rotter!" shouted Wootton major. Gordon Guy recovered himself at once. "Leave him to me!" he said, between his teeth. (See Chapter 12.)

"Fiancee off, deah boy!" explained D'Arcy.

"Boss?" said Herrie.

"Disappea!" said Dicky.

"You see," resumed Blake, "you resemble a chap in our school, and he's got into trouble once or twice through you being seen coming out of pubs, and so on, and being mistaken for him. So you've got to leave the neighbourhood. See? If you've got any business here you'll have to transact it by post—no one's have you in Ryloombah. We're going to rag you baldheaded until you clear. Why, what are you laughing at, you lunge?"

Tom Merry had looked with a blank stare at Blake began, but before the Fourth-Former had finished he understood, and he burst into a roar of laughter. The chorus of Study No. 6 gazed at him in some exasperation. It was not a time or place for Tom Merry's double to be laughing, considering what they were going to do to him.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Shell fellow.

"You utah see! What are you laughing at!"

"We'll give him something to cackle about!" said Blake. "Yank him over to the horse-trough, and we'll duck him to begin with!"

"Yea, withak!"

"Hold on!" gasped Tom Merry. "I say—ha, ha, ha!"

do you mean to say that you take me for Reggie Clavering? Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's exactly the individual we do take you for," said Blake. "I suppose you're not going to tell any lies about it?"

"I am Tom Merry!"

"Oh, draw it wild!" said Blake contemptuously.

"Don't be funny!" inspired Dicky. "This isn't really a funny business; you'll find that out when you get into the trough!"

"Yea; pray don't tell whoopahs, Clavering!"

And Tom Merry was propelled towards the horse-trough, in the grasp of the four justices. Mr. Joliffe was standing in his doorway, looking on with a grin. He had no intention of interfering to save Tom Merry from being ducked. He rather enjoyed it. Two or three village archers gathered round to look on with interest.

Tom Merry cast a wild glance up the street in search of Mazzona and Lowther. But they were in the bar-shop waiting for him, and discussing lemonade while they waited.

"Leggo!" roared Tom. "I tell you I am Tom Merry! How can you be silly asses enough to take me for Clavering?"

"Silly asses, are we?" said Herrie. "Well, in you go! THE GRU LASHAN.—No. 323.

We're not silly asses enough to believe that you're Tom Merry, anyway!"

"Wahah! Not! It is simply shocking the way you will eat him, Clavering! You told me yesterday afternoon that you were Tom Merry, and I believed you then; but this time—"

"I am Tom Merry!" yelled Tom.

"Wah!"

"Hoops of rats, old sport!" said Blake. "Better not wriggle—you say you got bumped on the trough; and you're going in, anyway."

"Logic, you silly idiot! I'm Tom Merry! Can't you see that I'm wearing a St. Jim's cap?" yelled the unfortunate junior.

"Yess; and I think it's like your awful cheek to put on a St. Jim's cap, Clavering, when you don't belong to St. Jim's!" said D'Arcy sternly.

"Take it away from him!" said Blake. "He's so right to it! He must have put it on specially to be taken for Tom Merry!"

The cap was jerked off Tom's curly head, and tossed away. In spite of his struggles, he was whirled up by the locomotive. Mr. Joffe's grin was very wide now. Tom Merry was getting drowsy. He had himself warned the juniors not to be taken in if Clavering should pretend to be him—Tom Merry—and evidently they were prepared to hear such a statement, and to disbelieve it.

"In with him!" roared Blake. "Blessed if I thought he had it in him to put up a tumbler like this! But we'll cure him! Shove him in!"

"I tell you I am Tom Merry!" shrieked the Shell fellow, shuddering at the edge of the trough, and holding on for dear life.

"Choo! Choo!"

"Do you think we'll believe that Tom Merry was being coming out of that pot?" said Blake impatiently.

"Dry up!"

"I went in there to ask about Clavering's."

"Gummon!"

"I tell you— I— I say, Mr. Joffe!" shouted Tom Merry. But Mr. Joffe stopped back into the horse and disappeared.

"Now, 'suff said!" said Blake. "In with him! All together!"

"Toot-ensemble!" grunted Digby.

With a final dreadful effort Tom Merry was dragged from his hold, whirled into the air, and plunged fairly into the horse-trough!

CHAPTER 10. Very Wet!

SLASH!

Tom Merry descended into the middle of the full-flowing trough, and the water rose on all sides of him from the concussion. It was like a water-pool, and there was a yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as he received a wave on the chest. All the juniors were splashed, but D'Arcy's state was woeful. He staggered back regarding his new vestment, no longer handsome, with dismay and wrath.

"Oh, crumbs! Look at my waistcoat!"

"Both your waistcoat!" grunted Blake. "I've got blessed water down my neck! The beast! What is he giving us all this trouble for?"

"Like his cheek!" growled Herriot, mopping water out of his eyes.

"Give him a good dashing while we're about it."

Tom Merry struggled up into a sitting position in the trough. He was drenched from top to toe, and the water came up to his armpits as he sat up shuddering. Steamers were running down his face. He made a jump to get out of the trough, but the Fourth-Farmers seized him promptly, and jammed him down again. There was another mighty splash.

"Keep him in!" said Blake. "Let him keep his shivery over the water, though. We don't want to drown him. Not that it would matter much, only it's against the law. Now, Clavering, we're going to talk to you like a Dutch uncle."

"I'm not Clavering, you meddling idiot!"

"Shnerp!" said Blake, shaking the prisoner in the trough, and jerking his head under again. "Mustn't call nobody names."

"Grough!" spluttered Tom Merry, as his face emerged again. "Ow-ow-ow! Grough! I'll make you sit-up for that! You-ow!"

He struggled to release himself, but it was in vain. The four juniors held him by their faces inside the trough, and only his face showed above the water. He glared at them with sulphurous rage, but they did not mind that.

"Now," sneezed Blake, "are you going to swear—"

"Paw! Paw! Paw!" said Blake, shaking the prisoner in the trough, and jerking his head under again. "Mustn't call nobody names."

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"Wah! Clavering, are you going to swear to get out of Kipling's at once?"

"Grough!"

"Will you promise, honour bright, to take the next train away, and not come back?"

"I'm not Clavering! Ow! Grough-oooh!"

Tom's head went under again. It came up once more, and he panted violently.

"Every time you tell a lie we're going to duck you under," said Blake cheerfully. "We'll keep it up as long as you like. No trouble at all."

"Ooo-oooh!"

"Will you promise to travel off—"

"Ow! Ow! Help! Rescue!"

"Nobody here to rescue you," said Blake, with a glance roared at the gathering crowd of village youths, schoolboys, and idlers, who were looking on with interest. "We don't let anybody interfere. We'll see to it."

"How can I, you silly idiot, when I've got to go back to St. Jim's?" panted Tom. "I tell you I'm Tom Merry-Grough!"

His head went under again. Blake was in deadly earnest. Tom Merry felt half-drowned when his face emerged from the water once more.

"Oh, you silly change!" he gurgled. "You cross, scabious idiot! I'll lick you all round! I'll wash you bald-headed! Ow! Mamma! Loveth! Rescue!"

"Still keeping it up!" grunted Blake. "Blessed if I ever saw such an obstinate ass. But we'll teach him manners, if we have to drown him. Now, Clavering—"

"I'm not Clavering. Yarooop!"

Under again!

"But Jove! Don't quite drown him, dash boy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully. "We don't really want to have the awful look of a cowman's longest toe knee."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry's head was dragged up again, streaming with water. He had almost ceased to struggle. He had swallowed a good deal of water, and his face was exhausted. He blinked with a watery blink at the juniors.

"Oh, you scabious change!" he gurgled.

"Ha, ha, ha! What have you got those!" asked Mearns Loveth, coming up with Mamma. The two Shell fellows had given back of waiting for Tom Merry, and they had come out of the head-shop. The sight of the crowd outside the Green Man drew their attention, and they came along to see what the matter was.

"We've got Clavering," said Blake.

"Yess, wathah! Caught him comin' out of that pot, you know, and the awful bossah has the frightful cheek to pretend that he's Tom Merry!"

"I am Tom Merry!" shrieked the junior in the trough.

"Loveth, tell the silly idiot I am Tom Merry! Ooooh!"

His head went under again. Mearns Loveth peeped.

"I— I say, I think you're making a mistake, Blake, old man."

Blake dragged Tom Merry's head up again, and snorted contemptuously. He was quite sure that he was not making a mistake.

"Rats!" he replied. "We caught him coming out of this pot. I suppose that settles it. Tom Merry wouldn't be there."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Loveth. "Yes, he was there."

"What?"

"He went in to inquire about Clavering."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"We were waiting for him," gasped Mamma. "Oh, my hat! You've waken up the wrong passenger. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Make them let me go!" gurgled Tom Merry. "I'm nearly drowned! Oh, I'll make you silly change smart for this!"

"I—I say, Loveth, are you sure it's Tom Merry?" stammered Blake, quite taken aback.

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"But Jove! What a very unfortunate owwah! Of course, we could not know Tom Merry would be silly as enough to be got into the Green Man."

The Fourth-Farmers released their victim. It was evident now that a mistake had been made. Tom Merry crawled out of the trough, and stood shivering in the coats of a pool of water formed by the streams that ran down his clothes.

Mamma and Loveth ought to have been sympathetic. So they were; but they could not help seeing a humorous side to the matter. They roared, and Tom Merry glared at them with a glare like unto that of a basilisk.

"Goo! I'm wet! Ow! My clothes are spoiled! Yes, silly change, what are you seeking at?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Jove! If you were really Tom Merry, I'm awfully

sorry for the mistake," said Arthur Augustus handsomely.

"I apologise."

Blake grinned.

"Well, you shouldn't have been fooling round this night," he said. "You warned as yourself that Clavering might pretend to be you when we collared him."

"Yess, wadiah!"

"I'm not so jolly sure that he isn't Clavering after all," growled Herriss.

"Fatsided!" gasped Tom Merry. "Ass! Silly chump!"

