

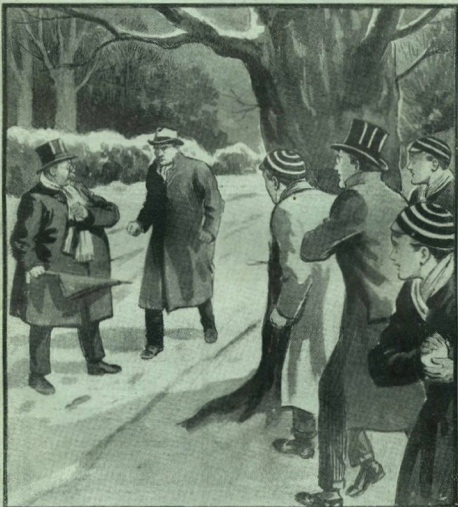
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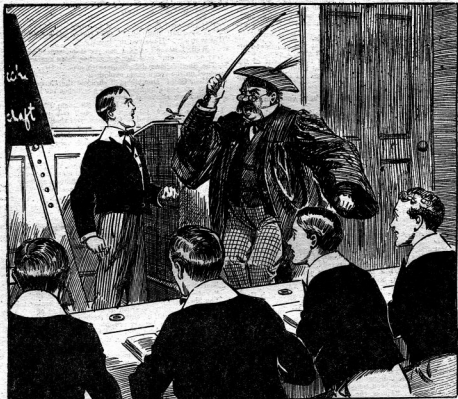


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HERR SCHNEIDER'S SECRET!

A Grand Long, Complete School Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



Arthur Augustus held out his hand gingerly, and gave a little yelp as the pointer descended. "Now to odder hand" commended Herr Schneider. "I wefuse!" exclaimed D'Arcy. "I wegard you as a tywant, Herr Schneidah!" (See Chapter 7.)

CHAPTER 1. Mutiny in Class.

"MERRY!" Herr Schneider, the German master at St. Jim's, rapped out Tom Merry's name like a pistol-shot. "Yes, sir!" said Tom meekly.

All the Shell were very meek that afternoon. Herr Schneider was in one of his "satty" tempers; his pointer had come into use several times, and lines had fallen as thick as leaves in Vallambrosa.

"You visper to Lowter," said Herr Schneider, blinking at

the captain of the Shell through his spectacles. "You take feefy lines."

"But I didn't whisper to Lowther, sir."

"You take a hundred lines, Merry!"

"But, sir—" began Tom rebelliously.

"Two hundred lines, and if you say anoder vord, I cans you!" rapped out Herr Schneider.

Tom Merry breathed hard through his nose and did not say the other word. But Monty Lowther spoke up, in his meekest and blindest tones.

"If you please, sir, Tom Merry didn't whisper to me."

"Take a hundred lines you also, Lowter."

Next Wednesday:
"THE RIVAL PATRIOTS!" AND "OFFICER AND TROOPER!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And make not ridiculous ejaculation, Lowther!" roared Herr Schneider. "It is not permitted to say 'Oh, grumbs!' in class."

"If you please, sir," said Lowther still mockingly, "I didn't say 'Oh, grumbs!' sir—I said 'Oh, crumbs!'"

There was a faint giggle from the juniors. Monty Lowther was a humorist, and he would have cracked his little joke on the way to execution. But the look that came over Herr Schneider's face as he realised that Lowther was making fun of his beautiful pronunciation was terrifying.

"Lowther!" he gasped. "Gum here! Gum at vunce!" And Herr Schneider grabbed the pointer from his desk. Monty Lowther did not move. He only looked surprised.

"Certainly, sir. What am I to gum?"

"Vat?"

"I am willing to gum anything you please, sir," said Lowther, in the most obliging way. "I will gum it at once, sir, if you like. But you haven't told me what I am to gum."

"Shurap, you ass!" murmured Manners. "You'll get skinned!"

Herr Schneider turned almost purple.

"Lowther, you pretend mit yourself tat you understand no dot. I tells you to gum; but if you not gum, I gum!"

And Herr Schneider strode towards the humorist of the Shell, with the pointer gripped in his fat hand.

"Lowther, you are impertinent mit me. Hold out to hand mit you."

Whack, whack!

"Now, perhaps after tat you will not be so vunny in class," said Herr Schneider grimly.

Monty Lowther sat and squeezed his hands together, not feeling at all "vunny." Herr Schneider had laid on those two cuts with terrific vim. All the humour was taken out of Monty Lowther for the moment.

"Now we will work," said Herr Schneider, with a glare at his class. "Dis class is to most stupid tat nefer vas. But it is tat I am here to teach you Oberun, and I will my duty do. You must not laugh in class, Noble. Take feefy lines. Now you shall gif me your attention, isn't it?"

The Shell fellows gave Herr Schneider their attention. They would have liked to give him all sorts of things, chiefly something lingering, with boiling oil in it.

The German class was on the verge of insubordination. Herr Schneider's bad temper was getting intolerable. He was always severe; but this afternoon he had been unjust as well as severe, and he had handed out innumerable punishments without stopping to ascertain whether they were merited.

It was the war that was to blame. There had been news of a fresh German defeat at the seat of war that morning. Herr Schneider's sympathies, naturally, were with his own countrymen. The bad news—from his point of view—had irritated his temper, and his unfortunate class had to suffer for it.

The juniors knew very well what was the matter with Herr Schneider, and it increased their resentment.

As Blake of the Fourth had remarked indignantly, if the beast felt so concerned about the other beasts, he was welcome to go back to his beastly Fatherland, and all St. Jim's would say good-bye to him with pleasure.

But Herr Schneider knew on which side his bread was buttered, and he had no intention of giving up his excellent berth at St. Jim's. And it was a little unreasonable of him to be exasperated by the publication the fellows showed when good news came from the front.

The juniors were indignant, but they had no redress. Some of them would have been tempted to appeal to their House-master; but Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, was away; he had joined Kitchener's Army as a recruit. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was acting as temporary Housemaster in his place, till Mr. Railton's successor arrived, and Mr. Linton's ideas of discipline were very rigid. It was not of much use appealing to him.

So the fellows grinned and bore it, or bore it, at least, if they did not grin. But they were growing more and more exasperated. Some fellows had suggested appealing to the Head himself, others proposed a strike against learning German at all, and one or two reckless spirits even advocated collaring Herr Schneider in the class-rooms and bumping him. But that desperate expedient would have led to a flogging at least, if not the "sack."

But the juniors were really getting into a dangerous mood, and there was trouble on the horizon.

If Herr Schneider had been a little more tactful, he would have seen the signs of trouble and moderated his severity a little. But the Herr was a believer in the policy of the "mailed fist," the mailed fist in his case being represented by the pointer.

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OUR COMPANION PAPERS: "THE MAGNET" LIBRARY, Every Monday. "THE DREAMDOUGHT," Every Thursday. "THE PENNY POPULAR," Every Friday. "CHUCKLES," 10. Every Saturday, 2.

The lesson was going on drearily; German irregular verbs never appealed very much to the juniors, and with a stonypin and impatient master finding fault at every turn, there was not much encouragement to "back up." Fellows were startled or scared into making blunders, and every blunder meant lines or raps on the knuckles.

Herr Schneider devoted quite a lot of attention to Monty Lowther. Lowther's humorous efforts had irritated him.

"Ach! It is in te Second Form tat you should be, Lowther!" he snapped. "You are to most stupid yoo tat nefer vas."

"Thank you, sir," said Lowther.

"I try to explain to you a simple ting, and you understand no more tan te man in te moon," said Herr Schneider. As a matter of fact, Monty Lowther was in such a state of exasperation that he was determined not to understand. "Now, I say to you 'Haben Sie mein Bleistift?'"

"No, sir," said Lowther.

"Vat!"

"It's on your desk, sir," said Lowther.

"You—you stupid yoo! I say 'Haben Sie mein Bleistift?' Tat is to say, 'Have you my pencil?'"

"Well, I haven't, sir. I can see it on your desk at this very moment sir," said Monty Lowther, in an aggrieved tone.

The Shell fellows did not dare to grin. Herr Schneider seemed on the verge of an explosion.

"Mein Gott! Dummkopf!" shrieked the German master. "I not ask you a question. It is a sentence tat I gif you!"

"Oh, I see, sir," said Lowther.

"I repeats mit myself, 'Haben Sie mein Bleistift.' But I explains to you tat ven you shall talk in te familiar manner mit your friend in Cherman, you shall not say tat—you shall use te singular. You shall say 'Hast Du mein Bleistift?' Tat is te singular."

"Yes, sir," said Lowther. "It sounds very singular."

"Vat vat?"

"Very singular indeed, sir," said Lowther.

The German master stared at him. Then the double meaning of the word singular dawned upon him, and he understood that Monty Lowther was being humorous again.

"Ach! It is tat you are vunny vunce more!" he exclaimed. "Hold out to hand, Lowther. I shall teach you to respect your master, hein!"

Whack, whack whack!

"Ow, ow, ow!"

"I will geev order in dis class or know te reason vy not," said Herr Schneider. "Vell, vat is it, Skimpole? Vy you stand up for?"

Skimpole had risen to his feet. He blinked at Herr Schneider through his glasses with a very serious expression on his face.

"If you please, sir," said Skimpole firmly, "it appears to me, sir, that you are somewhat unreasonable and exacting this afternoon."

"Vat—vat—vat!"

The Shell fellows gasped. Skimpole was the brainy man of the Shell, generally regarded as several sorts of an ass. He was a very thoughtful youth, and studied the deepest subjects, and talked in the longest possible words. Skimpole was the very last person who would have been expected to "check" the German master. It was a case of fools rushing in where angels feared to tread.

"Yes, sir," said Skimpole reproachfully. "I find that your impatience, sir, considerably disturbs my mental equilibrium, and prevents me from applying the concentration requisite to a complete understanding of—"

"Mein Gott!"

The thoughtful Skimpole progressed no further. Herr Schneider grabbed his collar, and yanked him out bodily before the class. Then the pointer came into play on Skimpole's bony person, and Skimpole yelled.

"Tom! Merry jumped up."

"Chuck it!" he exclaimed. "Stop it, sir!"

"Vat!"

"That's enough!" shouted Tom Merry, who was as angry as the master now. "We're fed up. Come on, you fellows; we're not going to stand this. Come out!"

"Hear, hear!"

The Shell fellows jumped up in a crowd. They had only wanted that word from their leader. They poured out from their desks, and made for the door, Manners catching the suffering Skimpole by the arm and marching him away. Herr Schneider stood transfixed. That there could be such a thing as rebellion in the class had never crossed his mind.

"Vat, vat, vat!" he stammered. "Gum back! Gum back at vunce! I command you! Go back to your seats mit you, I command!"

"Bow-wow!" said Monty Lowther.

"Rats!"

"Britons never shall be slaves! Down with the Kaiser! Go and eat coke! Yah!"

And with those words of defiance, the Shell marched out of the class-room, leaving Herr Schneider rooted to the floor, and stuttering with rage and dismay.

CHAPTER 2.

Mr. Linton Comes Down Heavy.

"**B**AI JOVE! What's the maffah, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form asked that question.

The Fourth had come out of their Form-room, and they found the Shell fellows in the junior common-room, in an excited crowd.

Tom Merry & Co. had taken the law into their own hands. From this class-room they had marched into the common-room, where they awaited the result of their act of rebellion. The leaders of the revolt were determined enough, but some of the fellows were feeling extremely uneasy. What would happen next they could not guess. Herr Schneider had not followed them, but it was quite certain that he would not take their rebellion "lying down."

They were discussing the situation excitedly when the Fourth-Formers came in.

"Anythin' up?" asked Arthur Augustus, turning his eyes-glass in surprise upon the Terrible Three.

"Yes!" growled Tom Merry. "We've chucked the German lesson in the middle!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Schneider's gone too far, and we've got up on our hind legs," said Clifton Dane, the Canadian. "And now, what will happen goodness knows!"

"My hat!" said Blake of the Fourth. "There'll be trouble. If old Railton were still here, he might see you through; but Linton—"

"Linton's as bad as Schneider," remarked Digby. "If you put it to him, it's only hopping out of the frying-pan into the fire."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The new Housemaster's coming this week," said Herries hopefully. "He may keep the beast in order a bit."

"Bai Jove! It's wathah a pity old Wailton's gone, aftah all."

The juniors discussed the situation, not very hopefully. If Mr. Railton had been there, they might have hoped for something from him, but he was gone. Mr. Linton, Housemaster pro tem., was not likely to waste much sympathy upon them, or even to listen to their wrongs. The New House fellows might have appealed to their own Housemaster, Mr. Ratcliff; but "Ratty" was worse than Schneider. As for going to the Head himself, they naturally hesitated to take such an extreme step.

The question was, what was going to happen?

They were not kept long in suspense.

"Bai Jove! Heah comes Linton, deah boys," called out Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, as there was the whirrk of a gown in the passage.

The excited voices died away.

The Shell fellows stood silent as Mr. Linton came into the common-room, and they noticed that he had a cane in his hand.

The master of the Shell looked at them grimly. Mr. Linton had found it rather a worry to have a Housemaster's duties on his shoulders, and he was not disposed to be bothered further by insubordination in his own Form.

"Merry!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir!" said Tom.

"I speak to you as head boy in my Form. Herr Schneider reports to me that his whole class left the class-room during the lesson, in spite of his orders to them to keep their places. What does this mean?"

"If you please, sir—"

"You have left your lesson unfinished, and disobeyed your master!"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"Then there is nothing to be said. I shall cane the whole Form."

"But, sir—"

"You first, Merry!"

"Herr Schneider was unreasonable, sir. It's impossible to stand him. He—"

"It is not for you to criticise your master, Merry. Hold out your hand at once, or I will send you to the Head to be flogged!"

There was no room for argument. The captain of the Shell obeyed. He received four cuts, each of which he afterwards described as a "cner."

After him, the rest of the rebels went through the same

experience. They bore it as philosophically as they could. Only Skimpole ventured an objection. Skimpole essayed to explain to Mr. Linton, in words of considerable length, his views on the matter. He was cut short, and received an extra cut for impertinence.

There was a chorus of mumbling in the common-room when Mr. Linton had finished. The master of the Shell was a little breathless by that time. He was not an athlete.

"And now," he said sternly, "you will return at once to your class-room. There will be an extra German lesson. Herr Schneider has generously consented to sacrifice his own leisure, in order that you shall not lose your instruction. You will return to your class-rooms at once."

The Terrible Three did not move, and the other fellows looked to them for guidance.

Mr. Linton's eyes glittered.

"If any boy should venture to disobey me, I shall make a particular request to the Head for that boy to be expelled from the school!" he rapped out.

"Oh!"

"Better gwin and beah it, deah boys," whispered Arthur Augustus.

There was nothing else to be done. Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther led the way, and the Shell returned to the class-rooms.

Last lesson was over now, and they had the pleasure of spending an extra half-hour in the class-room—at German! Herr Schneider awaited them there, and his little round eyes gleamed through his glasses as they came in.

The rebellion was over—nipped in the bud.

"Ach! You have gum back!" said Herr Schneider. "Go to your places, den. It is an extra lesson tat you shall have. Silence in class."

The Shell fellows went through that extra lesson with grim patience.

Perhaps Herr Schneider realised that he had overstepped the mark. Excepting when he was in a "ratty" temper, he was not a bad fellow at heart. At all events, he was much easier with his class during that extra lesson. The pointer remained idle on his desk, and there were no more lines—certainly the Shell fellows had enough to go on with.

When they were dismissed at last, the juniors marched out with grim faces.

They found Blake & Co. waiting for them. Jack Blake was grinning.

"Come on, you chaps!" he said. "We've been waiting for you. We've got an idea."

"Whose?" grunted Monty Lowther.

"Oh, don't be funny, old chap!" said Blake. "It's a ripping idea. You know, Monsieur Morry's study window is near old Schneider's. Mossoo is very keen about the war news. Well, we're going to give him a demonstration under his study window, and cheer the Allies, and boo the Germans. It won't be our fault if Schneider hears us from his study, will it?"

"Hs, hs, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wathah considah that will make the old boundah sit up," said Arthur Augustus. "He is vey touchy about the Germans bein' licked, you know; though I woudly don't know what he expected."

"Kim on!" said Blake.

Quite an army marched after Blake of the Fourth to carry out his excellent scheme.

The Fourth and the Shell gathered under Monsieur Morry's study window in the dusk. They started by singing the "Marseillaise," and Mossoo opened his window, and smiled his acknowledgment of the compliment. There was a light in Herr Schneider's study window next at hand, and the juniors saw his shadow there. The German master was evidently listening too—not with pleasure.

"We've come to tell you the latest news, sir," said Tom Merry. "Blake's got an 'Evening News,' Mossoo."

"I zank you, my boys," said Monsieur Morry. "Vat is zat news?"

The juniors heard Herr Schneider's window open.

"Fresh success of the Allies, sir!" chirruped Tom Merry.

"Hundreds of Germans captured!"

"Zat is verree good! Zank you, Merree."

"Vree la France!" yelled Blake.

"Hurray!"

"Down with the Kaiser!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Stop tat noise, mit you!" shouted Herr Schneider from his window.

"We're speaking to Monsieur Morry, sir," said Tom Merry affably. "We're just telling him, sir, that a lot of Germans have been captured—"

"Yaas, wathah! And a lot more are wunnin' like anythin', sir—"

"And the Kaiser's hair's turned white, sir, and his complexion's turned green," said Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Food prices have doubled in Berlin, and there's a famine in German sausage," went on Lowther, apparently reading from the paper. "Sauerkraut can no longer be obtained for love or money. All the German bands have been sent to the front, the Kaiser quite correctly thinking that they are more dangerous than the Prussian Guard. Owing to the command of the sea maintained by the British Fleet, it has been impossible to import wax for the Kaiser's moustache—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Slam!"
 The German-master's window closed violently; he did not wait to hear any more of the latest news. Monsieur Morny grinned, and shook his finger reprovingly at the juniors, and closed his window.

Tom Merry & Co. gave a final yell:
 "Vive la France! Rule, Britannia! Blow the Kaiser!"
 Then they marched off, satisfied that they had "got a little of their own back" on the crusty German-master. On the blind of Herr Schneider's window a peculiar shadow could be seen moving. It was the enlarged shadow of a fist shaken in the air, exaggerated by its reflection on the blind. In the privacy of his study the patriotic and exasperated German-master was shaking his fist, unconscious that the shadow on the blind reproduced his action to the eyes of the juniors without. The juniors shrieked with laughter as they watched the dancing shadow.

"Bai Jove! Schneidah is awfully watty!" chuckled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I weally think we have made him sit up this time!"
 "And he'll make us sit up next lesson!" grunted Gore.

There was very little doubt about that point. And that evening the much-wronged youths discussed at great length various schemes for "muzzling" the German-master, but without much success. But they found comfort in the knowledge that the New House master was expected soon.

"If he's anything like old Railton," Blake remarked, "he'll keep the Schneider-beast in order—to some extent, anyway. Schneider's been ten times worse since Railton left. He knows Linton's an old duffer who'll back him up. The chap'll be here on Wednesday, and we'll hope for the best. Pass the jam."

CHAPTER 3.
 Kangaroo's Idea.

"GATHER round, my infants!"
 Harry Noble of the Shell, otherwise known as Kangaroo, uttered that exclamation. It was in the quad, after morning lessons on Wednesday. The Cornstalk was looking quite excited.

Tom Merry & Co. gathered round cheerfully enough. The discussion as to what was to be done with the "Schneider bird" had been going on for days, without much result being claimed. And if Kangaroo had any new light to shed on the subject, the wronged youths were only too eager to listen to him.

"What is it—a wheeze?" demanded Monty Lowther.
 "The wheeze of the season," said Kangaroo impressively.

"Bwavo!"
 "Go it, Kangy!"
 "I've just heard some particulars about the new House-master," said Noble. "He's coming this afternoon, as you know. Well, I've heard now that he's an Australian—a Melbourne University man. That makes it pretty clear that he'll be a thoroughly decent chap—a bit above the average in intelligence, and so on—ahem!"
 "Oh, pile it on!" said Blake.

"And I've got an idea for fixing him," said Kangaroo. "My idea is, as the man is going to be our Housemaster, we ought to give him a reception. As a fellow-citizen of the Australian Commonwealth, I will take the lead in giving him a greeting, and all you fellows can come and back me up. You see, a new master arriving all on his own, a stranger to the school, will be bound to be pleased by being received in state by a numerous deputation from his House—what?"

"Yass, wathah! I should think he would take it as a great compliment."

"We'll be at the station, twenty or thirty of us, and give him a rousing reception," went on Kangaroo. "We'll treat him with tremendous respect, and make him feel awfully pleased with himself. That way we shall make a jolly good impression on him. He will understand from the very start that we are nice, orderly, respectful fellows, full of admiration for our masters, and devoted to our kind teachers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Then when he finds that relations are strained between THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 365.

us and Schneider, he will see at once that it isn't our fault. We shall have him on our side. See!"

"Rapping!"
 "Kangy, old man, you're a giddy genius!" said Jack Blake enthusiastically. "It reminds me of what the poet says:

"Thrice armed is he who hath his quarrel just,
 And four times he who gets his blow in fust!"

We shall get in the first whack, and if we succeed in buttering up the Housemaster—"

"We'll, Blake, I trust the idea is not to buttah up the Housemaster," remarked Arthur Augustus reprovingly. "I could not approve of that."
 "Go hon!"

"We'll give him soft sawder galore," said Kangaroo; "make him understand from the first that we like him tremendously. Everybody likes to be popular, and when he knows that we like him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "You see, we're prepared to like him tremendously if he backs us up against the Schneider-bird."

"Hear, hear!"
 "I object to buttahin' up."
 "Oh, rats! It's a jolly good idea!" said Monty Lowther. "Better let me make a little speech to him at the station."
 "Rot!" said Kangaroo. "As he comes from my country, of course I take the lead. Besides, it's my idea."
 "Now, look here, Kangy—"

"Bow-wow!"
 "It's topping!" said Tom Merry. "We ought to find out something about him first, too, so that we can explain how his reputation has impressed us, or something to that effect. If he comes from Australia, he's bound to be pleased to know that he's been heard about here. Who is he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "His name's Carrington," said Kangaroo. "That's all I know about him, except that he belongs to Melbourne, and he's older than Railton. I had that much from Kildare, who heard it from the Head. He's only lately come to England, and he has been a master in a big school at Melbourne. The Head knows a lot about him, but has never met him. His appointment here has been arranged through the Board of Governors, and some of the Governors have seen him in London. Nobody here has seen him, so I can't say what he's like; but I know he'll be the right sort."

"How do you know that?"
 "He's an Australian."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Couldn't be a better recommendation," grinned Blake. "Anyway, we'll hope that he's the right sort. Pity we don't know something more about him—we could pile it on about having been keen to see him because of his world-wide reputation."

"Weally, Blake—"
 "There's one thing—he's an authority on the native languages of the Polynesian Islands," said Kangaroo.

"Good! Then you can speak to him in Polynesian."
 "Fathed! I don't know a word. But I think he's written a book on the subject. We might find out the name of it from the library catalogue, perhaps," said Kangaroo. "Now, you know all fellows who have written books—especially books that nobody reads—like to think that everybody's heard of their precious rot. If we can find out the name of the book, and mention it sort of casually, he'll be as pleased as Punch."

"Good! We'll ask him for a copy," grinned Lowther. "Let's hunt through the library catalogue. You can do that, Kangy, as it's your idea."

"Oh, one of the fellows can do that!"
 "Boosh! It's your idea."
 "You're leader."
 "Play up, Kangy!"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

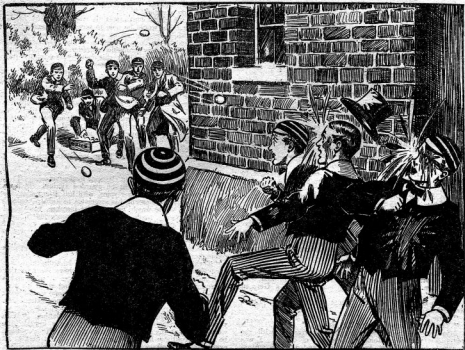
Kangaroo grunted, and gave in. Hunting through the library catalogue was not a pleasant task; but it was "up" to Kangaroo, and he undertook it as cheerfully as he could.

"It's a topping idea!" said Talbot of the Shell. "If there's a copy of the giddy volume in the library, we ought to read a bit of it."

There was a general groan.
 "Oh, that's carrying it too far!" said Tom Merry decidedly. "We'll learn the title of the book; that's enough."
 "Yass, wathah!"

By the time the juniors went in to dinner Kangaroo had finished his search. After dinner, he displayed a sheet of paper with the title of Mr. Carrington's book written on it. Tom Merry & Co. gasped a little as they read it. For this was the title:

"On the Native Polynesian Languages, with a Dissertation



With a wild whoop, the St. Jim's fellows came sweeping round the corner. "Fire!" roared Gordon Gay. Whiz! whiz! whiz! splash! splosh! went the Grammarians' fusillade. (See Chapter 4.)

on the Maori Tongue, and a Reference to the Dialect of Savage Island."

"My only hat!" said Tom Merry. "I can't possibly remember all that."

"Blessed if I could, either," said Kangaroo, "but I'm going to pin this paper inside my cap, so that I can keep it under my eye—see? I shall hold my cap in my hand, respectfully, while I talk to him, and so I shall be able—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall have to dress for the occasion," remarked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy thoughtfully. "I trust you fellows will make yourselves look wathah today. I will help you tie your necktie this time, Howwies."

"Oh, rats!" said Herries.

"And I hope you will brush your hat, Dig—"

"Bow-wow!"

"And if you feel inclined to change your collah, Blake, it will be so much the better. You cannot expect to impress a Housemaster favourably with ink-spots on your collah," said Arthur Augustus severely. "I shall be wathah careful myself. What time is the man's twain comin' in, Kangaroo?"

"Blessed if I know," said Noble. "There are three or four trains this afternoon, and he may come by any of them. Hold on, though—Taggles will know. Somebody will be sent with the trap to meet him; I should think."

The juniors proceeded to make inquiries of the school porter. From Taggles they gleaned the information that the trap was to be sent to the station at five.

"Lots of time to dress, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus, as they came away from the porter's lodge. "If you like, I will inspect you fellows aftah you have dressed, and give you some hints—"

"Bow-wow."

Instead of preparing an unusually stunning toilet for the occasion, Tom Merry & Co. played football; and they left themselves just-time to change and get down to the station. But Arthur Augustus had declined to play. He had spent a

great deal of time on his toilet, and certainly he looked a thing of beauty and a joy for ever when he had finished.

With hopeful hearts Tom Merry & Co. started for Rylycombe, where they arrived in good time, and lined up on the platform ready to greet the new master of the School House.

CHAPTER 4.

A Desperate Device.

"WAYLAND JUNCTION!"

"Change for Rylycombe!"

The express stopped in Wayland Station. A gentleman in a first-class carriage laid down his book, and looked out over his glasses into the station. He was a man of about forty-six, with a clear-cut, kindly face, and a short, brown beard. He took up a bag and an umbrella, put his book under his arm, and stepped out upon the platform.

"Change here for Rylycombe?" he asked the porter.

"Yes, sir."

"Rylycombe is the station for St. James's School?"

"St. Jim's? Yes, sir."

"When is the local train, please?"

"Four-thirty—'t'other platform."

"Thank you."

Mr. Carrington, the new Housemaster, bound for St. Jim's, walked down the platform. The local service of trains was not frequent—he had over half-an-hour to wait. The express rolled on out of the station.

A man in a peaked cap and a heavy coat, who looked like a chauffeur, touched his cap to the Australian gentleman.

"Mr. Carrington, sir?" he asked.

"That is my name."

"I was sent here to wait for you, sir. I am Dr. Holmes's chauffeur," said the man respectfully. "Dr. Holmes wish that you drive home with him, as his car is in Wayland now."

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE RIVAL PATRIOTS!"

Mr. Carrington glanced at the man. The chauffeur spoke English with a decided German accent.

"Thank you," said the Housemaster.

"Will you come with me, sir?"

"Certainly."

Mr. Carrington followed the chauffeur from the station. Outside, a brown motor-car was waiting. The chauffeur opened the door. A man in a silk hat inside the car raised his hat politely to the Housemaster.

"Mr. Carrington?" he asked. "Yes. Please step in. Dr. Holmes is at the vicarage, and the car is going directly there."

Mr. Carrington stepped into the car. The chauffeur took the driving-seat, and the brown car moved away down the busy High Street of Wayland.

"Allow me to introduce myself, Mr. Carrington," said the gentleman in the silk hat. "I am your fellow Housemaster at St. Jim's. My name is Ratcliff. I understand that you have but lately arrived in England?"

"Less than a month ago," said Mr. Carrington. "I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Ratcliff."

If Mr. Carrington had not been a complete stranger to St. Jim's and to the dwellers therein he would have known that this plump, well-fed-looking man was very little like Horace Ratcliff, the thin and meagre Housemaster of the New House. But as he had never seen Mr. Ratcliff, he had no suspicion. The car rolled out of the High Street into a country road. The Australian gentleman glanced from the window.

"The vicarage is outside the town," the man in the silk hat explained. "It is at some little distance. May I ask if you had an uneventful voyage from Australia—no danger from German cruisers?"

Mr. Carrington smiled.

"None at all," he said. "The sea is completely commanded by the British Fleet since an Australian ship finished with the Emden. I see that Dr. Holmes employs a German chauffeur."

"Oh? Oh, yes! A very honest man. You are quite a stranger to the school?"

"Quite."

"You have never met even Dr. Holmes?"

"So far, no. My engagement was arranged with the governors, with Dr. Holmes's approval, of course. I was known to him by name, and he to me, and we have mutual acquaintances," said Mr. Carrington. "But this is my first visit to England. It will be a great pleasure and a privilege to me to act as Housemaster at St. Jim's until Mr. Ratcliff's return."