"Look here—"

"Pony don't get watty, howdiah! If he's really Tom Merry, he's some reason for feelin' wadiah annoyed," said D'Arcy mildly.

"He's Tom Merry right enough," grinned Lowther.

"Tommy, old son, you'll catch cold if you stand there in your wet clothes. Better come home and change."

"I'm going to smash those silly idiots!"

"Oh, come, I like that!" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "We were only doing it for yote sake. It was your own scheme. Taint our fault that you look like Clavering, and that you hang about just where we might expect to find him."

"No flesh! No good lovin' your teampal, Tom Merry. We were really only awawyin' out your own instructions, dead boy."

"You cross ass!"

"I refuse to be called a cross ass. I crossdiah—"

"Come on, Tommy!" shrieked Lowther, taking his chair's arm. "You'd better run and get warm, or you'll catch a cold. Come on!"

Lowther's advice was good. Tom Merry was certainly in danger of catching cold. He gave the Fourth-Formers a final backward glance, and allowed himself to be led away. He started for St. Jim's at a run, with water splashing out of his boots at every step. Mansers and Lowther, nobly controlling their nostrils, accompanied him. A shout of laughter from the village waddies followed him.

Blake & Co. looked at one another in some dismay.

"Well, we've done it this time!" said Dingle. "Of course, it was his fault! I don't see that we are to blame."

"Well, no," said Blake. "I don't see it, either. We couldn't have done otherwise, and he ought to have proved somehow that he was really Tom Merry! I suppose he really is Tom Merry, as he's letting those chaps take him to St. Jim."

"Yass, wadiah! It is very unkind, but, waddy, we were sent to blame. And when he is cold I trust Tom Merry will thank us for havin' done our best, anyway."

Blake grinned. He did not think it likely that Study No. 6 would receive Tom Merry's thanks for what had happened.

"Well, we've done our best, anyway," said Herriss. "I can't see that Tom Merry's got anything to grumble at. But some chaps are never satisfied."

Tom Merry certainly was satisfied, as he squelched his way homeward to St. Jim's. He was very far indeed from satisfied. In the Shell dormitory he rubbed down and changed his clothes in an accompaniment of sneezing and sniffing.

Blake & Co. had, as a matter of fact, a little overdone it, and Tom Merry had caught a cold. That was not surprising under the circumstances.

"Feel better?" asked Lowther sympathetically, when Tom had finished changing.

"Akhoo! Yess. But I've got a cold!" growled Tom.

"Oh, those silly asses!"

"Well, it was really a natural mistake to snape—"

"Oh, snape!"

"Every school has a silver lining," said Lowther comfortingly. "You've got a cold—"

"I don't see any silver lining in that, fatsided!" growled Tom.

"And Clavering hasn't!" Lowther explained. "So long as your cold lasts, we shall all be able to spot the difference between you. You see, you sneeze now, and Clavering doesn't, so we can't mistake one for the other, unless Clavering catches a cold too, and that really isn't likely."

"So, you see, it's really rather lucky, after all!" said Mansers.

But Tom Merry did not see it. He refused to be comforted. When he met Blake & Co. he glared at them—between two sneezes, and showed no disposition whatever to thank Study No. 6 for having done their best.

CHAPTER 11.

On the Sick List.

M R. LINTON, the master of the Shell, glanced at Tom Merry when the jessies came into the Form-room the next morning. Tom's nose was very red, and his eyes were a little watery, and he seemed to have some difficulty in breathing. He had made heroic efforts to keep his cold in check, in dread of being sent into the school

sanatorium. He had drenched himself with oil of eucalyptus to such an extent that he became offensive to all the noses in the Shell, and then he had drenched himself with eau-de-Cologne to drive the scent of the eucalyptus. Fortunately D'Arcy had a good supply of eau-de-Cologne, and Lowther knew where he kept it, so there was no difficulty about that.

Between the eucalyptus oil and the eau-de-Cologne there wasn't much danger of the other fellows catching the cold from him—the combined scents were strong enough to kill the microbes without sneezing; indeed, some of the jessies thought they were strong enough to kill Tom Merry himself. Quite an arena floated round him as he entered the Form-room, and there was a general sniffing.

"You have a cold, Merry, I think," Mr. Linton remarked.

"Just a touch, sr," said Tom.

"Have you taken anything for it?"

"Oh."

"Keep on the end form by yourself. The other boys must not run risks of catching it," said the master of the Shell.

"If it gets worse I will mention it to the Housemaster, and you may be sent into the sanatorium."

"I—I think it's getting better, sr," faltered Tom.

"Very well; we shall see," said Mr. Linton. "I am glad, at all events, that you do not wish to leave your lessons, Merry."

That wasn't exactly Tom Merry's idea. He would have had no insuperable objection to leaving his lessons; but he did not want to be made an invalid of. He kept his cold out of sight as much as he could by keeping to his study when he was not required in the Form-room. His sympathetic chums built up a big fire in the study after lessons that day, and Tom Merry sat before it in the armchair, and sniffed.

"Keep in the same temperature all the time, and a cold can't last long," said Lowther sagely, "and we'll play chess up here with you this evening, kid."

Just then Toby knocked at the door, and put his plump face into the study. He had a telegram in his hand.

"For Master Merry," he said.

"Send it over!"

Tom Merry opened the telegram, and gave a groan of dismay.

"Hallo! What's the news?" asked Mansers.

"No blessed chance of nursing this blessed cold," said Tom. "I've got to go out."

"Oh, rot, you can't go out!" said Lowther warmly.

"Must! Look at it!"

Mansers and Lowther read the telegram. It ran:—"Dearest Tommy,—I am coming down to see you, and shall arrive at Wayland Station at six o'clock. I wish you to be there to meet me, as I have to make some purchases for you. Come alone.—Priscilla Fawcett."

The chums of the Shell looked dismal. Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess, could not be disregarded. Miss Priscilla was tenderly attached to her ward, and the long telegram was very like her. She did not want the halfpennies when sending messages to Tommy.

"Wire her you're sorry!" said Lowther.

"No good. She must have left Hackleberry Heath the time the telegram was sent."

"Yes, she's on her way now," Mansers remarked thoughtfully. "I say, those purchases in Wayland will be for a feed, of course. She's a good sort."

"But if she sees me with a cold, I shall never hear the end of it!" growled Tom Merry. "She will worry the Head and the Housemaster, and make them send me into sentencement; very likely engage a special nurse, and drive me pretty nearly dotty, and worry herself more than she does me."

"Beesily!" suggested Lowther.

"Beesily!" agreed Lowther. "And you oughtn't to go out, either, with that cold. Going to Wayland will really make it worse."

"I don't mind that, if only Miss Fawcett doesn't spot it."

"She says you're to come alone," said Lowther, glancing at the telegram again. "Doesn't want our cheerful company this time."

"Wants to talk to me about my health!" growled Tom Merry. "I shall get that all the way to St. Jim's in the box."

"Look here, you're too keen to go," said Lowther. "I'll go and explain it to her. She can talk to my sheet my health, if she likes. I'm fit, and can stand it."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"If you go instead of me, she's bound to think I'm at death's door," he said. "You see, if I'm well, there's no reason why I shouldn't go, and if I'm not well, she'll make a blessed invalid of me, and want to doctor me. I think I'd better go, and keep the cold dark if I can."

Lowther grinned, as he surveyed Tom's reddened nose and watery eyes.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 111.

A Redoubt. New Long, Complete School This at
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

WEDNESDAY
"A CHANGE OF IDENTITY!"

"You jolly well won't keep her from sporting that!" he said.

"Well, I'll try! Anyway, if I don't go, she'll be frightened to death about my giddy health, and it will be worse than ever."

"But you're steady!"

"Oh, not—only a touch of cold. I'll go— I don't want to stick in the room like a beasty invalid, anyway."

And Tom Merry rose to his feet.

"You really oughtn't to go out," said Manzoni.

"Oh, it'll do me good," said Tom cheerfully. "Nothing like fresh air, you know. I'll put a coat on. I wish you chaps would come with me, but Miss Fawcett says I'm to go alone, so I suppose I'd better."

And Tom Merry left the School House in coat and cap, with a sash over his neck. Brooks of the Fourth was coming out, with a couple of books under his arm, and he nodded cheerily to Tom Merry.

"Cold any better?" he asked.

"Yes, it's flourishing," said Tom grimly. "Getting on quite nicely—very strong for its age."

Brooks laughed.

"Not going out?" he asked.

"Yes, I've got to go over to Wayland Station to meet Miss Fawcett."

"Then I'll trot with you as far as Wayland. I'm going home."

"Oh, good!" said Tom.

The day-boy left St. Jim's with him, and they walked through the wood together. Brooks's home was a rambling old house on Wayland Moor, and he walked to and fro every morning and evening, having his midday meal at St. Jim's with the other fellows. Brooks was a hard worker, for beside his school work, he did other work to earn money, being chiefly dependant on his own exertions, and that walk to and from school was the greater part of the exercise he ever had. Brooks chatted, and Tom Merry smiled, as they walked through the wood, and came out at the moor.

"By the way," Brooks remarked, "have you seen that chap yet?"

"My double!" Tom asked. "No; he seems to have gone after all. He's not at the Green Man, and the fellows have been looking for him everywhere, and haven't caught sight of him. I suppose he was only down here for the day, after all."

Brooks shook his head.

"He's here," he said quietly.

"Here!" said Tom Merry, in surprise. "You're sea him?"

"This morning, as I was coming to the school," Brooks explained. "You know, I cut right across the moor to save time; it's a very lonely path, and I hardly anybody ever uses it, excepting the people who live in the summer cottages—gardeners, and chaps like that, who come down here in the summer."

"Too early for them yet," said Tom.

"One of the cottages has a lodger already," said Brooks. "I passed Mrs. Bell's cottage as usual, and saw a chap there that I took for you. I wondered what you were doing so far from St. Jim's before morning lessons, and called out to you, and the chap went into the cottage at once. Then I remembered your double."

Tom Merry's face was a little excited.