The car bumped out of the high-road into a rutty lane, and the Housemaster glanced from the window again.

"A short cut," explained his companion. "I see you have a paper with you, Mr. Carrington. Is there any fresh news? Of course, we are all extremely keen on the war."

"Another German reverse in Belgium. I am glad to say," said Mr. Carrington. His companion's eyes glittered for a moment. "There is also news of a German spy who has been at large in this country for some time, and has hitherto succeeded in eluding the police."

"Indeed! I have not heard of him."

"His name is Franz Goetz," said Mr. Carrington. "A very clever man, but a very unscrupulous rascal. I am afraid. He held a position as a schoolmaster in Scotland before the war, and it was only lately discovered that he was a spy, and was sending wireless news to Germany. He has been traced through England, and is believed to be now somewhere on the South Coast. It is difficult to trace him, however, as he speaks English like a native, and has nothing distinctive about him to indicate that he is a German."

"A dangerous character. What is he like?"

"The description is of a man of about forty-five, with a dark beard," said Mr. Carrington.

The man in the silk hat passed his hand over his clean-shaven chin.

"Probably he has escaped from the country by this time," he remarked.

Mr. Carrington shook his head.

"Such does not appear to be the opinion of the authorities," he remarked. "The rascal is more likely to seek to remain here, under some assumed name, for the purpose of carrying on his spying work. It is quite easy for him to pass himself off as an Englishman, and as he had resided in the country for twenty years, he knows his way about. It is quite possible that at this very moment he may be found hiding under a false name, and perhaps keeping up the appearance of a harmless teacher in a school."

"But that would not be easy, as he would need recommendations of some sort to obtain such a position," remarked the gentleman in the silk hat thoughtfully.

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"Yes; you are right."

"Yet, if he could contrive it, it would certainly be his safest course. He would be able to serve his Fatherland unsuspected, while keeping up an extremely innocent appearance. Indeed, if he is in possession of the necessary information—which is very probable, considering his connection with the scholastic world in this country—he might even take a place in another man's name."

"It is possible," assented Mr. Carrington. "I see you know something of him. He is certainly a cunning and unscrupulous rascal."

"The other man smiled. "Suppose, for instance," he went on—"suppose from this man's inside knowledge he should learn the fact that you, Mr. Carrington, have been appointed Housemaster at St. Jim's. You are a stranger there. The rascal might have the effrontery to present himself there in your name, and take your place."

Mr. Carrington laughed. "Quite simple," he said. "There would be one difficulty however."

"And that?"

"That I should soon be on the spot to denounce him."

"But that difficulty might be guarded against. Being a spy, in connection with other spies, with full information, he might lay some plan among his associates to kidnap you and keep you out of the way! Suppose, for instance, you should be caught, sent, made a prisoner, and concealed in some lonely place, and this rascal seized your luggage and your papers, and went to the school in your place? So long as you were kept a prisoner, what would he have to fear?"

Mr. Carrington started, and looked curiously at his companion.

"Nothing, I suppose," he said. "But I hardly think that even Franz Goetz, rascal as he is, would have the nerve for such an enterprise. It would need a nerve of iron, and a single false step would bring his plot tumbling about his ears. I hardly think that even the most reckless rascal would think of such a scheme. You have a romantic imagination, Mr. Ratcliff."

"Yet it is not impossible," smiled his companion. "With your clothes; your letters, your papers, your luggage, he would arrive at the school quite unsuspected. He would not be able to continue his wireless operations—not at first, at all events—but his letters would pass unsuspected, being written by a Housemaster in a public school. They would go to Holland, and thence to Germany, crammed with news. He could even send telegrams to Holland, supposed to be sent to an Australian relation there, for instance. Meanwhile, posing as a schoolmaster, he would be the centre of receiving information from other spies in all parts of England. It would be a first-class idea, you must admit that. Why should it not succeed?"

"I fear I should be in the way," smiled Mr. Carrington. "But it would be quite easy to put you out of the way," said his companion, glancing from the window of the car.

The car had slackened down in a rutty lane across Wayland moor. A hundred yards from the lane a small house was visible, showing among leafless trees.

"Of course I am only putting a case, Mr. Carrington. But suppose this man—this rascal Goetz—being fully supplied with information, had met you in this car—"

"This car?"

"Yes, at the station, with a story that Dr. Holmes was in Wayland, and wished to drive you home with him—"

Mr. Carrington started.

"Would you not have stepped into the car quite unexpectingly—as, in fact, you did do?" went on the clean-shaven gentleman, with a peculiar glitter in his eyes. "Not knowing the country, you would not suspect that, instead of taking you to the vicarage, this rascal was taking you to the loneliest spot in the whole country, where a place was prepared for your reception. In fact, you would suspect nothing till the blow fell."

The car stopped, and the chauffeur jumped down.

Mr. Carrington half-rose to his feet. The face of his companion had changed in its expression, and the glitter in his eyes struck the Housemaster strangely. It began to dawn upon him that the man was not merely "putting a case."

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed. "I—"

"Keep quiet!" said the other grimly; and the Housemaster started back, as a revolver was thrust almost into his face.

"You are my prisoner, Mr. Carrington!"

"What?"

"I do not seek to hurt you, my friend. But if you resist I will blow out your brains as freely as I would kill a rabbit."

"You are not Mr. Ratcliff?" panted the Housemaster.

"I have never seen Mr. Ratcliff!"

"You—you are—"

"The rascal—the unscrupulous rascal—you have been describing to me, my friend."

"You are Franz Goetz?" almost shrieked Mr. Carrington.

"The German bowed mockingly.

"At your service!" he said.

"And—and you think that you will make me a prisoner while you carry out your vile scheme!" exclaimed Mr. Carrington, his voice trembling with rage. "You—you scoundrel! Bah! I do not care for your revolver!"

He stepped from the car.
But the unfortunate gentleman leaped fairly into the arms of the muscular chauffeur, who grasped him at once.

Franz Goetz sprang after him. Mr. Carrington was struggling furiously with the chauffeur. Goetz gripped him from behind, and he was borne to the ground.

"Schnell, Karichen!" panted Goetz.

"Ja, ja!"

The Housemaster, still struggling, was dragged away from the lane. He shouted fiercely for help. But his voice was lost on the lonely moor; and the dusk of the winter evening closing about him shut off the scene from all eyes, if there had been any near.

Goetz clapped his hand over the Housemaster's mouth.

"The handcuffs! Quick, Karl!"

Snap!

Handcuffed, and with a gag thrust into his mouth, the Housemaster was rapidly carried up a weedy, neglected path to the house. A door was instantly opened, and the prisoner was rushed in.

A quarter of an hour later the car was driven away from the lonely house on the moor. In the car sat Franz Goetz, German spy, dressed in the clothes Mr. Carrington had worn, with Mr. Carrington's paper in his pockets, and Mr. Carrington's bag by his side.

In the cellar of the lonely house on the moor the new master of the School House at St. Jim's lay a helpless prisoner.

CHAPTER 5.

Not as Per Programme.

"**B**A! Jove, I weally do not think much of Mr. Cawwington!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that remark on the railway platform at Rylcombe.

The local train from Wayland Junction had come—and gone. It did not bring Mr. Carrington.

Outside the station the trap from the school was waiting to take the new master to St. Jim's, so there was no mistake about the time of the train. Tom Merry & Co. had lined up on the platform to receive him. When the train was signalled, Kangaroo had taken a last hasty glance into his cap to re-read the lengthy name of Mr. Carrington's book on the Polynesian languages. All was ready for the reception—excepting Mr. Carrington! He did not arrive.

The juniors scanned the few passengers who alighted from the train with great disappointment. There were several women, several farmers, and two or three recruits in khaki. Certainly not one of them could possibly have been supposed to be Mr. Carrington, the Master of Aris from Melbourne.

"I weally do not think much of Mr. Cawwington!" Arthur Augustus repeated firmly, as his companions grunted. "He has lost his twin. Punctuality, dear boy, is the politeness of princes."

"Carrington isn't a prince!" growled Kangaroo. "We don't have any of that puffie in Australia!"

"Weally, Kangaroo, you understand vewy well what I mean to remark," Mr. Cawwington is unpunctual. "Prowastination is the thief of time."

"Bow-wow!"

"You're simply bursting with proverbs to-day, Gussy." remarked Talbot of the Shell. "Why don't you tell us that a stick in time saves nine?"

"Weally, Talbot—"

"And 'It's never too late to mend'; and 'Look before you leap'; and—"

"Psey don't be an ass, Talbot, dear boy! I wepeat that my opinion of Mr. Cawwington is lowahed. I was prepared," said Arthur Augustus, with great dignity—"I was quite prepared to have a high opinion of Mr. Cawwington, as he comes from the great Colony which is besekin' us up so wip-pin'ly against the beastly Fwussians. I shall have to wecon-sider my opinion."

"Then he may as well go and hide his diminished head," said Monty Lowther mournfully. "He will never survive that! We may consider him done for."

"Weally, Lowther—"

"Beastly that he hasn't come!" said Tom Merry. "It's gotten to keep us waiting here for nothing!"

"He didn't know we were here," grinned Blake. "This was going to be a little surprise for him."

"Yaa. The surprise is mucked up now, owin' to his losin' his twin. Housemasters ought not to lose twins."

"Do you think he lost it, Gussy?" asked Lowther thoughtfully.

"Yaa, appawently."

"Then somebody else has found it!"

"Eh?"

"Because it came in at five o'clock all the same."

"I can not in the humah for witten jokes, Lowther. Are we goin' to wait for the next train, dear boys?"

"It doesn't come in till six," said Manners dolefully.

"A whole blessed hour to wait! Grooch!" said Herries.

"Yaa, it's wotten!"

Taggles came on the platform, blinking round him.

"N.G. Taggy!" said Jack Blake. "He hasn't come!"

"Which I've got the trap 'ere, and I don't want to keep the 'orse standing about in the cold!" grunted Taggles. "Which wot I says is, when a man says he's coming by a train he ought to come by a train! Ugh!"

"P's'aps he's taken a taxi from Wayland," suggested Digby.

"Oh, my hat!"

Tom Merry shook his head.

"No; the Head must have expected him at Rylcombe, or he wouldn't have sent the trap for him," he said. "He'll come on by the next train. Jolly queer his losing a train, as he must have had a good while to wait for it."

"Bai Jove, I've his it!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, struck by a bright idea. "Isn't the time in Australwah different from English time, Kangy?"

"Just a trifle!" grinned Kangaroo.

"Then that's the reason. Probably he forgot to put his watch on to English time, you know, and pewpaws he's goin' to arrive heah by five o'clock Australwah time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see anythin' to cackle at, dear boys."

"No; we can see somethin' to cackle at," said Lowther. "You naturally couldn't without a looking-glass. Let's get out, you chaps, and we may be able to find some of the Grammarian bounders, and rag them to pass the time."

"Hear, hear!"

"Wah!" said Arthur Augustus. "We don't want to wisk spoilin' our clobber when we are goin' to greet the new Housemaster."

"Oh, blow the new Housemaster!" said Kangaroo. "We're not going to spend an hour doing nothing. Let's go and look for the Grammar bounders."

"Weally, you know—"

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's objections were not heeded. Tom Merry & Co. did not feel inclined to spend an hour cooling their heels in the station, and the weather was much too cold for standing about.

They sallied forth from the station with the amiable purpose of looking for the fellows of Rylcombe Grammar School, their old rivals, and ragging them.

"Ware, Grammar cads!" sang out Reilly of the Fourth suddenly. "Here they are, bedad!"

Gordon Gay & Co. of the Fourth Form at Rylcombe Grammar School were coming out of the village tuckshop in a crowd. Some of them were carrying parcels, probably containing tuck for a feed in their studies. Tom Merry & Co. bore down on them at once.

"Hallo! St. Jim's cads!" said Gordon Gay. "Line up and give 'em socks!"

"Weally, dear boys, I protest—"

"Cads!" yelled Blake. "We'll have their tuck!"

"Hurrah!"

Gordon Gay & Co. lined up to defend their tuck. There was a wild and whirling scramble at once. The Grammarians were outnumbered, and they fled, and the Saints rushed after them in a whooping crowd in the direction of the Grammar School. Two or three of the bundles had been dropped, and biscuits and broken eggs were scattered on the ground.

Gordon Gay and his comrades fled into the lane that turned off the high-road in the direction of the Grammar School, and there they stood at bay at the corner. Gay had unfastened his parcel, and handed out the contents hurriedly among his comrades. The contents of that parcel were eggs.

With a wild whoop the St. Jim's fellows came sweeping round the corner.

"Fire!" roared Gordon Gay.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz! Splash! Sploooosh!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gwooooh!"

"Great Scott! Ow!"

"Yah!"

The rush of the Saints stopped. The juniors, smothered with broken eggs, wiped white and yolk from their eyes and

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blinked and glared. The eggs were still whizzing, and their faces and clothes were smothered. Arthur Augustus was a special mark. He looked so beautifully elegant that the Grammarians chose him especially. Eggs smashed over him on all sides amid his wild ejaculations of horror. And to judge by the scent that resulted, Gordon Gay must have bought some of those eggs very cheap.

"Oh crumbs! Oh, it is howlid! Oh doah!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Come on!" roared Gay.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

Tom Merry & Co. retreated round the corner again. The victorious Grammarians followed them, expending the remainder of their ammunition.

"Go for 'em!" gasped Tom Merry. "We're smothered, but we'll roll 'em in the mud, anyway!"

"Go it, St. Jim's!"

The exasperated and eggy Saints rushed to the attack again. This time Gordon Gay & Co. had to retreat, and the Saints drove them back to the very gates of the Grammar School. But there reinforcements came pouring out, and the odds were against Tom Merry & Co., who had to give ground in their turn.

"Wipe up the ground with 'em!" shouted Gordon Gay.

"Hurrah!"

"Bai Jove! We shall have to wan like anythin'!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Oh crumbs! Leggo, you wotthah!"

Written major and Frank Monk of the Grammar School had collared the swell of St. Jim's. They chuckled, and sat him down heavily in the muddy lane. Blake and Dig rushed to the rescue, and floored his captors and dragged the gasping Gussy away.

Tom Merry & Co. had to retreat. But the Grammarians were not disposed to let them off lightly. They pursued and drove their enemies back to the village, and the tussle went on in the old High Street.

Many a rag and many a battle royal the St. Jim's juniors had had with their old rivals, but this "scrap" was a record. Tom Merry & Co. had forgotten all about their new Housemaster now, and that it was time for his train to come in. They had plenty to think about without that.

Right back to the station they were driven, and even the sight of Mr. Crump, the village policeman, in the distance, did not make the combat slacken. But as Mr. Crump came up, the Grammarians slackened off. Gordon Gay & Co. gave their rivals a final yell of derision, and marched away, leaving Tom Merry & Co. muddy and eggy and breathless and dishevelled.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "We hit off a bit more than we could chew that time. I'm going to have a swollen nose!"

"I've got one!" mumbled Blake.

"Bai Jove! Look at my clobber!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, blow your clobber!" said Kangaroo. "Look at my 'em!"

"I say! The train's in the station!" exclaimed Clifton Dane, suddenly remembering the purpose for which the juniors were there. "If he's come by that train—"

"Oh crumbs! We—we can't meet him like this!" gasped Tom Merry.

"You fellows will remember that I raised objections—"

"Oh, bow-wow! Don't you begin, Gussy!"

"Weally, Tom Mowwy—"

"Ere you are, sir!" It was the voice of Taggles. "The trap's been waitin' a hower, sir."

The juniors spun round in dismay. A well-dressed gentleman was coming out of the station with Taggles. It was evidently the new Housemaster, as Taggles was showing him to the trap. He looked at the dragged juniors in surprise.

"These 'ere young gentlemen belong to your 'Ouse at St. Jim's, sir," said Taggles, with a grin at the unhappy heroes of the School House.

"What!"

The new Housemaster stared at the boys.

"They raised their hats or caps dimly."

"We—we came here to—to—to—to meet you, Mr. Carrington," said Tom Merry.

"Yess, wathah, sir; to give you a greetin'—"

The new master frowned. He had cold-looking, pale-blue eyes that glittered unpleasantly, and a look that the juniors did not like.

"You came in that disgusting state to meet me!" he exclaimed.

"We—we've had a little accident, sir—"

"A—a— a sewies of beastly accidents, sir—"

"You see, sir—"

The new master waved his hand.

"Enough! Do all you boys belong to my House at the school?"

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"Yes, sir. All School House."

"Then you are under my authority. Take two hundred lines each for appearing in the public streets in that disrespectful state."

"Oh!"

The new Housemaster stepped into the trap, and Taggles drove away, grinning. Tom Merry & Co. looked at one another with sickly expressions.

CHAPTER 6.

A Perfect Beast!

"WHAT a rotter!"

"Beast!"

"What a sell!"

"Oh, Jerusalem!"

"And that," said Kangaroo, in a tone more of sorrow than of anger—"that is the giddy Housemaster we've got in the place of Raitton! That is the chap we're willing to welcome like a man and a brother! That is the beast we were reckoning on to back us up against Schneider! That is the—no villain whose rotten book I've looked out in a rotten catalogue, and learned the rotten title—"

"Why, he's worse than Schneider!" said Tom Merry indignantly. "Even old Schneider wouldn't give fellows lines before he'd fairly set foot in the school. We told the beast we'd had an accident."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Thus do the hopes we had in him touch ground and dash themselves to pieces—Shakespeare," said Monty Lowther dolorously.

"Oh, blow Shakespeare! Let's get in and get washed."

"Yaas, bai Jove! I feel howwid!"

The School House crowd, greatly dispirited, started for St. Jim's. They were feeling depressed and angry. Certainly they had presented a somewhat striking and peculiar appearance when the new master's eyes first rested on them. Still, for a new master to distinguish his arrival by giving a score of fellows a heavy imposition apiece was really a little too "thick."

Their high hopes were dashed to the ground. The new master was evidently a first-class rotter. Even Mr. Raitton of the New House could hardly have been as bad as that. Herr Schneider himself was a cherub in comparison.

With dismal looks the juniors tramped home.

Kangaroo's scheme, which had promised so much success, and raised their hopes so high, had been a ghastly failure.

The Cornstall felt it most keenly of all. It was exasperating to him to find that a man from his homeland was a disappointing beast like this. Certainly he had little to be proud of in the new master.

The juniors reached the school, and tramped in across the quadrangle. The trap had arrived long before. Taggles grinned at them from his lodge as they came in. Figgins & Co. of the New House met them in the quad, and stared at them. They asked questions, but the disappointed juniors were not in a mood for questions. They bumped Figgins & Co. in the quad, and went on, feeling a little soiled.

It was some time before they had removed all the traces of their disastrous encounter with the Grammarians.

When they came down from the dormitories, looking a good deal cleaner, they found all the fellows discussing the new Housemaster.

Kildare of the Sixth, the captain of the school, met them with a somewhat queer expression on his face.

"You kids have met Mr. Carrington?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom Merry dimly, "we went to the station to meet him. Unfortunately, we got into a scrap with some kids, and were looking a trifle dusty—ahem!—when we met him. It was really his own fault—he came by a later train, and—and—"

Kildare smiled.

"Well, Mr. Carrington has told me to warn you that he expects the lines he gave you this evening."

"The beast!" said Blake.

"What!" exclaimed Kildare sternly.

"Well, isn't he a beast!" said Blake appealingly, "giving chaps lines before he's fairly in the school! Besides, it was a compliment to him, going to meet him—"

"You might explain that to him, and he might let you off," said Kildare, good-naturedly. And he turned away.

"Bai Jove, there's somethin' in that, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus eagerly. "Suppose I go and explain to him? We didn't weally explain—"

"We might try it," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "He may have thought it was a rag. We could mention that it would have been all right if he'd come by the five train—"

"Can't all go," said Bernard Glyn. "Better select a deputation."

"Three will be enough, and they can speak for the rest," said Blake. "I'll leave it to anybody who likes. I don't like the look of that fellow's eye."

"Bottah leave it to me, deah boys; you can wely on a fellow with plenty of tact and judgment—"

"Gussy will only make matters worse," Lowther remarked.

"Let us go. You fellows chain Gussy up somewhere—"

"You ustah see, I wudna be chained up!"

"The Terrible Three made their way to Mr. Railton's study, which they concluded would now be occupied by Mr. Railton's successor in the School House. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made a step after them, but he was held, gently but firmly, in the grasp of Blake and Herriss and Digby. The juniors had a suspicion that D'Arcy's "tact and judgment" might not improve matters.

Tom Merry tapped discreetly at the Housemaster's door.

"Come in!"

It was a cold, steely voice, and the Terrible Three did not like the sound of it. But they went in. The new master was arranging papers in the study, but he paused, to fix a cold, steely look on the chums of the Shell.

"Ah! You are three of the boys whom I saw in a disgusting state at the station," he remarked.

"Ahem! Yes, sir!"

"Have you brought me your lines already?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"Then what do you want?"

"We—we want to explain," stammered Tom Merry, a little taken aback. "The—the fact is, Mr. Carrington—"

"There is nothing to explain, so far as I am aware," said the new master.

"Oh, yes, sir! The—the fact is, we—we have been looking forward to your arrival, sir, with—with enthusiasm!"

"Indeed!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Monty Lowther, taking up the tale.

"We—we know all about you, sir!"

The Housemaster started.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed sharply.

"We—we know about your book, sir—your famous book," stammered Lowther, a little disconcerted, "on the native languages of the—the Cannibal Islands, sir, with a dissertation on the—the dialects of Timbuctoo, sir."

"What!"

"And—and as you come from Australia, sir," said Manners, coming to Lowther's rescue, "we—we are especially enthusiastic. You see, sir, Australia has been playing up so splendidly in the war, and making the disgusting Prussians run like billy-oh, sir—"

"Hold your tongue!"

The Housemaster rapped out the words so savagely that the Terrible Three jumped. Why that complimentary reference to his native land should enrage him they could not understand in the least; but his eyes were simply sparkling with rage.

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Manners. "B-b-but it's true, sir. 'Tain't soft swadder, sir—really! It was an Australian ship that sunk the Emden, you know, and put a stop to its tricks. The whole country was simply brimming with it, sir. You should have heard the fellows cheering when the news got here, sir!"

The new master picked up a cane from the table.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Mum-mum-Manners, sir!"

"Hold out your hand, Manners!"

"Mum-m-m-my hand, sir!" stammered the unfortunate Manners.

"Yes, immediately!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Swish!"

"Now leave my study. Your impositions are doubled. Bring them to me before bedtime, or you shall be caned severely."

The Terrible Three limped out of the study. As Lowther said afterwards, all the stuffing was taken out of them. They were quite overcome.

"Well!" said Blake, who was waiting with the rest at the end of the passage, "what luck?"

"Licked!" groaned Manners.

"Lines doubled!" mumbled Tom Merry and Lowther.

"Bai Jove! I pwesume you did not exahcise sufficient tact and judgment, deah boys. You should wreally have let me go."

"He's a beast!" said Tom Merry, between his teeth. "An utter beast! Mr. Ratcliff of the New House is an angel beside him."

"And Schneider's a darling duck in comparison!" groaned Manners.

"I am sush, deah boys, that you failed to put it tactfully

to Mr. Cawwington. Undah the circs, I will try what I can do!"

"Oh, hold the duffer!"

"Br-r-r! Let him go and get licked, if he likes!" snapped Lowther.

"It will be all right," said Arthur Augustus confidently.

"I shall explain to Mr. Cawwington that he has been wathah hasty, and I am sush he will see reason. You wait for me."

The juniors waited. They watched Arthur Augustus tap at the Housemaster's door, and disappear into the study. A minute later he reappeared. He came back along the passage with his hands tucked under his arms, apparently trying to close himself up like a pocket-knife. There was a general chuckle:

"What luck?"

"Oh, crumbs! He is a beast!" groaned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "An utter beast! I have been licked! Licked, deah boys! Fancy that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's nothin' to cackle at! I am suffowin' severely. Oh, crumbs!"

"Anybody else want to try his luck?" asked Monty Lowther.

"No fear!"

Nobody else wanted to try his luck. They were fed up with the new master.

CHAPTER 7.

A Startling Meeting.

THERE was a German lesson the next morning for the Fourth, and the Fourth Form went into the class-room in a greatly dispirited mood. Figgins & Co. of the New House shared the feelings of the School House fellows. They had hoped something from the new master, though not to the same extent as the boys of his own House. All the school by this time knew that the new master of the School House was a "beast." All the Lower Forms, at least. Certainly it could not be denied that he was a very severe master.

Mr. Linton, who had now handed over his House master duties to the new-comer, had been a very poor substitute for Railton, from the juniors' point of view. But now that they had seen their new master, they would have been glad to continue under the rule of Mr. Linton. The Shell master was severe and exacting; but the new Housemaster out-Heroded Herod in that line. The only master at St. Jim's who was anything like him was Mr. Ratcliff—and even Mr. Ratcliff shone by comparison.

Figgins & Co. found a certain amount of comfort in that reflection. It had always been a sore point with the New House chums that their Housemaster was such a beast in comparison with Mr. Railton of the School House. Now the advantage was on their side. At last they could feel a certain modified amount of pride in Mr. Ratcliff. He wasn't so beastly as the new School Housemaster, anyway.

The new master had not been twenty-four hours in the school, but he had come down heavy in all sorts of ways. There had been good news from the front in the morning paper, and the juniors had cheered in the quad. Much to their astonishment, the new master had taken exception to even that harmless demonstration, and he had bidden them stop their noise in the harshest possible voice, and when Kangaroo explained that they had only cheered because the Prussians were licked again, he had given Kangaroo a hundred lines.

"The beast isn't even patriotic," said Kangaroo gloomily. "I don't mind the lines; that's nothing, but—" Words failed the Coenstalk junior. Kangaroo took it very much to heart. He was heartily ashamed of his fellow-Colonial.

Heer Schneider was tart that morning with the Fourth. He was not to be pleased. As usual, the news of a German reverse had affected his temper, and the rejoicing of the St. Jim's fellows made him ratty. The "cheek" of it exasperated the juniors greatly. That a German should stay in England during the war, and show rattiness simply because his Fatherland was getting licked, was altogether too thick. As Blake said, with sulphurous indignation, did the old duffer expect them to want his silly Kaiser to win!

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in the hottest water. Arthur Augustus's beautiful accent broke on the German language like waves on a rock. When Arthur Augustus persisted in calling "a Ritter" a "wittah" and a "Streiter" a "atweiah," Herr Schneider rumbled with rage. He brought the pointer into play at last.

"Hold out to hand, D'Arcy! You make a mock of your master, ain't it?"

"Certainly not, sir!" said Arthur Augustus, with lofty indignation. "I twast, sir, that you do not esteem me

capable of makin' a mock of my mastah! I should wegard anything' of the sort as vevy bad form."

"Hold out to hand, and close to mout!"

Arthur Augustus held out his hand gingerly, and gave a little yelp as the pointer descended.

"Now to odder hand!"

D'Arcy's eyes gleamed.

"I wufuse!"

"Vat!"

"I wufuse! I will not be caned—I mean, pointered—for nothin'. I wegard you as a tyrant, Herr Schneidah!"

"Shurrin, Gussy!" murmured Blake.

"I wufuse to shut up! I wegard Herr Schneidah as actin' in an unreasonable and wepewehensible way. I wufuse to be pointerah!"

"Will you hold out to hand, por!" shouted Herr Schneider, purple in the face.

"No, sir."

"Demn after lessons I takes you to your Housemaster, ain't it?"

"Vevy well, sir! I twust that my Housemastah will see justice done."

Arthur Augustus sat down.

There was a murmur of approval from the other fellows, but they had little hope that the new Housemaster would see justice done. Appealing to Mr. Carrington was like getting out of the frying-pan into the fire. But Arthur Augustus's noble back was up. If he did not get justice from the Housemaster, he was resolved to take the matter to the Head himself.

After the lesson, Herr Schneider, who was still brimming with wrath, signed to Arthur Augustus to follow him.

"I takes you to your Housemaster, D'Arcy."

"Vevy well, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's firmly. "I am perfectly willin' to go befoah my Housemastah, sir. I twust that Mr. Cawwington will do what is wight. But if not, sir, I shall appeal to the Head."

"Silence, hear!" murmured Kerr.

"Sileese, D'Arcy! Follow me!"

"Yaas, sir."

Arthur Augustus followed the stont German gentleman, with his noble nose high in the air. The blood of all the D'Arcies was boiling in his aristocratic veins, and he would have faced a whole army corps of Housemasters just then. But his chums looked dismal.

"Gussy's going to get it in the neck," muttered Blake. "The Beast will be down on him, as safe as houses."

"The Beast" was the name by which the new master was already generally referred to.

"I guess something's got to be done," growled Lumley-Lumley. "If old Schneider don't pull in his horns a bit, we'll go in a body to the Head."

"We'll back up Gussy if he goes to the Head, anyway," said Dig.

All the juniors agreed upon that.

Meanwhile, Arthur Augustus followed the German master to the study formerly occupied by Mr. Bailton. Herr Schneider tapped at the door and entered. The study was empty. The Housemaster was taking the Sixth, and he had not yet returned. But a few minutes later steps were heard in the passage.

The Housemaster came in, and Herr Schneider blinked at him through his spectacles.

Then, to D'Arcy's astonishment, the German master gave a sudden start and almost staggered back.

"Mein Gott!" he exclaimed.

Herr Schneider's eyes grew big and round behind his glasses. He stared at the new master like a man in a dream. The latter started a little.

Then they stared at one another without speaking. Arthur Augustus looked on in astonishment.

"Ach!" gasped Herr Schneider at last. "I dream, I tink! I—I—"

"Ah! You are Herr Schneider, I suppose?" said the new master smoothly.