"Have of him, Brooks?" he asked.

"Well, he was exactly like you, only he wasn't in Eton," said Brooks. "Of course, it wasn't you, by any chance?"

"No fear. I was calculating this giddy old this morning, and settling on the moor," said Tom Merry. "By Jove! Then you know where he lives. That's good. What can be doing there? It ain't the place you'd expect to see a chap like that. More likely to put up at a pub. I should say."

"So I thought," said Brooks, with a nod. "Looks as if he's lying low. I understood that he was sacked from his school when he was down here before. Perhaps he's in trouble again, and keeping dark. Anyway, you know where to find him now, if he should have the cheek to give you any more trouble."

"I think awfully," said Tom. "I'm jolly glad to know where he is, though if he really keeps out of sight, I don't think that I want to drop on him. Well, here we are."

Brooks walked on over the moor, and Tom Merry turned into the Wayland road. Ten minutes later he was at the station. It was not yet six, and he had some time to wait; but the train from Huckleberry Heath came in at last.

Tom Merry waited at the exit from the platform as the passengers passed; but, to his great surprise, his old governess was not among them.

The platform was cleared, and Miss Priscilla Fawcett had not appeared.

"My hat," Tom Merry ejaculated. "Isn't she coming?"

He could not help feeling pleased at the idea. Fawcett as he was of his old governess, he did not want her to see him just then. If she discovered that he had a cold—and she was pretty certain to do so if she saw him—there would be no end to her anxiety and her care for him. He shuddered at the prospect of being made an invalid of, and shut up in the sanatorium, and dined and physicked and fed on "slaps." If Miss Fawcett did not come, it was a lucky escape for him. And evidently she had not come by that train, and that there was no other train that evening from the remote quarter of Huckleberry Heath.

Tom Merry searched along the platform, and looked in the waiting-room, and waited about for nearly half an hour, but there was no sign of Miss Priscilla. Evidently she had changed her mind about coming. If the good lady had had one of her attacks of rheumatism, that was not surprising; and, doubtless, he would find another telegram waiting for him at St. Jim's. He inquired of the station-master if there had been any accident on the line, and was assured that there had been none, so, in a constipated frame of mind, he walked back to St. Jim's.

Well, said Manzoni and Lowther together, as he came into the School House, "where is Miss Priscilla?"

"Died's come, after all," said Tom. "Is there a wire for me?"

"Haven't heard of one."

Tom looked puzzled.

"Miss Fawcett's bound to wire and explain," he said.

"Well, I'll inquire for you."

Lowther inquired, but came back empty-handed. There was no telegram from Huckleberry Heath.

"Come later," he suggested. "Come and have tea. It's jolly late, but we've waited for you, my son."

"Ahhoo!" said Tom. "All right—ahhoo!"

And they went up to the study to a late tea.

CHAPTER 12.

Streak Down!

GORDON GAY came down to the cricket-field at the Grammar School with his bat under his arm, and a sunny, cheerful expression on his face. The Cornstalk Grammarian was in high good humour. Cricket was beginning again, the great winter game having been finally laid aside for another season; and cricket was the game the young Grammarian loved. He intended that the Grammarian junior team should go ahead that season, and lik St. Jim's juniors into a cocked hat; and he was keeping the cricketers well up to practice.

But, as it happened, Gordon Gay's cricket was destined to be interrupted on that particular afternoon. He had joined the other fellows at the wickets, when a junior in Eton came in at the gate of the Grammar School, and looked about him, like one new to the place. He sighted the cricket field, and the crowd of Grammarians there, and walked towards it. And there were exclamations from several of the Grammarians:

"Tom Merry!"

"St. Jim's bouncer!"

Gordon Gay had been about to go down to the wickets, but he paused at the new arrival he drew upon him. He nodded in a friendly way. He was feeling very friendly towards the world in general just then, under the combined influence of spring sunshine and cricket, and he was quite willing to forget all about that rugging in the lane, and the row outside the tack-shop in Etkombe. Indeed, as that rugging and that row had turned out, the Grammarians for their part could not afford to let bygones be bygones.

"Hello, Merry!" he said cheerily.

The juniors in Eton did not return either his nod nor his friendly greeting. There was a scowl upon his face.

"I came here to see you," he said.

Gordon Gay scented hostility at once; but it left him quite unmoved. He shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"Well, here I am!" he said. "You can see me! No extra charge for a good look."

"You can see us all, if you like, Tom Merry," added Frank Mask liberally. "Look away. You don't often see such nice boys."

"Barely ever!" said Watton major solemnly. "And after you've done seeing us, you can see how we play cricket, and pick up some tips."

"Good idea!" chimed in Wootton minor. "You need 'em at St. Jim's."

The junior's scowl deepened. The chipping of the Grammarians seemed to add fuel to his evident wrath.

"You call—" he began.

Gordon Gay held up his hand.

"Don't call on names," he said quietly. "We don't like it. And you needn't bear malice for that bit of a rugging. Bless

your little boots, you fellows have ragged us often enough, I suppose?"

"I'm going to lick you," said Gay calmly. "Well, if that's the way the cat jumps!" said Gay calmly. "Well, if you're looking for trouble, I keep it as long as I can." "And I'll make you sorry for the way you handled me, as sure as my name's Tom Merry!"

"Bats! Come into the gym!"

"Look here, we're going to play cricket," interposed Frank Monk. "If Tom Merry wants a kicking, he can have it presently. You see fight after dark in the gym."

"Yes, that's so," agreed Gordon Gay. "There's not much more daylight. Suppose you stay to tea, Merry, and we'll have the scrap afterwards?"

"I'm going to lick you now."

"Oh, hush him!" said Wootton major. "Somebody sit on him."

"Yes, I think you'll have to wait," said Gay. "I'm not going to waste daylight on you, Patience, my son."

"What?" Gordon Gay's handsome, sunburnt face flushed crimson. "What did you say?"

"Coward!" repeated the boy in Eless testily. "I'm not going to wait. If you're not a punk, you'll stand up to me now."

Gay set his teeth. He pitched away his hat at once.

"If you put it like that, I'll handle you on the spot," he said angrily. "Come on, and let's get the gloves."

"Oh! You want your beauty spotted, do you?" said Gay, starting at him. "Well, I don't mind. Blessed if I understand you quite. You're not much like the chap we've always thought you. I'll do my best to knock some sense and reason into you, Tom Merry. Come on, and we'll try it without the gloves."

"I'll fight you here!"

"Now, talk sense," said Gay. "We can't fight here in the open without gloves. Any of the masters might spot us. Old Bowker, the Fifth Form-master, often watches the cricket from his window; and Delamere, our captain, is somewhere about. We should be stopped if we started here."

"Look here, you silly duffer—why—what—my hat!"

"Bucks!"

The junior in Eless had made a sudden step forward, and struck out, and his open palm came across Gordon Gay's cheek with a crack like a pistol-shot. The Australian junior staggered back with a cry. The attack had been utterly unexpected.

"You rotter!" shouted Wootton major, springing forward with his fist raised.

Gordon Gay recovered himself at once.

"Leave him to me!" he said, between his teeth.

He threw off his blazer and his cap, and came towards the scowling junior. His eyes were gleaming like cold steel now.

"You're a cad and a rotter!" he said. "I'll fight you here if you like, or anywhere. Put up your hands, you cad!"

"Go to, Gay!"

"File in!"

"Give him socks!"

The cricketers had all abandoned the game now. They gathered round in a ring, screening the two foes as much as possible from view from the School House.

Gordon Gay stood facing his adversary, who put up his hands willingly enough. In another moment they were fighting furiously, with a savage determination that was seldom as never seen in the combats between the Grammarians and the Buzins.

Gordon Gay and Tom Merry of St. Jim's were pretty well matched, and the Grammarians had expected a tough and obstinate fight. But somewhat to their surprise, and greatly to their delight, Gordon Gay had this fight all his own way from the start. The junior in Eless fought hard, with an almost cat-like ferocity; but he seemed to lack strength in science, and he was flustered, and wavered from time to time, as if his back were falling him. Yet all the Grammarians knew that Tom Merry of St. Jim's had boundless pluck.

"Bucks!"

The junior was down at last, stretched on the ground by a mighty right-hander, and he lay panting and scowling at Gordon Gay's feet.

Gay waited for him to rise. But the fallen junior seemed short of wind, and he still lay panting and gasping.

"Down to a term!" grinned Wootton major.

"Gay wins! Hurrah!" cheered the Grammarians.

"Have you had enough?" asked Gordon Gay calmly, though he was breathing hard after the tussle. "I don't want to go on if you don't, Tom Merry!"

"Here comes Delamere," added Frank Monk hurriedly.

The fallen junior did not speak. He leaped suddenly to his feet, and springing at Gordon Gay. His hand had gone to

his pocket—it came out with a short, thick stick in it, and before Gay could guard against the unexpected weapon—before he could see it even—a savage blow was struck. Gay caught the blow on his arm, and the arm dropped numbly to his side. Before a hand could be raised to interpose, a second savage blow was struck, and it lighted upon Gordon Gay's curly head. Gay gave a low cry, and pitched heavily into the grass, and lay still.

There was a gasp of horror from the Grammarians. For the moment they were paralysed by the sudden and terrible happening.

In that moment the junior who had struck the blow broke through the ring and ran for the gates.

Monk and Wootton and several others rushed towards Gordon Gay to raise him up. Two or three fellows dashed after the fleeing junior.

"Don't let him get away!" yelled Wootton minor.

He led the pursuit, and the fellows dashed after the fugitive. But fear lent the latter wings. He dashed out of the gates, sped across the road, leaped the ditch, and scrambled over the palings into the wood beyond. In a few moments he was lost to sight in the thick plantation, and the Grammarians just baffled and furious, returned to the cricket field.

Gordon Gay lay upon the grass, his face deadly white, and supported by the arm of Wootton major. Delamere of the Sixth, the captain of the Grammar School, had arrived on the spot, and he was looking down at the stricken junior in horror.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Delamere. "What has happened?"

Gordon Gay groaned. He had been stunned for the moment by the brutal blow; but his senses were returning. Wootton major turned a face white with rage towards the captain of the school.

"It was Tom Merry of St. Jim's!" he exclaimed, in a choking voice. "The cad! The villain! He came here to fight Gay, and was licked!"

"I saw it; but—"

"Then he jacked out a life-preserver or something and hit Gay over the head. Look at Gay now! 'Oh the villain!'"

"Is—it's all right?" stuttered Gay feebly. "Don't make a fuss! He'd be sacked for this—don't say a word, you fellows!"

"Don't say a word!" growled Wootton. "I'm jolly well going to say a good many words! Let him be sacked. He ought to be hung!"

"Help Gay into the House, and get him to bed!" said Delamere. "I must report this to the Head!"

"Don't!" gasped Gay. "The—the chap must have been out of his senses, I think; don't get him sacked from his school. I—I—don't mind!"

"Never mind what you mind!" said Delamere. "This has got to be seen to. The young rotter ought to be sent to prison. Get that kid indoors, you lads!"

Gay groaned as he was raised up. There was a huge bump on his head, and blood was flowing down under his thick curly hair. Monk and Wootton supported him on either side as he staggered weakly towards the House. He was put upon his bed in the dormitory, and in a few minutes Dr. Monk, the Head of the Grammar School, was by his side, with a sterilised and anxious face.

"Bless my soul!" the doctor exclaimed, in horror. "You tell me it was Tom Merry, of St. Jim's who did this. It seems incredible!"

"We all saw him, sir," said Harry Wootton.

"I will telephone at once for a doctor," said the headmaster. "Meanwhile, keep quite still and quiet, Gay. You boys leave him; he must be quiet. I will send the matron—"

"If you please, sir—" gasped Gay feebly.

"Well, what is it, my boy?" asked Dr. Monk kindly.

"Don't say anything about this at St. Jim's; I don't want Tom Merry to get into trouble for it—"

Dr. Monk shook his head.

"I am about to visit Dr. Holmes, to tell him the whole circumstances of the case," he said sternly. "Unless Merry is both fagged and expelled from the school, I shall place the matter in the hands of the police."

"Hush, hush!" murmured the Grammarians. They fully agreed with their headmaster.

Gordon Gay groaned, and sunk back upon the bed. He had done his best for the junior who had injured him so cruelly, and he could do no more.

Half an hour later, when the medical man had seen Gordon Gay, and he was in bed with his head bandaged, and the matron in attendance, Dr. Monk ordered his carriage and drove over to St. Jim's to see Dr. Holmes, with a grim expression upon his face that boded no good to Tom Merry.

CHAPTER 13.
The Blow Falls.

"TOM MERRY!"

D'Arny snatched from the Third put his head in at Tom Merry's study. The Terrible Three were just finishing their late tea, and thinking of prep.

"Hallo," said Tom. "A'chae! What do you want, young sinner?"

"The Head wants you."

Tom Merry groaned as he rose to his feet.

"It's come!" he said. "He's heard of my blessed cold, and he's going to pitch me into the sanatorium! What rotten luck!"

Wally D'Arny looked at him curiously.

"That's not!" he remarked. "There's going to be trouble of some sort. Dr. Monk from the Grammar School is with the Head."

"Old Monk!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise. "What does he want?"

"I didn't ask him," chuckled Wally. "But he seems to want you. What have you been doing over there?"

"I haven't been there, you young ass—I've been to Wayland. Perhaps I haven't got to go into sanatorium after all," said Tom hopefully.

And he left the study and went downstairs, somewhat puzzled to know what he was wanted for in the presence of the Grammar School headmaster. There had been no rags lately between the two schools, excepting that one in Kyleside, which certainly wasn't one for the Grammarians to complain about. Besides, Gordon Gay & Co were not the sort to complain. Tom Merry was feeling very perplexed as he tapped at the Head's door. Dr. Holmes's voice, seeming stern and deeper than usual, bade him come in.

Tom Merry entered the Head's study. Dr. Holmes was looking very grave and stern; and the Grammar School master's face looked like iron. He glanced over his spectacles at Tom Merry with an expression of contempt that brought the blood rushing to the pastor's face.

"You sent for me, sir," said Tom, fixing his eyes upon his own headmaster.

"Yes, Merry," said Dr. Holmes, regarding him intently. "I have heard a most extraordinary statement from Dr. Monk. Unless you can give some explanation, I shall expel you from this school immediately, and you will be severely flogged before you go. You are aware, of course, of what Dr. Monk has told me."

For a moment it seemed to Tom Merry that the study was reeling round him.

He gazed blankly at the Head. Was he dreaming—or had the Head suddenly gone mad?

"What did it all mean?"

"Well, Merry," said Dr. Holmes, sternly. "what have you got to say? Have you the slightest excuse to offer for your criminal conduct?"

"Criminal conduct!" protested Tom.

"Yes—criminal, ruffianly, outrageous."

"But what—what—what have I done, sir?" gasped Tom Merry, trying to pull himself together. "What does Dr. Monk say I have done? There must be some mistake."

"There is no mistake," said Dr. Monk, rising, and fixing his eyes scornfully upon the unscrupulous junior. "You know perfectly well what I have told Dr. Holmes."

"I haven't the faintest idea, sir. I know I've done nothing to deserve being expelled for," said Tom Merry, with spirit.

"Your attack on Gordon Gay, of the Fourth Form at my school."

"What! Has Gay complained—"

"Gay is not in a state to complain—and as a matter of fact, it was his wish, that I should not come here—but I have done my duty," said Dr. Monk. "Your infamous and ruffianly assault upon that boy—"

"What! I—I don't understand! Gay wasn't hurt—I got it worse than he did, on Wednesday afternoon."

"I am not speaking of Wednesday afternoon," said Dr. Monk coldly. "You are quite well aware of that, Merry!"

Tom Merry gazed at him stupefied.

"But I haven't seen Gay since last Wednesday!" he stammered.

"What! You dare to deny that you came over to the Grammar School this afternoon and assaulted Gordon Gay in a ruffianly manner, throwing him with a blow from some weapon which you had concealed about your person!"

Tom Merry staggered back, grasping at a chair for support. The room seemed to be whirling round him again.

"I—I've parted—I did!"

"Yes, you—in the sight of fifty or more boys, everyone of whom knows you perfectly well by sight!" said Dr. Monk sternly. "The affair was also witnessed by Mr. Bowler, my Fifth Form-master, from his study window."

"Well, Merry," said the Head of St. Jim's in a deep voice, "what have you to say?"

"I'm not true, sir."

"What!"

"I don't trust!" shouted Tom Merry, reconvincing himself; "there isn't a word of truth in it—not a word from beginning to end."

Dr. Monk turned to the Head of St. Jim's with great dignity.

"I need only say, Dr. Holmes, that there are numberless witnesses to prove the assault, and that it was committed by Tom Merry!" he said quietly.

"The case seems to be perfectly clear," said the Head firmly.

"But I wasn't there, sir!" protested Tom. "I haven't been near the Grammar School to-day! I defy anyone to prove that I have. I can prove that I haven't!"

"Indeed! I shall be glad to hear your proof. Where have you been? Indoors?"

"No, no—I've been out," faltered Tom Merry. "I've been to—Wayland."

"Indeed!" The Head's tone was grimmer than ever.

"Why did you go to Wayland at this special time of the day?"

"To meet Miss Fawcett, sir. She wired me to meet her there."

The Head started.

"You met Miss Fawcett? She is here?" he asked quickly.

"No," said Tom Merry reluctantly. "She didn't come after all."

Dr. Holmes's face hardened again.

"That is very unfortunate for you," he said coldly. "After wiring you to meet her in Wayland, your guardian did not come! Why not?"

"I—I don't know, sir."

"That is very curious. Have you the original telegram?"

"Here it is, sir."

Tom Merry groped in his pocket, and produced the telegram. Dr. Holmes glanced at it.

"If this telegram is from Miss Fawcett, I shall believe that you went to Wayland," he said. "What proof is there that it is from your guardian?"

"It comes from Hawthornberry Heath, sir, where she lives," faltered Tom.

"You have many acquaintances there, I believe, Merry?"

"Certainly, sir."

"One of whom, probably, would oblige you by sending a telegram if you wished for a pretext for being out of the school at a certain time?"

"I—I—I—"

"Why should Miss Fawcett wire you to come alone? Why should you not have taken your friend with you?"

"I—I don't know, sir."

"Does she usually wish you to go alone to meet her on such occasions, sir? I always take my friends with me."

"Miss Fawcett will be communicated with, to ascertain whether she sent this telegram," said the Head, laying it on his desk. "My belief is that she did not send it, that it is part of a cunning scheme, Merry. It is possible that you went to Wayland, but you could easily reach the Grammar School from there."

Brooker of the Fourth walked with me as far as the Wayland road, sir."

"Very well. After that, were you alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Until you returned to the school?"

"Yes, sir."

"For how long a time?"

"I don't know. About an hour, sir."

"Ample time to do all that you are accused of," said the Head coldly. "At what time did Brooker part from you?"

"I think about a quarter to six."

"It was about six when the wretched boy reached the Grammar School, as I understand," said Dr. Monk, who had listened to Tom Merry with incredulous contempt.

"I didn't go to the Grammar School! I never thought of

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"I" said Tom Merry desperately. "I—I waited about the station, wondering why Miss Fawcett didn't come, and looked round for her, and—"

"That will do," said the Head icily. "You cannot cover up your action by telling palpable falsehoods, Merry."

"It is the truth, sir."

"A whole crowd of boys bear witness that you came to the Grammar School, and deliberately picked a quarrel with Gordon Gray; that you fought him, and after being defeated, struck him down with some weapon, stunning him," said the Head. "In the face of such evidence, Merry, I am not likely to believe your clumsy falsehoods. What you have done could be punished by a term in a reformatory if Dr. Monk chose to place the matter in the hands of the police. From friendship towards me, to save the good name of this school, Dr. Monk has consented to act more leniently. He will be satisfied if you are flogged and expelled from St. Jim's. That is your sentence, Tom Merry."