"Ach! Ja, ja! Und—"

"I am Mr. Carrington, the new Housemaster. I am glad to meet you, Herr Schneider. Mr. Linton has mentioned your name to me." And the new master held out his hand to Herr Schneider.

Herr Schneider did not seem to see it. He was still blinking in a state of utter amazement at the other.

"Mr. Carrington?" he stammered.

"Yes, that is my name." The Housemaster smiled.

"You seem surprised, sir."

"Ach! Aber ich weiss wohl—"

"Ah, please do not speak in German," said the Housemaster, smiling. "I am afraid my acquaintance with your language is very limited, Herr Schneider. I am ashamed to say so. I speak only English and French and a little

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German—very little, I fear. My more abstruse studies have been among the native languages of Polynesia."

"Ach!"

"Why is this boy here!" asked the Housemaster, glancing at the astounded D'Arcy. "Has he been offending again?"

"Tat pey!" Herr Schneider remembered D'Arcy. "It is nothing. You may go, D'Arcy. Go at vunce!"

"Yaas, sir."

Arthur Augustus quitted the study.

Herr Schneider was still blinking at the Housemaster, as if he thought that his eyes or his spectacles deceived him.

"Ach!" he murmured. "Was haben Sie—"

"My dear sir," said the Housemaster, with a slightly surprised look, "I have already mentioned that I do not speak German. Please keep to English. You speak my language very well."

"Yes—your language!" stammered Herr Schneider.

"Yes. You are aware, surely, that English is the language of Australia?" said the Housemaster, looking astonished.

"You—your gum from Australia!"

"Certainly! I belong to Melbourne."

"You—you are English!"

"Undoubtedly—or British, as we should say."

"Und you speak not Cherman!"

"Very little indeed."

Herr Schneider passed his hand over his brow.

"Ach! Egwuse me, Mr. Carrington," he stammered. "I—I tink—I was tinkin; tat is to say, you shall look like somebody else tat I tink—Egwuse me!"

"Certainly!" said the Housemaster. He regarded the German master, with an amused smile, as the fat gentleman almost staggered from the study, evidently overcome with astonishment and doubt.

But when the door had closed on Herr Schneider the smile vanished from the face of the man who was known as St. Jim's at Mr. Carrington, from Melbourne.

He stood rooted to the floor, his face changing colour, his eyes gleaming, his look almost haggard. He, as well as Herr Otto Schneider, had received a shock.

CHAPTER 8.

Very Surprising.

"WREALLY, deah boys, I fail to comprehend it!" That was the announcement that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made, as he rejoined his anxious friends in the passage. The Shell had come out now, and Tom Merry & Co. were with the Fourth-Formers, waiting anxiously to learn what had happened to Gussy.

They were all ready to back him up in going to the Head if the Housemaster proved intractable, as they fully expected. But they could see that D'Arcy had not been licked. He was simply looking astonished—in fact, flabbergasted.

"Not let off!" asked Blake.

"You don't mean to say that the Beast has played 'op decently!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"It's vevy remarkable."

"What is, fathead!" demanded Kangaroo.

"I wufuse to be called a fathead."

"What's happened, you duffer!" roared Blake. "How did it go? What did Carrington say when the Schneider bird reported you?"

"I have not been reported."

"Not been reported!" said Blake dazedly. "But the Schneider bird mopped you off to Carrington's study 'op report you?"

"Yaas. It is vevy remarkable. I weally cannot comprehend it. Pway be patient, deah boys, and I will tell you all about it. When Cawwington came in, Herr Schneidah stared at him as if he was a ghost! He seemed quite knocked over! He recognised him."

"Well, I suppose they've met before," said Tom Merry. "Nothing surprising in that, that I can see."

"I wegard it as vevy surprisw'n." He looked as if Carrington was a ghastly spectre. Cawwington seemed wathah startled, too, for a minute. Schneidah began speakin' to him in German, as if he expected him to understand it. Then the Beast told him his name, and Schneidah said in German

"But I know him well— He was goin' on, but Cawwington drew his attention to me. He said I could go."

"Without being reported?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Or licked!"

"Yaas!"

"Well, that's jolly queer," said Monty Lowther. "Neither of the beasts is likely to let a chap off a licking if he could help it. I suppose Schneider recognised an old acquaintance in the Beast; though I don't see why he should be so vevy much astonished if he did."

"He was simply knocked over, dear boys!" said Arthur Augustus impressively. "I weally thought he was goin' to come a cwoopah for a moment. I did, weally."

"Here he comes!" muttered Talbot.
Herr Schneider was coming away from the Housemaster's study. After D'Arcy's surprising communication; the juniors naturally looked at him curiously. The appearance of the German master fully bore out D'Arcy's description.

He did not even see the juniors. He walked on like a man in a dream. The usually ruddy colour in his fat face had faded, and his eyes had a dazed look. It was plain to the most casual glance that the German master had received a terrible shock.

He was muttering to himself as he passed the group of surprised juniors, and they heard some of his remarks.

"Ach! Was kann ich tun? Ist nicht möglich—nicht nicht—aber—"

He passed on, too preoccupied to notice the startled eyes following him.

Tom Merry & Co. exchanged glances.
"What was he mumbling about?" asked Herries.

"He said 'What can I do? It is not possible—but—,'" said Talbot.

"Bai Jove! Don't you regard it as vewy remarkable now, dear boys?"

"Remarkable isn't the word for it, my son," said Monty Lowther. "Blessed if I've ever seen the Schneider bird knocked into a hoop like that before. Why the deuce should Carrington have that effect on him? Even if he knows him, there's no reason why he should be knocked into a cocked hat like that."

"But he doesn't know him," said Blake. "We all know that nobody here had ever met Carrington. We know old Schneider's never been in Australia, and this is Carrington's first time in England."

"Bai Jove, yaas! But he recognised him."

"Did Carrington recognise the Schneider-bird?"

"No, he appeared not to."

"Schneider must have taken him for somebody else, then," said Tom Merry. "But it's queer—jolly queer. Perhaps he's seen somebody like Carrington?"

"But why should it knock him over like that?" said Blake.

"You could see that he was looking simply stunned."

"Blessed if I know; it beats me!"

The juniors could not help being curious about it. But they could, as Lowther put it, neither make head nor tail of the mystery.

There was a German lesson for the Shell that afternoon, and Tom Merry & Co. went into the class-room with unusual interest. They wanted to see whether Schneider was looking his old self again yet.

They found that he was not. Whatever it was that had given him that terrible shock, Herr Schneider had not yet recovered from it.

He was preoccupied and absent-minded, and hardly seemed to take note of the lesson at all, and the Shell fellows found great relief therein. Lines did not fall, and the pointer lay idle on the desk.

The German master was buried in thought, and several times he muttered to himself, mutterings that had nothing whatever to do with German declensions and conjugations.

But before the close of the lesson he betrayed the fact that he was the same old Schneider. Perhaps the juniors were getting a little noisy and inattentive, as the master seemed to be taking hardly any notice of what they did. Herr Schneider seemed to become suddenly aware of it. The unknown worry that was preying on his mind blazed out in a burst of savage temper.

"Ach! I will keep order here!" he snapped. "Merry—Lowther—Talbot—you talk mit yourselves, hein! Hold out to hand!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Glyn, you not look at me like tat—take a hundret lines! Gore, take a hundret lines for to have shuffle vy feet! I geps dis class in order, or I knows to reason vy not, hein!"

The lesson ended in bad temper on the master's part, and suppressed fury on the part of the class. And when the ill-used juniors came out of the class-room Tom Merry said in a sulphurous voice:

"Something's got to be done! Blow him!"

And all the fellows agreed that something, certainly, had to be done, the only difficulty being to discover that "something" that could be done.

CHAPTER 9. The Pound Robin.

"WELLY on me!"
"Bow-wow!"
"I repeat, dear boys, that you can wely on me," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy firmly. "I have a wippin' ideah."

The crowd of fellows gathered round the tea-table in Study No. 6 did not look very hopeful or enthusiastic. But Arthur Augustus looked quite merry and bright. His powerful brain had evolved a new idea. And he proceeded to explain, while Tom Merry & Co. proceeded with their tea.

"It's a wound robin, dear boys!"

"A-a-a what!" ejaculated Blake.

"A wound robin?"

"What in the name of the Kaiser is a wound robin?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in wonder.

"Weally, Tom Merry, you ought to know what a wound robin is. They use it at-sea, you know, when they want to wemonstrate with a captain. All the crew sign a protest, and sign their names wound in a wing, so that no name appears to come first, so the wotiah can't jump on the wingledah. See?"

"Oh, a round robin!" growled Blake.

"Yaas, a wound robin. Now, my ideah is to dwaw up a protest to the Head, and get all the fellows to sign it in the form of a wound robin. Then, if there is a wov, the Head will not be able to flog the leadah, because there will be no leadah. He will only be able to tweat us all alike, do you see?"

"Whore does Gussy get these ripping ideas from?" said Talbot admiringly. "Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, I regard it as wathah wippin' myself. Some fellows do think of things, you know," said D'Arcy modestly. "I will dwaw up the protest, and we will take it wound the House, gettin' the fellows to sign."

"Hear, hear!"

"But what lines is the protest going to run on?" asked Tom Merry. "We shall have to put it rather tactfully. These headmasters are kittle-cattle, you know."

"You can wely on my tact and judgment, dear boy. I suggest a protest against continuin' German lessons dwin' the wath."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Fwore patriotic motives. I object to the language," said Arthur Augustus. "It weally is not quite loyal to be leasarn' German at a time like this; and it is so jolly hard, too. If we can wouse the patriotism of the Head, we may be able to get out of German lessons till the end of the wath. And that will probably be a long time—it's a long way to Potsdam."

The juniors looked rather doubtful. There was no doubt that Dr. Holmes was patriotic. They knew he had "whacked out" big subscriptions to the funds, he had taken in Belgian refugees, and he had highly approved of Mr. Raitton's action in joining Kitchener's Army as a recruit. But whether his patriotism would go to the extent of letting the fellows off German lessons till the end of the war was extremely doubtful. Still, there could be no great harm in suggesting it—by the safe medium of a round robin. Nobody would have cared to walk into the Head's study and suggest it personally. But with a hundred names signed to a round robin, the risk was "whacked out" on equal terms, and was really very small for each individual.

Arthur Augustus was evidently very much taken with his idea. He cleared a space on the table, and drew a sheet of impet paper towards him, and started. He gnawed the handle of his pen for a start, and wrinkled his aristocratic brow.

"Whereas—" he began.

"Good," said Tom Merry; "that has a nice legal sound."

"Whereas and wherefore, this country being in a state of war with the Empire made in Germany—"

"I do not think the word 'wherefore' is required."

"Well it sounds imposing."

"Pewraps you are right, dear boy."

Arthur Augustus wrote it down.

"Whereas and wherefore, this country being in a state of war with the German Empire—"

"It is considered that pure patriotism requires that all German goods should be given the go-by."

"Go-by" is wathah a slangy expression, Tom Merry. I doubt if the Head would compwehend what it meant."

"I stand correctod," said the captain of the Shell gracefully. "Anybody suggest a word? A good, bumping, emphatic word, if possible!"

"Should be excluded, instead of given the go-by," suggested Talbot.

"Vewy good. How many 'k's' in excluded?" asked Arthur Augustus, hesitating.

ANSWERS

NEXT
WEDNESDAY:

"THE RIVAL PATRIOTS!"

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of
Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"Only one, ass!" said Digby.

"Two?" said Horries.

"None!" roared Blake. "Don't you know that excluded is spelt e-x-c-l-u-d-e-d!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you Shell-fish cackling at?" demanded Blake warmly. "Do you think I don't know how to spell excluded? There are no 'k's' in it!"

"And to 'i's' either!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Well, I wouldn't swear to the 'i's,'" said Blake. "But, in case of doubt, it's safer to put it in. Put in an 'i', Gussy, and make sure!"

"Look here——" said Manners.

"And you look here," said Blake. "Is Study No. 6 drawing up this round robin, or are you Shell-fish doing it——what?"

"Oh, all right!" said Tom resignedly. "Put in an 'i', and a 'j' if you like. And you might put an 'x' or a 'z' at the end while you're about it!"

"You spell it as I've said, Gussy," said Blake gruffly.

"I'm strong on spelling; it's where I come in really well. E-x-c-l-u-d-e-d."

"Wight-ho!" said Arthur Augustus. "But what about a 'k'?"

"There's not a 'k' I tell you!"

"Very well. I don't claim to be a fearfully good spellah, but I certainly thought there was a 'k.' However, to continue. Pure patriotism requires that all German goods should be excluded——"

"Among which," suggested Lowther, "may be counted the German language—a foreign product very unpopular in this country, especially in the Lower Forms!"

"Very good!"

"Good!" said Digby. "And the undersigned therefore suggest that German lessons shall be checked——"

"You can't say 'checked' to the Head, deah boy!"

"Long word wanted!" said Monty Lowther.

"Suspended!" suggested Tom Merry.

"Yaas, 'suspended' will do wippily. We won't say abolished, as that might seem like askin' too much. Suspended till the end of the war!"

"Till the termination of hostilities," suggested Dig.

"Dig, deah boy, that's wippin'." The Head will like it much better like that. It weally sounds just like the Head himself talkin'," said Arthur Augustus admiringly. "Till the termination of hostilities. What next?"

"As witness our signatures," said Tom Merry. "Then we all sign."

"Put in something nice for the Head," said Blake thoughtfully—"something about relying on his well-known good sense and patriotism."

"Yaas, wathah! I should not suggest buttahin' up, but there is no harm in payin' a little compliment to an old sport like the doctah. Pwray make a suggestion somebody?"

"We rely——" began Blake.

"We place our reliance," said Dig.

"Yaas, that's bettah. We place our reliance——"

"We place our reliance on the good sense," said Blake.

"The profound judgment," said Dig, who was really growing quite brilliant.

"Heah, heah! We place our reliance on the profound judgment——"

"And well-known patriotism of our respected headmaster!"

"Oh, good! I weally think that will do!"

"Write out the lot, and let's see how it reads," said Tom Merry.

Arthur Augustus wrote it out in his elegant hand, and the juniors read it all together. It was undoubtedly an imposing document:

"WHEREAS and wherefore this country being in a state of war with the German Empire, it is considered that all German goods should be excluded, among which may be counted the German language, a foreign product very unpopular in this country, especially in the Lower Forms.

"The undersigned therefore suggest that all German lessons should be suspended till the termination of hostilities. We place our reliance on the profound judgment and well-known patriotism of our respected headmaster. As witness our signatures."

"Now you all sign your names wound in a wing," said Arthur Augustus. "I weally think this wound wobin is

quite eloquent. It will also show the Head that we have been very careful with our lessons, because it contains such wippin' long words and such excellent spellin'!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You are quite suah, Blake, that there is no 'k' in excluded!"

"Yes," roared Blake: "I know there isn't!"

"Oh, all right, deah boy! But I should not like to have any mistakes in the orthography of the wound wobin!"

"You've got two 'i's' in hostilities," snorted Lowther.