Tom Merry almost shrank.

"I am innocent, sir!" he managed to utter.

"That will do. You may go."

Tom Merry staggered slightly towards the door. It closed upon him, and he went dazedly into the passage. Manners and Lowther were waiting for him there, and they uttered a simultaneous cry at the sight of his drawn, bloodless face.

"Tom! What's the matter?"

Tom looked, staring, on the wall.

"I don't know. I think it's a horrible dream. I'm racked!"

"Racked!" yelled Lowther. "What for?"

"Nothing."

"But—what reason—"

"They say I've been sent to the Grammar School and—"

"And what Gordon Gray—"

"Stunned him with a club, or something. All the Grammar chaps are ready to swear to it," said Tom Merry helplessly. "Unless they're all mad, I don't know—"

His chum gazed at him miserably.

"You haven't been there!" howled Lowther.

"Of course I haven't! I've been to Wayland. But—but I don't think now that that telegram was from Miss Fawcett to me. It was a trick of somebody's. I can see that now. There's something going on I don't understand."

Lowther gave a yell.

"But I do!"

"You do, Merry? What—"

"Somebody like you has been to the Grammar School and taken the chaps in there. Don't you see? That cad—that villain—your double—"

"Oh!"

"Come with me!" shouted Lowther. "We'll have this out!"

He grasped Tom Merry by the arm, and rushed him towards the Head's study. He threw open the door without even waiting to knock, and rushed in, dragging Tom with him, with Manners following excitedly behind.

CHAPTER 14.

Thanks to Steady No. 6.

DR. HOLMES stared angrily at the janitor. He had just been expressing his regret to Dr. Monk for the punishment, and assuring him that Tom Merry's punishment would be necessary and final. The sudden irruption of the janitor interrupted him.

"Merry, how dare you come back here! Lowther—Manners—what does this mean?"

The Head's wrath was majestic.

"But Monty Lowther was not detained. He was there to defend and to save his chum, and nothing would have daunted him at that moment."

"It's all a mistake, sir!" he panted. "I can prove it!"

"Nonsense, Lowther!"

"Don't you remember, sir, last term Tom was suspected of some thing, and it turned out to be a fellow named Clavering, who's just like him?" Lowther went on hurriedly, heedless of the Head's frown. "We dragged the fellow here for you to see him, sir, to prove that Tom hadn't been punished, as you suspected."

Dr. Holmes started a little. Now that the incident was recalled to his mind, he remembered it perfectly well. It had made an impression upon him at the time.

"That is correct," he said slowly. "But there is no proof that that boy is in this neighbourhood now, or that he has any animus against Gordon Gray."

"But there is, sir," cried Lowther. "He's been seen here!"

"You are sure?"

"Gassy—I mean, D'Arcy—has seen him, sir, last Wednesday afternoon. And he has got his knife into Gay. Gay

caught him smoking in the lane, and took him for Tom Merry, and ragged him, sir."

"Is it possible?"

"We've been looking for the cad ever since, to rag him and make less cheer out," said Lowther. "We can't find him now. But all the fellows know about it. Kidder knows, too. We've told all the chaps—"

Dr. Holmes held up his hand.

"That may be true," he said, "but it proves nothing. All the Grammar School boys are convinced that it was Tom Merry who came there and attacked Gordon Gray. Also, Dr. Monk has informed me that the boy left his cap behind when he fled. It was one of our school caps. This person Clavering would not be likely to be wearing a St. Jim's cap, I presume?"

Lowther was staggered for a moment.

"Indeed, it appears to me that Merry was possibly taking advantage of the presence of this boy in the neighbourhood, hoping to be able to pass off his wicked act as having been done by Clavering."

"Clavering could easily get a St. Jim's cap, sir," said Lowther desperately. "It's quite plain that he wanted the Grammar chaps to take him for Tom Merry."

"And why?" said the Head coldly. "Why should a boy, a stranger to Merry, conceive such a wicked plot against him?"

"But I've got proof, sir."

"So you have said before, but you have produced no proof. Enough—"

"Clear proof, sir?" exclaimed Lowther. "Look at Tom Merry! You can see that he's got a cold, sir."

"That is plain enough for anyone to see, I suppose," said the Head irritably. "But what has it to do with the matter in hand?"

"I mean, if Tom Merry was at the Grammar School only a couple of hours ago, with that bad cold, the fellows must have seen that he had a cold."

"I presume so. It would be scarcely possible to conceal it," said the Head, with a glance at Tom's reddened nose and watery eyes. "But what—"

"Well, sir, ask the Grammar chaps who saw him, whether the fellow who went for Gay had a bad cold or not!" exclaimed Lowther triumphantly.

Tom Merry's face brightened up wonderfully. He saw his chum's point now, and he pressed Lowther's arm gratefully.

Dr. Holmes went to the telephone. He took up the receiver, and rang up the Grammar School. The janitor watched him with breathless excitement.

"Hello!" said the Head. "Yes, this is St. Jim's!" He was speaking into the receiver. "That is Mr. Sowden, Grammar School! Thank you! I wish to speak to some boy who saw the attack upon Gay—an eye-witness."

There was a pause; the Head waited. There was breathless silence in the study. Then the Head went on again.

"That is Monk—Frank Monk! You saw the attack on Gay?"

"Yes, sir," came back Frank Monk's voice over the wires. "You are sure it was Merry?"

"Quite sure, sir. So are all the fellows," said Monk, in wonder. "Surely Merry doesn't deny it?"

"Did the boy you saw show any signs of having a bad cold in the head?"

"A bad cold in the head!" repeated Monk. "Not at all, sir. He was as fit as a fiddle, so far as I could see."

"You are sure of this, Monk?"

"Yes, sir, I am sure of this, Monk!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Tom Merry is suffering from a bad cold, which he had all day. His face shows the signs of it in an unmistakable manner. You could not have failed to see it, if you had seen him, my boy."

"Well, that beats it!" came back Monk's astounded voice. "It was Tom Merry right enough, but he hadn't any cold in the head when he was here an hour ago."

"There is known to be a boy in the neighbourhood very much resembling Tom Merry," the Head went on. "They are so like that they have been mistaken for one another. I am told that you met this boy on Wednesday—yes and some others—and mistook him for Merry."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What did you say, Monk?"

"I—I said you surprised me, sir."

"Now you know this, Monk, are you of opinion that it was Tom Merry, or the other boy who resembles him closely, who made that attack upon Gay?"

"The other fellow, I suppose, sir. We were all surprised at it—it wasn't at all like Tom Merry, as we know him. The fellow who came here certainly hadn't a cold—he was as right as rain—I mean, he was quite well, sir."

"Thank you, Monk! Dr. Monk, you may care to speak to

(Continued on page 32.)

The "GEM" LIBRARY—No. 121.
A Magazine New, Good, Complete, Cheap Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

HOW TO GET ON IN CANADA!

BY A SUCCESSFUL EMIGRANT.



OFF TO CANADA.

THIS WEEK:

Food and Lodging.

The Price of Clothes.

Starting the Search

for Work.



A HOMESTEAD IN ALBERTA.

Although I stated in last week's article that I would have something to say about the prices of food, lodgings, and clothes in the Dominion, it is not my intention to try your patience with any dry list of figures. As, however, the majority of young Britishers who emigrate to Canada have to conserve their seasonal resources right from the first day they land in the New Country, perhaps a few hints as to the best ways of living cheaply whilst looking for work will be helpful.

It is to be supposed that the average immigrant who has not some definite position in view, selects the particular town or divisional point that he thinks will offer the best opportunities to him, and lives there for a short time, at least. Considerable caution in choosing lodgings ought to be exercised by the young fellow who thus lands in a city that is entirely strange to him, as many have found out to their cost.

One often reads in Western newspapers of cases of "swindling" at disreputable hotels and lodgings-houses. "Boling" is the term applied to the criminal act of retaining a man of his "bill," and it is noteworthy that the thieves usually choose as their victims someone who is the worse for liquor, and consequently unable to defend himself. A few careful inquiries before engaging rooms may save a lot of trouble afterwards.

As on several occasions I have entered cities in the West that were entirely strange to me for the purpose of looking for work, I will first tell you my own method of securing lodgings. The best plan, I discovered, was not to bind yourself down by paying for board and room at any particular hotel or lodging-house. This I found out during a winter spent in Vancouver, British Columbia, several years ago.

I remember that I paid in advance for board and room at a large boarding-house in one of the outlying suburbs, and that, during the few weeks that followed, I seldom took more than two meals a day there, and sometimes less. My search for employment often took me to places outside the city from which it was impossible to return in time for lunch. Then I secured some odd jobs, and the same conditions prevailed, so that for the month I was at this boarding-house my expenditure for meals at restaurants amounted to about five dollars (\$5), in addition to the twenty-four dollars (\$24) I had already paid for room and board. Since that experience I have invariably, under similar circumstances, engaged a room only, and taken my meals out at restaurants.

My way of securing a room was first to pay a visit to the Young Men's Christian Association, if there was one in the particular town I was visiting, and there look through the list of "Apartments to Let" kept for the express benefit of strangers. Now, I must confess that the Y.M.C.A. and myself have no intimate acquaintance, but I can testify that the apartments that I have secured on various occasions through its agency have been quite satisfactory in every way.

You cannot secure decent board and lodgings for much less than six dollars (\$6.) a week. A small, clean room in a private house may be had for two and a half to three dollars (\$2.50 to \$3.) a week. Single beds in certain large and well-kept "rooming-houses," though, can be engaged for one and a half dollars (\$1.50) a week. In many restaurants a good square meal may be obtained for twenty-five cents (25c), or a "commutation-ticket," good for twenty-one meals, can be purchased for about five dollars (\$5), or perhaps less.

The Gren Ledger.—No. 323.

FERRERS LOCKE, DETECTIVE,

is the principal character in one of the complete stories contained in

CHUCKLES, #4

It must be remembered that the Canadians take their meals differently to the people in the Homeland. They have a whole-hearted contempt for "afternoon tea," and they do not usually include "supper" in their daily programme. Only three meals a day—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—are taken, but they are ample ones, and the average Britisher is soon glad to dispense with the others he has been accustomed to.

Undoubtedly the cheapest way to live in the Dominion is by "bacheling"—that is, by cooking your own food and generally eating as your own servant; but this cannot usually be worked unless you have a position. For this purpose a "shack" (one-room wooden building) has to be secured and fitted with a stove, table, chairs, culinary utensils, and so forth.

At one time, when I was working in a certain small city, I built a small shack some little distance outside the town a league where no ground-rent had to be paid. After the initial expenses, which amounted to about fifty dollars (\$50), I was able to live comfortably on four dollars (\$4.) a week. I use the word "comfortably" in the sense that I could purchase all the food I required for that amount; but the actual experience of bacheling I found very far from being comfortable at times. Cooking a meal after the day's work was finished became an absolute drudgery to me as soon as the novelty had worn off, and the food often suffered in consequence.

Clothes are considerably dearer in Western Canada than they are in England. For a suit that would cost £2 10s. in the Old Country fifteen dollars (\$15) would probably have to be paid. As has been mentioned before, however, British fashions are not in vogue in Canada, the American style in dress holding sway.

Leather gloves are used a great deal by workmen in the Dominion, and they are very necessary for some kinds of labour, as, for instance, that connected with the sawmills. A pair of leather gloves can be obtained from about one and a half dollars (\$1.50).

Boots cost more in Canada than in England, is about the same proportion as clothes. If you ask to see some boots in a Canadian store, the assistant, or "clerk," as he is called, will show you the kind that curls up to your knees; all others are called "shoes." If you want the ordinary footgear that reaches just over the ankles, you will be sale in asking for "a pair of high shoes."

Now, when the new arrival in a Canadian town has found on suitable lodgings, he will, if he is wise, waste little money or time on sight-seeing, but start at once to look for employment. In settling about this, be prepared to accept the first reasonable offer that presents itself, never minding whether you have done similar work or not. Consider nothing honest beneath you. The Canadians admire the man who is ready to tackle anything, and give him lots of opportunities. It seems best not to present references to a Canadian employer, and certainly it is folly to propose any bearing on your previous employment in England. To do it is apparent that there is still some prejudice in the Dominion against the newly-arrived English, and the less "English" you appear in your manner the better.

As this subject of seeking a position in Canada is a large one I shall continue it next week, when many more useful hints will be given.

OUR GREAT NEW SERIAL.

PLAYING THE GAME!



A Splendid Tale of School, Sport, and Adventure.

By ARTHUR S. HARDY.

INTRODUCTION.

After an exciting election at Grovehouse College, Geoffrey Foster is chosen to fill the vacant position in the college cricket eleven when they play Headingley—one of the most important matches of the year. The fact that Geoffrey is elected earns him the enmity of Jeffrey, who tried means fair and foul to secure the coveted position for his friend and enemy, Sidney Westwood.

One day Geoffrey learns that the company of which his father is the principal is about to go smash, and that Jeffrey's father, who was also in the company, has retired. Of course, Jeffrey makes the most of it, and publicly brands Foster as the son of an embezzler. The next Geoffrey hears of his father is that the police hold a warrant for his arrest. That day Geoffrey meets a man who tells him to meet his father at the stile in the lane at ten o'clock.

He is met by Jeffrey and Westwood as he leaves the school. Father and son meet at the stile, and after an affectionate greeting, the former vehemently protests his innocence. He must leave the country, nevertheless, and after giving Geoffrey ten pounds, he hurries away. On the way back to the school Geoffrey meets Simon Blake, a book-maker, who promises to say that Geoffrey came out specially to see him, should there be any need. When he at last arrives at the school, he finds the Head, Mr. Kelly—a master—and Jeffrey waiting for him. He is accused of stealing four pounds odd from the school cricket club funds, and as he has ten pounds in his pocket, which he refuses to tell how he got, his denials come to naught, and he is expelled from the school.

(Now go on with the story.)

Geoffrey Leaves Grovehouse—The Scene Outside the School—Some Who Understand—Bertha Morgan's Rose—Good-bye to the Old School.

What is that ringing cheer which comes floating from the drive in front of Grovehouse, to go sobbing far away in the woods and forests that cover the hills above Elsworth Village? Why is it that boys who have taken up their bats at the nets, or have set themselves to play a game of five, or, again, are wrestling and struggling like so many combatants upon the grass-ward, suddenly leave their games, and rush pell-mell in through the one big door, and out of the other, to cluster in front of the School House in groups seething with excitement?

Why is it that pretty Bertha Morgan, escaping from her mother's arms, thrusts her way eagerly amongst the school-boys until she reaches the front rank, to stand there blushing and trembling with agitation to gaze upon the pale, hand-

some face of a lad who, though the centre of a crowd of old comrades, some hostile, others friendly, holds his head erect with calm and conscious dignity?

A boy is being expelled from Grovehouse, that is all—being summarily and suddenly expelled. Geoffrey Foster is "going down," and soon his name will be a forgotten memory in the school which he so dearly loved. No, perhaps not forgotten, though, for it has been crossed with infamy, and chosen mad slings.

Early in the morning Mr. Kelly had called on Simon Blake in the village, and had learned from him that he and Geoffrey Foster had not the right before. More than that Blake would not say, and his manner toward the undermaster had been almost violent.

It was enough! Dr. Morgan decided there and then that Geoffrey must go. He returned to him six pounds of the impounded gold, keeping the rest to return to the cricket club treasury from which he was convinced it had been stolen.

And now as he stood with his masters around him the head of Grovehouse hit his lips in vexation to think that he should have been stupid enough to have permitted Geoffrey to depart during the interval between morning and afternoon school.

He had not calculated on this scene. Geoffrey Foster, who had expressed a desire to leave at once, merely demanding that his trunks should be sent to the address that he would afterwards forward to the school, had been quietly turned out of the doctor's study—where he had undergone a long and tedious lecture upon honour and morality which had not the power to wound him, because he was in no need of such guidance, not having sinned—and escorted to the door.

Mr. Kelly was to see him to the station, and pay his fare home. But at the vital moment of his departure Haines had come upon them, and with a shout of "Foster's going! Foster's going!" had rushed pell-mell through the school and out into the grounds, and the boys of Grovehouse had rallied to the call in their hundreds.

Now Geoffrey had a chance of seeing once and for all how he was regarded at the school.

Out from the throng pressed Haines, panting from the effects of his run, with toadrops standing in his eyes.

"You don't know, some of us, why you are being sent down, Foster," he cried, his voice choking. "But some of us can guess. If murder weren't punished by hanging, I'd shoot Jeffrey like a dog!"

"You couldn't say that, Haines," said Geoffrey quietly. Adams was next to seize Geoffrey's hand and press it.

"Good-bye, and good luck, old man," he said. "I at least know—what a man you are. May we soon meet again!"

Jellison came to the boy, and, drawing him a pace or two

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A Monthlies, New, Lond, Complete School Tale of Tom Murr & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT WEDNESDAY—

"A CHANCE OF IDENTITY!"

aside, placed both hands upon his shoulders and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Foster," he said, "it's a lie about betting with Hiko. I know that. Why were you last night?"

"I can't say," answered Geoffrey, faltering under the aristocrat's steady gaze.

"You can't say. Your father is wanted by the police. Is it possible that—"

"Hush, for pity's sake!" cried Geoffrey, seizing Jelliston's arm in a vicious grip. "For Heaven's sake, don't let them know."

Jelliston smiled a sweet, loving smile. His right hand wandered down to Geoffrey's, and the boy's palm was almost crushed by the vice-like grip his fingers formed.

"I understand," said the big Upper Sixth Form boy softly. "Geoffrey Foster, you are a hero. There's not a boy passed from between those walls since they were piled up, stone on stone, who can hold a candle to you. If I could I would shake the truth from the topmost turret so that all might hear. But there is your father to think of. Your secret is safe with me, Foster. But should you ever be in want, should you ever need a friend, rely on Jelliston. You know my address. Write to me. Good-bye, and God bless you!"

"I am surprised," said Undermaster Kelly in Dr. Morgan's ear, "that Jelliston should make a fuss of Foster. He doesn't usually mistake his man."

"They are mad over Foster," said the Head, with a half smile. "British generosity."

But other surmises were in store for him.

Captain William Hewitt, in whose ear Jelliston had whispered, leapt to the side of the boy who was being dismissed from Grovehouse in disgrace.

"Foster," he said, wringing the boy's hand, "some of us know you, and understand. What does it matter about the rest? I feel that if I could exchange places with you, and leave this school under the ban that you do now, I'd be a man. May I live to prove myself one some day as you have been. I won't say a word. Years hence, perhaps, when there is a chance of restoring your good name to you, I may, and the black mark that besmirches it now shall be removed. Write to me when you get away. Remember your schoolmaster. Always play the game, old man, but there, what am

I talking about? What else could you ever do? I'm sorry, dreadfully sorry, Foster. I almost loved you; my boy. You make me feel like a woman. Go, my lad, go, or I shall break down if you don't."

And he turned away with teardrops welling from the corners of his honest eyes.

Jelliston regarded all this with a sneer of self-righteousness. "The policeman tried to clear the boys away, but it was useless. And now a carriage drove up, and a man leapt out."

Geoffrey recognized his uncle!

The gentleman started in amazement at the scene.

"What is the matter, Geoffrey?" he said, extending a limp hand to the boy. "I've come to take you away—your mother—"

"I'm afraid you won't care to take me with you when you learn the truth," said Geoffrey, smiling in spite of himself, for he knew his uncle's peevish pride. "I have been expelled."

"Expelled!" cried Henry Gasco, who was Geoffrey's mother's brother, changing countenance. "Expelled! I was going to take you to your mother. Ah, there is Dr. Morgan! Excuse me."