"Yaas, that's wright, deah boy. There are not three."

"There's only one!" shrieked Lowther.

"Wats!"

"Why, you ass——!"

"Wubbish! If you considah that you know how to spell bettah than this study, Lowthah——"

"Oh, shove 'em in!" said Lowther. "Why don't you put in a couple of 'z's'?"

"I regard you as an ass, Lowthah! I am suah the word looks much more imposin' with two 'i's', anyway. That's all wright. You leave it to me, deah boy!"

The juniors proceeded to sign their names in a circle round the paper. Then they marched forth from the study to seek new signatures.

They found them in plenty. Every junior in the School House was keenly in sympathy with the object of the round robin, though some of them were doubtful about the achievement of the object.

Shell and Fourth and Third and Second signed, and signed, and signed, till the sheet of impot paper fairly bristled with names.

But they were all junior names. When Tom Merry & Co., emboldened by success, ventured to tackle the Fifth on the subject, they found the Fifth deaf to their eloquence. They tried Lefevre, the captain of the Fifth, first. Lefevre burst into a roar of laughter at the sight of the document.

"You sign here," said Tom Merry, indicating a vacant spot on the sheet, which was by this time pretty well covered with writing and blots.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Lefevre. "I don't think!"

"We should like a few Fifth-Form names," said Tom, with dignity. "But, of course, you needn't sign unless you like!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, leave the silly duffah to cackle!" said Arthur Augustus. "Let's try Murphy!"

Murphy of the Fifth stared at the inky document and gaped when it was presented to him.

"Tare and ons!" he said. "Are you going to take this to the Head?"

"Certainly."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Murphy.

"Look here, are you going to sign?" demanded Tom, a little nettled.

"Excuse me," gasped Murphy, with tears in his eyes.

"No, I don't think I will. I don't want to be licked. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"We'll try Campbell," said Arthur Augustus. "He's got more sense than that wild Wisahag. He's canny, you know. I believe all Scotsmen are canny. Let's try Campbell!"

It was probable that Campbell of the Fifth was canny, for he declined to sign the round robin. He declined without thanks.

"Blow the Fifth!" said Tom Merry.

"After all, we don't want any silly seniors in this! It's a junior wheeze. The Fifth can go and chop chips. Let's take it to the Head. We've got a hundred names at least!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

The Co. proceeded to the Head's study. They passed Kildare of the Sixth on the way, and they passed. It occurred to them at once that if they could get the captain of the school to sign it would give the round robin a decided leg-up.

Kildare looked at the paper curiously as it was held out to him.

"Would you care to sign your name, Kildare?" asked Tom Merry. "It's really a little thing of our own, but we are willing to give you a chance, as—as you are skipper!"

Kildare's eyes grew very wide as he gazed at the document.

FOR NEXT WEEK:

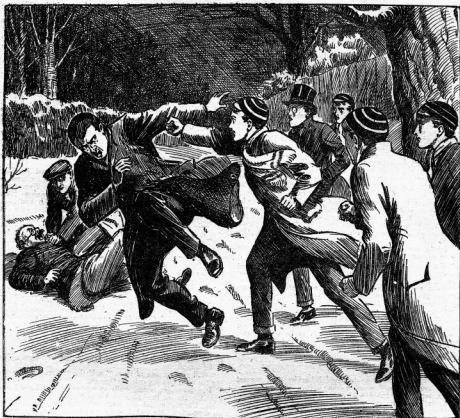
THE RIVAL PATRIOTS!

Another Splendid Long, Complete Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

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Tom Merry's right fist, clenched as hard as iron, caught Franz Goetz under the left ear, and huried him half-stunned into the snow. Before he could even realise what was happening, Blake, Lewther and Manners were upon him, grabbing his wrists, and kneeling on him. (See Chapter 14.)

"What is it? A collection of blots, or a new thing in smudges?" he asked.

"Ahem! That's those blessed fags, you know," said Tom. "They will make blots. Read it, old chap!"

Kildare seemed on the point of choking as he perused the document.

"You're going to take that to the Head?"

"Yass, wathah!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Don't you think the Head will like it?" demanded Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha! He will like it—especially the spelling—and the blots—and the smudges! Oh, my hat!"

Kildare almost staggered away. The juniors looked at one another a little uncomfortably.

"Oh, blow Kildare!" said Blake. "We don't want him to sign, anyway! Come on!"

"Yass, wathah! These seniahs are awful duffahs, you know. Follow your loadah, deah boys!"

And Arthur Augustus led the way heroically, and knocked at the door of the Head's study.

CHAPTER 10.

Not Quite a Triumph.

DR. HOLMES looked a little surprised as Tom Merry & Co. marched in; but he politely asked them what they wanted.

"If you please, sir—" Tom Merry began.

"Pway leave it to me, Tom Mewwy. Please, Dr. Holmes,

we are a wound wobin—I mean, a deputation bwingin' a wound wobin—"

"What!"

"You are awah, sir, that this country is at pwesent at wab with the Pwussian bowbawians."

"I could scarcely be unaware of it, D'Arcy."

"Just so, sir. Undah the cires, we are pwesentin' you with a wound wobin."

"A—a what!"

"A round robin, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Pway leave it to me, deah boy. I can explain it to Dr. Holmes. At this hour of pewil, sir, when our pallant twocops are rollin' in mud and blood in the frozen fields in Flandahs, we feel called upon to show our patriotism, sir."

"That's very right," said the Head, in wonder. "But I really do not understand."

"You approve of patriotism, I am suah, sir."

"Certainly!"

"I told you so, deah boys. I assuahed you that we could wely upon the patriotism of Doctah Holmes. Under the cires, sir, the juniahs of the School House have drawn up a wound wobin to present to you, sir. Heah it is, sir!"

Arthur Augustus laid the round robin on the headmaster's desk.

Dr. Holmes, in a state of great astonishment, adjusted glasses, and looked at the valuable document.

The juniors stood silent in some anxiety, watching the doctor's face. They were still a little doubtful how he would take it, in spite of the confident assurance of Arthur Augustus, D'Arcy. They did not quite know what effect the round robin would have upon the Head. But they soon knew.

Dr. Holmes repressed a strong inclination to laugh, and then frowned. His frown grew sterner and sterner.

The juniors exchanged dismayed looks now. Apparently Dr. Holmes's patriotism was more limited than their own, at all events, so far as concerned boycotting the German language during the war.

Dr. Holmes looked up at last. The heroes of the round robin quaked.

"Boys!"

"Ye-a-a-s, sir."

"Who drew up this ridiculous paper?"

"That wha-a-st, sir?"

"This ridiculous paper," said the Head sternly.

Arthur Augustus pulled himself together.

"There appears to be some misapprehension, sir," he said, with a great deal of dignity. "We do not regard that paper as ridiculous."

"Our views seemed to differ, then," said the Head. "I regard it as ridiculous and impertinent."

"Bai Jove!"

"Extremely impertinent!" said the Head.

"I trust, sir," said Arthur Augustus, with more dignity than ever—"I sincerely trust, sir, that you do not suppose me capable of being impertinent to my headmaster. I should regard anything of the kind as very bad form."

"I will accept your assurance that you did not intend to be impertinent, D'Arcy," said the Head, with a peculiar twitch to his lips. It struck the juniors for a moment that the Head was trying very hard not to smile. But he went on frowning all the same. "I must know who drew up this document."

"It's a wound wobin, sir. As we have all signed our names wound in a wing, we are all equally responsible."

"We—we hoped that—that you would—ahem!—see it as we do, sir," murmured Tom Mewy, "under the circumstances, sir—"

"Yaas watah! Undah the circs we feel that we are entitled to a weppl, sir, as that wound wobin represents public opinion in the House, sir."

"Certainly I shall reply," said the Head. "Although a state of war unhappily exists between this country and Germany, that is no reason why your lessons should be neglected. I will exonerate you from all intention to be impertinent, but in order that you may not commit the same fault again, I shall impose a hundred lines upon every boy who has signed this paper."

"Oh!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"I will hand the paper to Herr Schneider, and request him to see that every signatory hands in a hundred lines—in German!" said the Head. "You may go."

The authors of the round robin looked at one another with sickly expressions. They had expended a good deal of time, a lot of trouble, and a considerable amount of ink, on that round robin. And somehow or other it had utterly failed to impress the Head with the justice and wisdom of their point of view.

Tom Mewy & Co. executed a strategic movement towards the door. Arthur Augustus lingered. He still hoped.

"But, sir, will you allow me to explain—"

"Certainly not. You may go, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir; but undah the circs—"

Dr. Holmes stretched out his hand towards a cane. Arthur Augustus promptly followed his comrades into the passage. Evidently there was nothing doing.

D'Arcy closed the Head's door and looked at the dismayed juniors through his famous monocle. They were dismayed, but D'Arcy was indignant.

"Seems to be watah a frost, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus at last. "I am afraid I shall have to wiconsidah my opinion of Dr. Holmes. I have always presumed that he was an old sport. But now—"

"Hundred lines in German!" grunted Blake. "And then to be taken in to Schneider! Oh, crumbs!"

"It is weally watah wrotten, but it was a wippin' ideah—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Fathah!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Ass!"

"Weally, Tom Mewy, why—what—oh, crumbs!"

"Yaowoh!"

Arthur Augustus was suddenly seized by half a dozen pairs of hands, and bumped down in the passage. That was his reward for his brilliant idea of taking a round robin to the Head.

Tom Mewy & Co. walked off disconsolately, leaving Arthur Augustus sitting on the cold, unsympathetic linoleum, and gasping for breath.

"Bai Jove! The wottahs! You feahful beasts!"

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Arthur Augustus staggered up, and limped after his comrades in a state of burning indignation.

"The uttah wottahs!" he gasped. "The next time they are in a fix I shall uttably wefuse to think the mattah out for them, and provide them with a wippin' ideah. The feahful boundahs! I will nevah, undah any circs watahah, draw up a wound wobin again!"

And he never did.

CHAPTER 11.

The Honour of Herr Schneider.

"COME IN!"

The new Housemaster, whom St. Jim's knew as Mr. Carrington, was seated in his study, smoking a cigar, when a tap came at his door.

In response to his call the door opened hesitatingly. The new master's eyes glittered for a moment at the sight of Herr Schneider.

But his manner was quite courteous and bland. He rose to his feet, and smiled a welcoming smile.

Herr Schneider came into the study, and closed the door carefully behind him. The face of Herr Schneider wore a peculiar, not to say extraordinary expression. Ever since that meeting with Mr. Carrington in the morning Herr Schneider had not been himself. Everyone who had seen him remarked that there was something the matter with old Schneider. And now, as the fat German master stood facing the new owner of Mr. Railton's study, it was only too clear that there was something the matter with him.

"Pray sit down, Herr Schneider," said the Housemaster, indicating a chair.

Herr Schneider dropped, rather than sat, in the chair. "Quite a cold evening," said the Housemaster genially. "It is very kind of you to give me a look-in, Herr Schneider."

"Ja, ja!" mumbled Herr Schneider.

"No more trouble with the boys, I hope? In that case, you may rely upon me, Herr Schneider, to support you in every way with my full authority."

"Thank you!"

"I am not a believer in the new ideas of soft and gentle treatment for unruly boys," said the Housemaster; "I adhere to the old system. If you have any complaint to make, you may rely upon it that I shall use the fullest severity."

Herr Schneider sat silent. It was evident that he had come to say something, but it did not appear that he was there to make complaints.

"Will you try one of these?" said the Housemaster, pushing the cigar-box towards the German.

Herr Schneider mechanically took a cigar, but he did not light it. He sat twirling it in his fingers.

Mr. Carrington did not seem to notice his extraordinary preoccupation. He puffed at his cigar with a contented air, and chatted on amicably.

Herr Schneider did not speak. He only blinked at the Housemaster through his glasses, with a dazed expression.

Whatever it was he had come to say, he seemed to find some difficulty in uttering. Mr. Carrington chatted and smoked with apparent carelessness, but his eyes were on the German's face all the time.

Herr Schneider broke out at last. The words seemed to burst from him involuntarily.

"It will not do! Nefel! You must go-away."

Mr. Carrington raised his eyebrows.

"I beg your pardon, Herr Schneider."

"You must go away."

"I do not quite understand."

Herr Schneider twisted the cigar in his fingers nervously till the "smoke" began to come to pieces. He did not notice it.

"I say tat you must go. Ven I shall see you dis morning I receive such a shock as nefel vas. Listen to me! I will not be a barty to it."

"You speak in riddles, Herr Schneider," said the Housemaster calmly. "May I ask you to explain yourself?"

"I know you!"

"Naturally, since I have introduced myself," said the Housemaster smoothly.

"I knew you in Chermanny."

The Housemaster smiled.

"My dear sir, I have never been in Germany. I have never left my native country—Australia—till I came to England a month ago."

"Tat is not true."

"Herr Schneider!"

"I knew you in Chermanny, twenty years ago," said Herr Schneider. "I met you again ven tat you take holiday in Chermanny last summer."

"Nonsense!"

"You are not English—you are not Australian! You are Franz Goetz."

The Housemaster drew a deep, deep breath. For a moment the look in his eyes would have alarmed the German master if he had noted it. But the troubled old gentleman was blinking dimly through his glasses, and did not see it. The Housemaster's hands clenched hard; his teeth came together like a vice. But it was only for a moment. The next, he was smiling again in a bantering way.

"Come, come, Herr Schneider! What an extraordinary idea! I have heard of this Franz Goetz—his name has been in the papers. It is understood that the rascal has escaped from England."

"Ja, ja! But he has not escaped; he has come here in another man's name," said Herr Schneider heavily. "He has come to deceive everybody."

"My dear sir, I am a well-known man. If it were as you suppose, surely the real Mr. Carrington would not stay away to oblige me," said the Housemaster, smiling.

Herr Schneider shook his head.

"I know not what has become of the real Mr. Garrington, I hope to good heaven that you have not murdered him."

"Herr Schneider!"

"But that you are not Mr. Garrington, I know very well. You are Franz Goetz, and you have come here in his name and with his papers. I know you so well as never was. I do not forget faces, and we were at Bonn together when we were young."

"Surely, a case of resemblance," said the Housemaster, still smiling, though his lips were growing white. "I may resemble this man Goetz—I cannot say, as I have never seen him."

"You are he!"

"But consider, my friend, consider! How could a German pass himself off as an Englishman? You do not discover any accent in my speech—"

"I have read of you in the papers. You have been schoolmaster in Scotland. In this country you live twenty years. You speak English so well as native. But I trust to mein eyesight, Herr Goetz, and I know you."

"A mere fancy," said the Housemaster. "You must disguise your mind of these extraordinary ideas, Herr Schneider. I sincerely hope that you have not mentioned this amazing suspicion to anyone else. As I come from a distant country, it would possibly make a certain amount of awkwardness for me."

"I mention nothing yet."

"Yet!" repeated the Housemaster. "Does that mean that you intend to do so?"

"I must, if you not go away."

"Now, let us speak of this seriously," said the Housemaster, leaning towards the German, his eyes gleaming. "You have a suspicion that I am not Mr. Carrington—"

"I know that you cannot be."