He walked rapidly to the doctor's side, and the two stood talking together for a minute, at the end of which time Mr. Gasco, walking to his carriage and ignoring the very existence of Geoffrey, sprang into it and was driven away.

He returned to even acknowledge the relationship of the thief, and those who hated Geoffrey looked at the sight. The brave boy merely turned a little paler than before and smiled sadly.

But he had his compensation. With a spring Bertha Morgan sprang to his side, and, rising on tiptoe, threw her pretty rounded arms about his neck. She kissed him fondly, first upon one cheek, then upon the other. Then into his hand she pressed a red rose.

"Mr. Foster," she said, the tears curving her eyes, and her lips trembling. "I don't believe a word they say against you. I love you. I always have, and I always shall! Keep the rose, and when you look at it sometimes think of me. I'm only a girl, but I know how unjust they have all been to you. Good-bye! Good-bye!"

"Bertha!"

It was Dr. Morgan who spoke, and he angrily seized his daughter by the arm and threw her aside. He had not noticed her presence, and the disgrace she had brought upon him by her unmanly conduct assailed him beyond measure.

But now Captain Hewitt was speaking again.

"Bugs of Grovehouse," he cried, "you are all apartemen, and you don't hit a man when he's down. Foster is leaving us, and he's got a hard fight before him. I know him to be one of the best that ever came to Grovehouse. Will you let him go without a cheer!"

"No!"

"Then let her rip!"

He led with a hearty "Hip, hip!" and the very echoes were shattered by the roar that followed.

Geoffrey's departure was turned into a triumph, and once more Dr. Morgan stood amazed.

Geoffrey could stand no more. Turning away with his heart too full for words, he commenced his walk along the gravel drive.

Then he turned.

"Good-bye, boys!" he cried. "Good-bye to Grovehouse! Whatever may be said of me, I give you my word of honour that I am innocent of the charges that have been brought against me."

Then, with head proudly held erect, he walked on to the gates and passed out of sight.

In the road he passed and looked back once. He saw some of his chums waving their handkerchiefs to him. The sight was too much, and he hurried on. In the village he met across Simon Biske, the bookmaker. The man was waiting for him.

"I had a master down here this morning," he said, "asking about you. I wanted to tell him the truth, but I remembered what you said, and I kept my word. You're leaving Grovehouse, is it?"

"I've left," said Geoffrey, with a sigh.

"Then say those as have sent you away," cried Simon Biske, in his vulgar and glib way, "out! Will you give your hand to a fellow like you, Mr. Foster, as don't deserve to touch as honest palm?"

Geoffrey gave the good-hearted fellow his hand.

"Good-bye, my," said Biske, "and may you come on easy paths, in the wish of Simon Biske!"

With these words that ringing in his ears, Geoffrey passed out of sight of the tarred-top of Grovehouse. He had said good-bye to his school days, all too brief in their delight for most of us, and had started out to face the world.



A Terrible Night At Sea!

The wonderful description of a terrifying storm, with the flames of a doomed vessel lighting up the heavy, thunderous skies, whilst men fight for their lives in the raging seas, makes this grand yarn, which is taken from the Naudik film, controlled by Marie's Feature Co., a triumph of realism. See Friday's issue of

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PART II.—THE WORLD.

Trestham Hall—Geoffrey Reassures His Mother—And Gives His Uncle a Piece of His Mind.

Geoffrey Foster's intention when he got down into Ewerth Village was to go to the railway-station and book through to London. The greater distance he put between himself and Grovehouse the better, he thought; but ere his feet had traversed the short distance to the railway he passed, and after a moment's thought turned into a side lane which would take him across country to Gaisford.

He had determined first of all to visit his mother. The arrival of his uncle, Henry Garvide, at Grovehouse, had told him that his mother was staying at Trestham Hall. Garvide's estate near Gaisford, and, guessing at the distress she would be oppressed by his uncle's return without him, Geoffrey meant to go to her and quiet her fears for him by his presence.

Then, when he had reassured her, for the world and all it might hold of good or evil for him!

In a few short hours—for days one could scarcely call them—Geoffrey had become a man, and he felt all a man's responsibility. He felt it was good for him he had the need of action.

As it was, he had but a few pounds and some rather shabby property in the shape of useful jewellery, that had been given to him from time to time by his dotting mother and father, between him and starvation.

He must get something to do. He must earn a living wage as soon as possible. He could not be a burden upon his mother. He would not accept the charity of his begrudging and narrow-minded uncle.

The day was hot; but, fit as Geoffrey was—for he was the type of youngster who invariably takes care of his health and a fond of outdoor sports of every kind—walking was no hardship to him, and after an hour and a half of continual progression he arrived at the massive iron gate, set between pillars of stone and capped by fine sculptured ornaments, that gave entrance to the estate of Trestham.

Geoffrey opened the gates, and, heedless of the cry of the gatekeeper, who had come out of the lodge to speak to him, he kept upon his way until the house, a modern building of Portland stone and of fine design, was reached. He sprang up the steps and entered the hall.

The butler, who had seen his approach, came to him.

"My mother?" said the boy tersely; and the good man opened his mouth wide. It was only then that he recognized in this well-dressed but dust-covered schoolboy the nephew of his master, Mr. Henry Garvide.

"I will tell Mrs. Foster's maid that you are here," he said. That there was no occasion. A door opened, and a motherly woman, still beautiful, but with a woe and sad expression upon her refined features, came out into the hall. She stopped, surveyed a little, and opened her arms.

"Geoffrey!" she cried. And the next moment the boy was clucked in an embrace which lasted for all the agony he had undergone, all the misery he had suffered.

His mother dragged him into the drawing-room, covered with dust as he was. She sat him down upon a chair which had perhaps cost Henry Garvide a small fortune. But what were costly chairs and the best appointments of a salon to her then? She had for by in her arms, and tears of joy streamed down her cheeks.

Her outburst over, Mrs. Foster held herself away and surveyed her only child.

"Let me look at you, dear!" she said—and ah, the motherly love of her ancestor! "Why, Geoffrey, she went on, with a little laugh, "you are more like your dear father than ever! I am glad—so glad! I wouldn't have you different for the world!"

She was about to caress him, when there was a quick step outside, and Henry Garvide entered the room.

He frowned at the sight of Geoffrey.

"And so," he said, "notwithstanding the broad hint I gave you at Grovehouse, Geoffrey, you have dared to come here!"

"I came to see my mother," answered Geoffrey shortly; "not to see you, believe me. I shall not stay long. I desired to see her. I thought she might be ill, but—with a smile of tenderness—"I might have known she would be brave through it all. She has the pluck of a true Foster."

His mother trembled at the remark. She did not want to offend her proud and haughty brother, who was a true friend to her, although he disliked Major Foster and had always tried to discredit and look down upon him. She recalled the story he had told her immediately upon his return from Grovehouse without Geoffrey.

"My boy," she said, catching her breath, "your uncle said he said that you—"

"I had been expelled from Grovehouse for betting and for scolding the funds of our cricket club," said Geoffrey, raising his eyes flashing with anger. "I can guess. He spoke to Dr. Morgan about me, and then dived off without a word. It is the sort of thing I might have expected of him."

"Geoffrey!" scolded Mrs. Foster.

"No; let him go on, and the wealthy man, sliding up and down, with his hands behind his back and frowning crossly, at Geoffrey. "He will only give me one reason the more to dislike the very name of Foster."

"As if it were not as good a name as Garvide!" said Geoffrey, with flashing eyes and flushed cheeks. "As if my mother didn't show her wisdom and her judgment in choosing my father for her husband out of the hundreds of suitors who courted her! Oh, I know—was Henry Garvide was about to improve—"you hated my father because he was poor! All honour to him! He's a better man than you say, let them say what they will!"

"A thief—" began Henry Garvide; when his sister interrupted him with a cry of agony. He checked himself, and satisfied his hatred by his bitter thoughts.

"Mother," said Geoffrey, "do you think I would gamble! Do you think I would willingly break the laws of the school? Do you think I would rob my own cricket club of its money?"

"No, Geoffrey!" she cried, folding him in his arms and weeping. "No; of course, you wouldn't! You never could!"

"Did Mr. Morgan think so when he expelled you?" said Henry Garvide, with a sneer.

Geoffrey gently placed his mother aside and faced his uncle.

"If you were a man," he said, "whichever I might have been accused of, I should have thought that you, my uncle, would have stood by me then! Did it never strike you that I might have some reason for bearing the shame of such a dismissal from the school I loved? Did it never strike you that in keeping silence as I did I was thinking of a duty I owed to someone else, and not myself?"

"You speak in riddles," said the uncle.

"Very well, then," cried Geoffrey, his voice ringing with intense feeling. "You are not the man to betray your brother's name and base as you are. I need my father but night!"

(The Grand Sinker will be continued in next Wednesday's issue. By the way, have you seen the latest issue of "Chuckles"? One halfpenny. Now on sale at all newsagents. Get a copy when you order your next issue of "The Gem" Library.)

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A. Maitland, Fy. Long, Complete School Tale of

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NEAT
WEDNESDAY—

"A CHANGE OF IDENTITY!"

A. Maitland, Fy. Long, Complete School Tale of

Tom Barry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A DANGEROUS DOUBLE

(Continued from Page 21.)

your son, and he will assure you that the boy who came to the Grammar School was not Tom Merry."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Grammar School master. "He went to the telephone, and after the exchange of a few sentences with Frank he put down the receiver."

"It is very extraordinary," he said. "Of course, I had never heard of this other lad who resembles Merry. But it seems to be quite clear that a mistake has been made. Merry, I beg your pardon?"

Tom Merry drew a deep breath. The clouds that had darkened his horizon had rolled away—they had come and gone with such suddenness that he was almost dazed.

"It—it's all right, sir," he stammered. "I hope you believe now that I wouldn't do a rotten thing like that. I'm sure I'm not!"

"You are sure you were suspected," said Dr. Monk. "As for this other boy, he shall be found and charged with what he has done. He can be trusted!"

"I know where he can be found, sir," said Tom eagerly. "Brooke spotted him this morning, and told me. He's staying at Mrs. Holt's cottage on Weyland Mass."