"You suspect that I have kidnapped or otherwise got rid of that Colonial gentleman, and come here in his place and his name?"

"I know it!"

"But for what purpose, should you suppose?"

"I know that you are a spy. That is your purpose."

"Be reasonable, my dear sir. What is there for a German to spy upon in a school?"

"Nothing. But it is a safe hiding-place for a spy. It was as a schoolmaster that you spy in Scotland. Here you tink to receive reports from all to older spies under your orders, I suppose, and send to reports away to Chermans, which is easy for so respectable a person as a Housemaster."

"Even admitting for a moment that what you say is true, Herr Schneider, it is your duty to be silent. Suppose I am a German, and that I am serving my Fatherland. You are also a German. You could not betray me."

Herr Schneider's fat fingers trembled as he twitched at the torn cigar.

"I wish not to betray you," he said heavily. "You are my yellow-countryman. I am a Cherman, and I am a patriot. All Chermans in England have their hearts with their Fatherland. But to spy—that is base."

The Housemaster's eyes burned.

"There is more than one way of serving one's country, Herr Schneider. Franz Goetz's way is a valuable way."

"It is mean and disgraceful."

"You dare to criticise the orders of your Kaiser?"

"I am loyal to mein Kaiser," said the unhappy German master. "I am true Cherman. I wish that Chermans shall win in this fearful war. But I cannot betray the country whose bread I eat."

"Bah!"

"You do not think like that, Franz Goetz. You will gum into a country as a friend, and stab her in to pack. But I am an honest man. Here to poets say 'old Cherman,' and they

cheer you there is a Cherman defeat. But they respect me. They do not like me, but they know that I am honest man. They know that I would not betray the country when I sit at the table with to English and eat their bread. Mein Gott! That dare are Chermans who will do that base thing, that is a disgrace for mein Vaterland."

There was silence in the study. The Housemaster's eyes were burning, and his lips were white. Before the loyalty and unshaking honesty of the crusty old German master, the unscrupulous plotter and spy felt himself baffled. Herr Schneider broke the silence.

"You serve our Kaiser in your way. I say nothing of that. But I cannot be a traitor to the country when I am sheltered here, and trusted. You must go. If you lead this school to-morrow, Franz Goetz, I say nothing. But if you do not go, den, as an honest man, I must speak to the Head."

"You will betray me?"

"I will not be to accomplice of a spy and traitor."

"And you are a German!" said the Housemaster bitterly.

"I am a Cherman and an honest man."

The Housemaster bit his lips savagely. He had dropped his denials now. He knew that he was known, and that further fencing was useless.

"If you betray me," he said, "it will be known. It will be remembered against you in Germany. You will not be able to set foot again in your Fatherland."

"I will not be a traitor."

The Housemaster ground his teeth.

"Then what is your intention?" He hissed out the words. "What am I to expect?"

"Go!"

"And if I do not go?"

"Den to-morrow I speak to the Head!" said Herr Schneider.

"You shall not make me into your scoundrel like yourself, Franz Goetz. I grieve you until to-morrow that you think about it, and if you do not go, you pay to penalty."

Herr Schneider rose to his feet. He had delivered his ultimatum, and he seemed to feel easier in his mind. There was a certain dignity in the fat old gentleman as he stood looking down on the white, enraged, baffled rascal before him.

"Till to-morrow!" muttered the Housemaster.

"Ja, ja!"

"But—but—"

"There is nothing more to be said. Go, den!" Herr Schneider turned to the door. "To-morrow morning I will ask you—and you shall give your answer! You must go! You shall not make an honest man into a scoundrel, Herr Franz Goetz."

Herr Schneider left the study with his ponderous steps, and the door closed behind him. The false Housemaster sat staring at the door after it had been closed—almost numb, utterly dismayed. The scheme had been so cunning, so well-planned. It had succeeded so perfectly, and now it was tumbling about his ears like a house of cards! The game was up!

CHAPTER 12.

Rank Tyranny.

"GWOH! It's cold!" That was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's remark when he turned out on the following morning.

It certainly was cold. There had been a fall of snow during the night, and the quadrangle was a sheet of white. Snow-flakes dashed against the high windows of the dormitory.

"By George! It is cold," agreed Blake. "Never mind, we'll get some snowballing before brekker, and get warm. We'll see if the New House bouncers are out."

The Fourth-Formers came streaming down from the dormitory, and they found Tom Merry & Co already down. The Terrible Three and Talbot and Kangaroo were looking out from the School House doorway into the whitened quad. A few snowflakes were still falling.

From the steps of the School House a track led across the quadrangle towards the gates, plainly marked in the snow. The juniors were looking at it in some surprise. It was not long since the rising-bell had ceased to sound, but someone had evidently gone out very early. The track continued all the way to the gates, and the footprints were evidently those of a man.

"Some giddy master taken to very early rising," remarked Monty Lowther. "There isn't a fellow in the school with feet that size, excepting Herries—"

"Let my feet alone," growled Herries.

"New House bouncers not out yet," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to snowball Gussy. Do you mind being used as an Abut Sally, Gussy?"

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NEXT WEDNESDAY:

"THE RIVAL PATRIOTS!"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Thanks! Come on, you chaps, and let's begin."

The Shell fellows began at once. Snowballs whistled round Arthur Augustus as he stood on the steps.

"You uttah asses!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "Wing off! Oh, my hat! Oh, my nose! Bai Jove! File in, deah boys, and drive those Shell boundahs wound the quad!"

"Hear, hear!"

Arthur Augustus rushed to the attack, streaming with snow, and the missiles were soon flying merrily on all sides. Tom Merry & Co. were driven back by force of numbers under a shower of snowballs. With faces flushed up by the exercise, and their scarves and hair flying in the wind, the juniors warmed to their work, and were soon quite enjoying themselves. The Terrible Three and Talbot and Kangaroo had to give ground, but they took cover in the porch of Taggles' lodge, and met their assailants with a hot fire. But a rush dislodged them, and they were driven out.

The Shell fellows backed up in the gateway, and faced their foes once more. Blake & Co. advanced, delivering volleys of snowballs. As the whizzing missiles swept in a cloud towards the gateway a figure in an overcoat and muffler came in from the road. It was the new master. Evidently it was "Mr. Carrington" who had been out so very early, and had left that track across the quadrangle.

"Squash! Whiz! Buzz! Smash! Smash!"

"Ach, ach! Mein Gott!"

The Housemaster gave a wild howl as the flood of snowballs burst all over him. The Shell fellows were dodging, and the master was right in the line of fire. Snowballs smashed on him on all sides. His coat, his hat, his face, every part of him came under the heavy, though unintentional, fire of the Fourth-Formers.

"Hold on!" gasped Blake. "It's the Beast!"

"Cawwington, bai Jove!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The snowballing ceased at once. The Shell fellows and the Fourth-Formers stood dumb with dismay as the enraged master gazed at snow from his face. The expression on his hard face showed what they had to expect. Mr. Railton would have taken such an accident good-humouredly, but they did not expect Mr. Carrington to take anything good-humouredly. And they were right.

The Housemaster rubbed the snow away, glaring furiously. He seemed speechless with wrath. And the Shell fellows, as they watched him, wondered a little, in spite of their dismay. They had heard his startled exclamation when the snowballs smashed on him. What had the Australian ejaculated "Ach! Ach!" for in the very tones of Herr Schneider? The startled exclamation had come from his lips suddenly, unprepared. The juniors could not help wondering. "Ach! Ach! Mein Gott!" was really an extraordinary exclamation for an Australian to utter.

But they were not given much time to think about that. The Housemaster advanced upon them, his eyes blazing.

"You young rascals! Impertinent little wretches! You snowball me!"

"Excuse us, sir; it was an accident," said Tom Merry. "Nobody saw you, sir. We did not know you had gone out so early."

"Quite an accident, sir," said Arthur Augustus. "We are very sorry."

The Housemaster made a fierce gesture.

"Follow me to my study at once!"

"Those Shell chaps hadn't anything to do with it, sir. It was us who threw those snowballs."

"Silence! Follow me, all of you!"

The juniors followed the Beast glumly. They were evidently in for it, those who had not thrown the snowballs as well as those who had. The Housemaster strode savagely into his study and picked up a cane.

"Hold out your hands!" he said harshly.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

The swishing of the cane was incessant for several minutes. Then the juniors marched out of the study, squeezing their hands under their arms. They had received two each, and really terrific "swipes" all of them.

They went slowly out into the quadrangle again, but they were no longer feeling in a humour for snowballing. They squeezed their hands and mumbled. The punishment had been very severe, out of all proportion to the offence, even if it had been deserved. And the juniors were smarting under a sense of injustice, as well as the pain of the castigation.

"Oh, Kangy, old man," mumbled Arthur Augustus. "I weally wish your friend Cawwington had remained in Austwaliah! I don't believe he's a Mastah of Arts at all. I feel convinced that he was a bushwanga."

Kangaroo groaned.

"I don't own him!" he gasped. "Don't call him a friend THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 366.

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of mine! Oh! I wouldn't be found dead in the same contment with him! Yow!"

"The horrid beast!" said Blake, tucking his hands under his arms and trying to tie himself into a knot. "The awful rotter! Oh crumbs!"

"Heah come those New House boundahs!" groaned Arthur Augustus.

Figgins & Co. bore down on them from the direction of the New House with surprised looks. Tom Merry & Co. presented a really interesting study at that moment. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn stared at them.

"What's the little game?" asked Figgins. "Something new in gymnastics!"

"Ow! Wow! Wow! Yow!"

"Not licked already?" asked Kerr. "I must say you School House kids begin playing the giddy goat early in the morning. Licked before brekker! My word!"

"It's our beastly Housemaster!" mumbled Tom Merry. "He's a beast—a horrid beast—the very last word in beasts! Ow!"

"Figgins & Co. smiled.

"Worse than Ratty—what!" said Figgins. "Well, it's time you learned what it was like. We've got a better Housemaster than you now. You won't chip us about Ratty any more. But I'm sorry, though," added Figgins sympathetically. "You do look as if you've been through it."

"We'll make him sit up for it, somehow!" groaned Manners. "Ow! Let's make those New House beasts sit up too! What the deuce do they mean by talking about our Housemaster? Go for the rotters!"

And the exasperated juniors promptly attacked Figgins & Co., and drove them back to their own House with showers of snowballs. The New House juniors dodged into their House smothered.

Somewhat comforted, Tom Merry & Co. returned to the School House to breakfast. But they were feeling very "wrathy." Their new Housemaster was a worse beast even than Schneider, who had previously seemed to be the last word in beasts. And between the two of them, as Blake dismally remarked, they seemed likely to have a high old time.

CHAPTER 13.

A Surprise for the Co.

"BEASTLY cad!" said Rushton of the Sixth, when the fellows came out of the Form-rooms after morning lessons.

The School House master had taken the Sixth that morning. The Sixth Form, of course, were too high and mighty to be caned, and so "Mr. Carrington" had not been able to treat them as he treated Tom Merry & Co. But his temper was sharp and his tongue was bitter, and the top Form of St. Jim's had had a very unpleasant time with him. They did not like him, and Rushton's remark expressed the general opinion of the Sixth.

It was some consolation to Tom Merry & Co. to observe that the seniors had "had some." The new School House master was evidently not going to be popular.

Mr. Carrington came away from the Form-room, and shut himself up in his study at once. A few minutes later there was a knock at his door, and Herr Schneider came in.

The Housemaster met him with a sullen look. Herr Schneider was troubled and worried, but he was quite plainly determined.

"I have got for your answer, Herr Franz Goetz," he said grimly.

The Housemaster made an angry gesture.

"Don't use that name here."

"No van can bear us, I suppose. You have not gone. Is it at I am to go to Head and speak mit him?"

"Listen to me," said the Housemaster. "You are the German master here. You get a liberal salary. But whatever your salary is, you shall be paid treble as much if you hold your tongue."

Herr Schneider turned purple.

"Ach! Rascal!" he spluttered. "You could bribe me! You do not tink tat I am an honest man! You are vun disgrace to Chermanny! But I show you—I show you quick! Now I go to Head!"

"Stop—stop! I will go!"

The Housemaster panted out the words. Herr Schneider turned slowly back from the door. His eyes gleamed through his spectacles.

"You have insult me," he said, "but I say nothing if you go. Get out of dis school, and neder let me see your scoundrel face again, Franz Goetz. Take to train from Rylcombe dis afternoon, and I will gum mit you to station."

"You have made up your mind to this, Herr Schneider!"

"Ja, ja wohl."

"And your duty to your Fatherland!" said the Housemaster bitterly.

"Mein duty to my Vaterland is not to disgrace my Vaterland," said Herr Schneider steadily. "Rascals like you, Herr Goetz, have brought enough disgrace on my beloved Chermany in these days. You make all peoples in to world tink tat dere are no decent Chermans. It is you tat do not do your duty to Chermany."

"I act under orders from the Kaiser."

"It is not for me to say anything against mein Kaiser," said Herr Schneider, after a pause. "But I tink he make mistake in letting Chermany be disgraced by all dis spying and treachery. I am loyal to mein Kaiser and to mein country, but I will have no hand in betraying dese whose bread I eat."

The Housemaster clenched his hands. But he made no further attempt to shake the determination of Herr Schneider.

"Then I will go," he said; "but you need not come with me to the station."

"I gum mit you and see tat you go," said Herr Schneider coldly. "I do not trust you. You shall leave by te train from Rylcombe, and after tat you do as you like. I advise you to become honest man; but tat is your pininess."

"Listen! It will excite remark—it may draw attention to me," said the Housemaster. "I cannot afford to run risks. You do not wish to betray me to prison. I will go, and you can follow me later to the station. There is a train at six o'clock—well, I will leave early in the afternoon. At six o'clock, if you will come to the station, you shall find me there."

Herr Schneider nodded.

"Tat is all right; but I must see you go. You make what excuse you like to Head—tat does not concern me."

"I—I will write to him afterwards," muttered the Housemaster. "It would be too difficult to explain before I leave. I cannot run risks."

"Tat is easy you like. But you will be at te station at six o'clock, or I goes direct to der bolice-station."

"I shall not fail you!"

"Schar gut!"

Herr Schneider left the study. The Housemaster gritted his teeth when he had gone, and a terrible expression came over his face.

"Nein! I will not fail you!" he muttered. "You shall learn how dangerous it is to cross the path of Franz Goetz, head that you are!"

Herr Schneider had a class that afternoon, and apparently the worried state of his mind, caused by the presence of the German spy in the school, reacted on his temper. Herr Schneider's secret was not a pleasant one for him to keep; it worried him, and his temper suffered in consequence. His unfortunate class found it out to their cost. There was exasperation on both sides, and after the lesson the juniors felt almost homicidal.

If they had known what was in the German master's mind, and how steadily the crusty old gentleman was keeping to the path of duty and honour, it would have made them more patient to endure. But although they had seen that there was something "up" between Herr Schneider and the new master, they did not, of course, guess what it was, and had no suspicion of the Herr's worrying thoughts.