"Thank you!" said Dr. Monk. "I shall drive to the police-station before I go back. He shall not escape punishment."

And the Grammar School master took his leave. Dr. Holmes turned to Tom Merry.

"I, too, beg your pardon, Merry," he said. "But for Leather's squeak, I fear very much that a grave injustice may have been done. Yet I cannot blame myself for my decision, for who could have suspected this boy, a stranger to you, this Chevering, of such an act of unscrupulous wickedness? He must have had the deliberate intention of passing himself off as you, when he did this villainous thing, knowing that the consequences would fall upon you. However, it is a pale matter now, and he will not escape punishment. You may go."

The Terrible Three walked out of the Head's study. In the passage Tom Merry thanked Leather on the back.

"Good old Merry!" he said. "You've done it this time—you, and those silly ones in Study No. 6! They gave me this job. Let's go and tell them."

Study No. 6 received the news with amazement—and with delight. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was particularly so.

"Didn't I tell you, dear boys, that Tom Merry would come round and thank us for havin' done our best?" he demanded, his eyes gleaming with desire. "You see, I was right! Of course, it didn't work out exactly as we intended, but I really think we may say that Study No. 6 has saved the situation."

And Study No. 6 heartily agreed—and the Terrible Three approved the point.

Raggie Chevering was not found at the cottage on the moor. The man in blue who went there to look for him found that the bird had flown. But further details of the strange plot came to light—the old cottager gave evidence that Chevering had been away from the cottage at the time of the affair at the Grammar School—that he had come back without his cap, and packed his bag, and hurriedly departed. The school official in Rytondale testified that he had handed a new school cap to a young gentleman whom he had supposed to be Tom Merry that very morning. And Miss Fawcett denied all knowledge of the telegram that had been sent from Huckleberry Heath to her name. Tom Merry & Co. had a game to think out—why that plot had been formed, and what was the unknown object of it—but they had to give it up.

"Anyway, Chevering won't dare to come back again!" said Tom Merry, with satisfaction. "We've finished with him for good and all—that's one comfort. I'd like to give him a flogging, but I've glad his grace for good!"

And his classmate agreed with him. They had no doubt that they were done with Tom Merry's double for good, and they little dreamed under what circumstances they were to see him again.

THE END.

(Another splendid long complete school story of Tom Merry & Co. next Wednesday, entitled "A Change of Identity!" by Martin Chuzzlewit. Order now!)
The Great Librarian—No. 1.

OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY. "THE PENNY POPULAR," "GRUCKLES," & Every Monday. Every Friday. Every Saturday.

"THE GEM" LIBRARY 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 advertiser direct. No correspondence with ad-vertisers 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.4."

Miss M. Hamilton, Reef Street, Gympie, Queensland, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers in Ireland by Scotland, age 15-15.

Miss E. M. Lewis, 5, Hope Street, Green Valley, Fremantle, Western Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in postcards, age 17.

F. Irvine, Holland Avenue, Avondale, Auckland, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 14.

E. K. O'Brien, care of F. W. Bullock & Co., Pico Street, Adelaide, South Australia, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in Canada, Africa, or New Zealand, interested in stamps, age 14-15.

J. Boland, care of Mrs. Jenkins, Goldford Road, Mt. Lawley, Perth, W. Australia, wishes to correspond with college girl or boy readers living in Canada or the United States of America, age 13-13.

Miss Gerrie Maloney, 1, Seymour Street, Richmond, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wishes to correspond with her readers living in America, age 21-23.

H. Anson, Box 454, Englishart, New Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers living in England, age 23-23.

George H. Dixon, General Delivery, Winnipeg, Canada, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 17-18.

L. Hyman, 1478, Alexandra Avenue, Mile End, Montreal, Canada, wishes to correspond with readers living in the British Isles, age 15.

John B. Green, General Delivery, Winnipeg, Canada, wishes to correspond with girl readers.

L. Blitt, Post Office, Lawrence, Orange Free State, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in England or Scotland, age 15-15.

W. Randall, 12, Upper Street, North End, Port Elizabeth, S. Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers living in the British Isles, age 15-20.

J. E. Keast, Box 1022, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with girl readers, age 15-15.

Arthur Thomas, 55, Eastern Avenue, Kensington, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, wishes to correspond with a boy reader interested in stamps, age 14.

J. Ken Ogilvie, Telegraph Department, Freezing, South Australia, would like to correspond with a girl reader, age 12.

J. McEade, 12, Canby Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, wishes to correspond with a girl reader living in England, age 17-18.

T. J. Hopwood, Gate Post Office, Warata, British Columbia, Canada, wishes to correspond with boys learning in "Wireless Telegraphy"; also girl readers, age 15-17.

The Editor specially requests Colonial Readers to kindly bring the Free Correspondence Exchange to the notice of their friends.

Pay

5!

MONTHLY.

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**WRITE
FOR
FREE
LISTS**

OUR SPECIAL WEEKLY FEATURE



For Next Wednesday.

"A CHANGE OF IDENTITY!"

By Martin Clifford.

In this magnificent complete story of the famous drama of St. Jim's, Tom Merry's amusing "double," the disputable Reggie Claxton, again returns to the neighbourhood of the school, and there is more trouble in store for the hero of the Shell. A deep plot is contrived, and Claxton, smarting from a severe "ragging" at the hands of Tom Merry & Co., enters into it recklessly. The very audacity of the plot brings success up to a certain point, and the most startling developments take place before anyone at St. Jim's realises that the case is one of

"A CHANGE OF IDENTITY!"

"THE CORINTHIAN."

Many of my claims who read and thoroughly enjoyed Brian Kingston's popular sporting serial, "The Corinthian," which appeared in "The Gem" Library some months back, urgently requested me to re-publish this fine story in book form. This I have accordingly done, and "The Corinthian" appears as one of this month's volumes of "The Gem's Friend" No. Complete Library. As a rattling yarn of the old-time prize-cup, "The Corinthian" is already in great demand, and my claims are advised to take the earliest opportunity of obtaining this popular book.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

F. Parks (South Africa).—Very many thanks for your breezy letter. I will certainly consider your suggestion.

Knock-knees (Lancashire).—A cure for knock-knees: Rise on your toes, bend on hips, and slowly sink to the ground, allowing the knees to bend outwards. Do this regularly night and morning.

R. E. (Australia).—Many thanks for your letter. Send your card and address to me, and I shall be pleased to insert it in "The Gem's Free Correspondence Exchange."

H. Moses (Cornwall).—Thanks for letters and suggestions, but I am afraid other readers would not quite agree with you.

"A Regular Reader" (Pockharr).—I am afraid I cannot undertake to value your coin. Write and ask Mr. G. C. Kerr, of 24, The Lanes, Brighton.

Edith C. (France).—The greatest length of time a submarine has stopped under water is thirteen hours. I understand.

Master W. Kinn, of 122, Knight's Hill, West Norwood, B.W., wishes to form a "Gem" Club.

F. W. Millard (Belly Oak).—Messrs. H. and M. Rayne, of Waterloo Bridge Road, London, S.E., supply wigs, pompadours, etc.

Miss M. Hand (Hilsumbeel).—I am sorry, "The Silent Three" is out of print.

A. Freville George (Edinburgh).—I am sorry, the "Gem" Libraries you mention are also out of print.

R. Gilbert (Dorset), J. Wyck (Balford), and others.—Many thanks for your suggestions.

A. Y. (Scotland).—Providing you mention you are a reader of the "Gem" Library, no fee need be sent to the Kinematograph Bureau of Birmingham. When writing to this firm, you might mention your requirements.

"Bosnie".—Place your tongue to the end of your mouth and try to make a rolling sound. I may say that it is

absolutely impossible to cure your self if you have not learned a "cushy" tongue. The "R" is pronounced by penetration of the sides between the tongue and the roof of the mouth causing a slight vibration.

R. H.—I am afraid there is no method whatever of getting rubber from paraffin, but it would be most beneficial to keep in a dry and fairly warm place.

THE NAVY AS A PROFESSION FOR BOYS

By Admiral the Hon. Sir E. Fremantle.

Food, Pay and Pensions.

In addition to the wages, &c., mentioned in last week's article, it must be added that medical attendance and hospital treatment are given free, though at home duties are made after a certain period in hospital. Retirees are dealt on an important point, as we may learn from Sir Kipling's "Breed on the Waves," and the naval scale, which has been recently improved, is undoubtedly liberal, but further improvements, such as being "sent home" on a sea, are probable. "Savings" in such case given in the form of pension not even, technically not "taken up" in a sense.

The pay is adjusted weekly in England, recently as and the seaman has every opportunity of disposing of his pay as he feels necessary. He can "silt" a portion of his pay monthly to his wife or relative, the payments "rent" any money home through the Admiralty, or put his money into the savings-bank on board, or the master will supply him with postal orders.

In comparing a sailor's pay with that of a soldier or man it should be borne in mind that a sailor pays for his clothes, though allowances are made for cooking or special work.

Lastly, I come to the important

Question of Pensions.

earned at the early age of forty. These are on a liberal and are dependent on the conduct and rating of the man during his career. The minimum pension is 30s. a day, partly-obligo reaches £30 to £50 a year. Pensions are given to men disabled in the Service, and in certain cases widows. These details are necessary to show the advantage of service in the Navy. That there are many successes and little amusements in a Navy career is undoubted. Leave is liberally given, and a seaman with a good character, returns punctually on his leave, is afforded the opportunity of landing at every port visited, unless the stay is a very one.

No doubt there are inconspicuous and hardships in service, but even in this hazardous age I trust that there many lots of adventurous spirit who are not deterred by difficulties and discomforts, and who are ready to "take their part of danger on the roaring sea," and to join that Service to which our immortal Nelson gave his life. To a lad I believe that the Navy offers a fair field of work with a position in prospect, and a training which makes the "handyman" who is sure to find a suitable job he retires from a sea life.

("The Man-of-war Service as a Profession," Special article next week.)

The Gift