Tom Merry looked very thoughtfully out into the quad, where the snow was piled thick. The early winter evening was closing darkly in.

"You fellows game?" asked Tom suddenly.

"If it's anything up against Schneider—yes, rather!" said Jack Blake desperately. "I'm game for anything short of manslaughter."

"It's the other beast!" said Tom. "Carrington." "We're all game; but what's the wheeze?" asked Blake. "You Shell-fish get such rotten ideas."

"Not much worse than the blessed round robins you get up in your study," said Tom indignantly.

"Weally, Tom Mewry—"

"Peace, my infants!" said Kangaroo. "Let's hear what the little game is. Pile in, Tommy. Get it off your little chin!"

"The Beast has gone out," said Tom. "I hear that he's been out nearly all the afternoon, and he hasn't come in yet. What price ambushing him in the lane as he comes back, and giving him a jolly good snowballing? He wouldn't be able to recognise us in the dark."

The juniors looked thoughtful. They were game for almost anything; but ambushing and snowballing a Housemaster was a "big order."

"It would be safe as houses," argued Tom; "and even if it wasn't, we don't mind a licking. Carrington can't be much rougher on us than he is already. He—"

"Cave!" murmured Blake.

Herr Schneider was coming down the passage. The

German had his greatcoat on, and a thick muffler round his neck, and his hat in his hand. He was evidently going out. He did not glance at the silent juniors as he passed them. He put on his hat, and strode out into the darkness of the quadrangle.

The juniors exchanged quick glances as the fat figure of the German master disappeared into the winter dusk.

"My hat!" murmured Blake. "There's a chance! We'll make it Schneider instead of the other beast—what?"

"Yaas, watah! We weally cannot afford to lose this opportunity, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "Follow on his track."

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors rushed for their coats and caps at once. Herr Schneider was a much easier customer to tackle than the keen, hard-fisted Housemaster. To follow him down the lane, and make a sudden onslaught in the dark, was as easy as rolling off a form, as Blake put it. At last the obnoxious German was to pay for his sins.

Tom Merry & Co., eight or nine of them, slipped quietly out of the house, and hurried down to the gates. The big, flat footprints of the German master showed up in the snow, even in the dark. The gates were not yet closed, though that would not have stopped the avengers. They scudded out into the road. Tom Merry bent to glance at the snow. The heavy track of the Housemaster led away down the lane towards Rylcombe.

"Come on!" whispered Tom. "Quiet! Not a word!"

"Watah not, deah boys! Old Schneidah is soah to be watty—"

"Shurrup!"

"Weally, Kangaroo—"

"Mum's the word!" said Blake. "Kim on!"

The juniors hurried down the road. The thick, soft snow under their feet deadened every sound, and their footsteps were noiseless. The German master had a good start, but they knew his slow and heavy pace, and they had no doubt of overtaking him before he was a third of the way to the village.

"Look out!" murmured Blake. "I spot him!"

The juniors slackened down. They were in the darkest part of the lane, where big trees shadowed the narrow road. Dimly ahead of them they made out a portly figure. It had stopped. The German master was standing in the road, and the juniors wondered why he had halted. From the silence of the dusk a voice came to their ears.

"Ach! You meet me here denn, and not at te station!"

It was Herr Schneider's voice. And the juniors started as they heard "Mr. Carrington's" voice reply:

"Yes, I am here to meet you, Herr Schneider!"

Tom Merry & Co. scarcely breathed. They were quite close to the speakers, but invisible in the thick shadows of the trees, and noiseless on the carpet of snow. The thought came into their minds at once to "kill two birds with one stone." A sudden smashing volley at their two obnoxious enemies, and a rapid retreat before they could be spotted—nothing could be simpler. Silently they stooped to scoop up handfuls of snow.

But they stopped, petrified, as Herr Schneider spoke again. The half-gathered snow dropped from their hands, and they wondered whether they were dreaming. For this is what they heard Herr Schneider say:

"Good! Gum mit me, Franz Goetz!"

CHAPTER 14.

Laid by the Heels.

FRANZ GOETZ!

The name struck the juniors like a bullet. They knew it well enough—the name of the German spy who was being hunted far and wide by the police. It was in all the newspapers.

They were almost stunned. They could not think; they could only stand amazed, hardly breathing.

The Housemaster uttered a low, fierce exclamation.

"That name again! Will you take care?"

"I will not take care!" said Herr Schneider stolidly. "I have told you blain tat unless you go I will giff you up to te police. You promise to meet me at te station to take te train, and you gum here instead. Vy for is tat!"

"One last word with you," said the Housemaster. "I am doing my duty. It is your duty, as a German, to help me. Will you think once more?"

"I have tink enough. I tink tat perhaps it is my chooty to giff you up mitout giving you chance to get away; but tat I will not do. But to geeep your secret, and help you to betray te peoples tat treat you as friend, tat is not work for an honest man. All tat I have said to you. I say him again. You are a scoundrel, Franz Goetz; and if you go not, I have no mercy on you!"

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A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The juniors listened, stupefied.

"So?" said the Housemaster. "Well, old fool, understand then—I will not go! I shall remain! It is you who will go! You, old fool and dotard that you are—you thought that I should obey your orders! Bah! You shall lie a prisoner in a cell with Carrington till it suits me to let you free." He gave a sudden sharp whistle, and there was a rustle in the hedge close to the German master. A burly figure sprang out.

Herr Schneider backed away in alarm. He understood now. He had been ambushed in the dark and lonely lane, and he was to be seized and kidnapped, as the Australian master had been. He had fallen blindly into the trap set for him by the spy.

"Ach!" he gasped. "Scoundrel tat you are—"
"Fool!" said Goetz bitterly. "Did you think I should wait for the blow to fall?" He dropped into German. "Dummkopf! This morning I want to arrange with my comrades, and this is the result. Seize the old fool!"

Herr Schneider raised his umbrella as the two men rushed on him. But the fat old gentleman was down in a twinkling, and a hand was clapped over his mouth.

Tom Merry & Co. had remained rooted to the ground, overcome with amazement. That the new Housemaster was the German spy Goetz—that the real Mr. Carrington was a kidnapped prisoner, and the spy had come to St. Jim's under his name, in his place—it was not easy to grasp it at once. They were dumbfounded.

But as the fat old gentleman struggled helplessly in the snow, under his two assailants, they woke up, as it were.

"Come on!" panted Tom Merry.
The juniors did not hesitate for a second.

They had come there to snowball the German master; but in the hour of his peril they forgot all about lines and licks, and thought only of rushing to the rescue.

Herr Schneider might be a beast in one way, but he was a real brick in another; and, besides that, the thought of capturing the German spy who had baffled the police for so long spurred on the juniors.

Without an instant's hesitation, and not even thinking of the danger of tackling two desperate rascals, they rushed forward. The attack was a complete surprise.

Karl was kneeling on the feebly struggling German master, and Franz Goetz was dragging his hands together, to snap on a pair of handcuffs, while Karl held his hand over Herr Schneider's mouth to stifle his cries.

The juniors burst on them like a thunderbolt. Tom Merry's right fist, clenched and as hard as iron, caught Franz Goetz under the left ear, and hurled him half-stunned into the snow. Before he could even realize what was happening, Blake and Lowther and Manners were upon him, grabbing his wrists, and kneeling on him.

The other rascal jumped up, with a gasping exclamation in German; but as he did so Kangaroo smote him full between the eyes, and Herries delivered a blow at the same moment which took effect on the side of his jaw. Arthur Augustus, hitting out wildly in the gloom, succeeded in flooring Digby. But the burly Karl went down under those two blows, and the juniors piled on him instantly.

"Hold them!" panted Tom Merry, laying hold of Karl, too.

"Bai Jove! I've floozed one of the wottahs—"
"Ow!" groaned Digby. "Ow! You idiot!"
"Bai Jove! Surely— Bai Jove, I'm aw'd'y sowwy, Dig, old man!"

"Pile in, you fathead, and don't jaw!" yelled Lowther.
"Lend us a hand with this beast."

"Yaas, wathah!"
Franz Goetz was struggling desperately to get at a weapon. But he had no chance. His wrists were firmly held, and a knee in the pit of his stomach drove all the breath out of him. Karl was equally helpless underneath three sturdy fellows, who were not at all particular whether they hurt him or not. As a matter of fact, they did hurt him.

Herr Schneider sat up dazedly in the snow, and groped in a blind way for his spectacles.

"Ach! Ach! Ach! Mein Gott und Himmel!" stammered Herr Schneider. "Vat und who was tat! Ach! Is tat you, Tom Merry! Ach! Mein Gott! Oh, tat scoundrel! Ach!"

"Got the cads!" said Tom Merry, triumphantly. "My only hat!—What a capture! Won't this make the New House boundaries look green?"

"Hurrah!" panted Blake.
"Hold him! Hold tat scoundrel, mein poyas! Tat is Franz Goetz te spy! Hold him und gall der bolice!"

"You bet!" chuckled Kangaroo.
"Yaas, wathah, sir!"

Tom Merry had heard the clink of the handcuffs as Goetz dropped them when he fell. He groped in the snow for them and found them.

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"Shove his wrists together!" he said. "He had these giddy bracelets for poor old Schneider! They will suit him a treat."

"What ho!"
"Click!"

The handcuffs fastened on the wrists of Franz Goetz. The rascal gave a groan of despair as he felt the contact of the cold steel. It was all up with him now, with a vengeance.

"We must tie this other beast up with something," said Kangaroo. "He is still wriggling, though I hit him as hard as I can every time he wriggles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Gussy's necktie will do," chuckled Blake. The juniors were in high spirits now. They even felt cordial towards Herr Schneider.

"Weally, Blake—"
"Any old thing will do," grinned Tom Merry. "Only make sure of the cads."

The juniors made sure of them. With handkerchiefs, bits of whipcord, and neckties, they bound the two rascals till they got only could not move, but found some difficulty in breathing. They made assurance doubly sure.

Herr Schneider looked on grimly. When the juniors had finished, they rose breathless, regarding their captures with triumph.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "This is bettah than snowballin' old—ahem!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've quite barked my knuckles, deah boys—"
"I know you've barked my chin," groaned Digby.
"That was a vewy unfortunate accident, deah boy—"

"Berrrrr!" said Dig.
"Mein poyas!" said Herr Schneider. His voice trembled a little. "Mein poyas! I tank you for vat you have done. You save me from something. Tat man is a vicked spy. He gum to school mit anoder man's name, and tat odder man he is a brisconer severeres. But, mein tear poyas, you do not tink tat I have anything to do mit tat rascality—hein? You do not tink tat your old master is not an honest man?"

"That's all right, sir," said Tom Merry. "We heard what you were saying to the rotter, sir. We all know you are straight, sir."

"Yaas, wathah, sir, and—and undah the circe, sir, I apologise for havin' been powwaps a twiffle disrespeckful yestehday, sir. I wegard you as a brwick, sir."

"It is I tat am sorry," said Herr Schneider. "I have been cross in to temper mit you, and you have gum to mein rescue like ferry goot poyas after. I shall nefer forget dis, I tells you. Nefer after."

Franz Goetz raised his aching head, and began to speak rapidly in German. The juniors understood enough to know that he was making a desperate appeal to Herr Schneider. He was not allowed to proceed. Kangaroo unceremoniously shored a handful of snow into his mouth, and the rascal choked and spluttered.

"Nuff said, my peppin!" remarked Kangaroo. "This is where you take a back seat. The rotter—didn't I tell you all along, you fellows, that this fellow couldn't possibly be a genuine Australian!"

"Not that I remember!" chuckled Tom Merry.
"As a mattah of fact, now I come to welect on it, I had wathah a sushish—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, you fellows—"

"Now we've got to get the rotters to the police-station," said Tom Merry. "Herr Schneider can come and explain."

"Ja wobl!" said Herr Schneider.
"They can't walk like that," said Blake thoughtfully, "and I'm jolly well not going to carry a German spy. Loosen their hoots a bit and let 'em hobble. Not too much."

The legs of the two Germans had been tied with great care. The bonds were loosened a little, so that they could stumble along, but without any chance of bolting. In a sort of triumphant procession, Tom Merry & Co. marched them to the police-station in Rylcombe. Franz Goetz did not utter a word more. His hard face was pale with despair, and his comrade was sunk in a sullen silence. Their rascally game was up, and it only remained for them now to pay the penalty.

CHAPTER 15.

The Genuine Mr. Carrington.

LATER that evening, Figgins & Co. of the New House burst into Study No. 6 in wild excitement. Blake & Co. and the Terrible Three were there, supping cheerfully, very pleased indeed with themselves and things generally.

"Is it true?" roared Figgins.

"Tell us all about it!" gasped Kerr.
 "Give us the whole giddy history!" shouted Fatty Wynn.
 "Oh, there's not much!" said Tom Merry airily. "We've just captured a couple of German spies, you know—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Sort of thing you do every other day—what!" snorted Figgins. "Come off! Tell us all about it, and none of your School House swank."

Tom Merry laughed, and told Figgins all about it. The New House trio listened with deep interest, Fatty Wynn absent-mindedly helping himself to the tarts.

"Well, my hat!" said Figgins. "That takes the cake! That does really prance off with the giddy Peck Frean. How you School House kids could handle a job like that, beats me."

"Weally, Figgins—"
 "Jolly lucky you weren't hurt," said Figgins. "Only Dig's got any honourable scars to show—"

Dig granted as he passed his hand over a lump on his chin.
 "That was Gussy!" he growled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Oh, weally, Dig, accidents will happen, you know—"

"They will—when you're about," agreed Figgins. "Well, I must say you School House kids have played up jolly well for once. And that rotter wasn't Carrington at all—and the genuine Cornstalk is shut up somewhere—what?"

"That's it," said Tom Merry. "Of course, he'll be found soon."

"Ah! Pity it wasn't us on the spot!" said Figgins, shaking his head. "You kids have done well—very well indeed, considering—but we—"

"Why, you fathead, what could you have done better!" demanded Blake wrathfully.

"Oh, we should have found Carrington, too, and brought him home!" said Figgins airily. "We shouldn't have left a job half-done like this. Still, I admit you kids have done jolly well—for School House kids. I own that."

There was some excitement in Study No. 6 for the next few minutes, while Figgins & Co. were hurled forth on their necks.

Then Tom Merry & Co. finished their supper with great satisfaction.

Mr. Carrington—the genuine article, as Blake expressed it—appeared at St. Jim's the next day. Franz Goetz, in the hands of the police, had kept a sullen silence; but his confederate had acted more wisely, and had revealed where the Australian gentleman was imprisoned. A prompt visit of the police to the lonely house on the moor followed, and another German was captured there, and the kidnapped master was released.

Mr. Carrington looked very pale and worn when he came to the school, but he replied with a kind smile to the enthusiastic greeting of the St. Jim's fellows, and Tom Merry & Co. saw at once that he was, as Tom said, the "right sort." The Australian gentleman smiled still more when Kangaroo mentioned the famous volume "On the Extraordinary Languages of the Cannibal Islands, with a Dissertation on the Ancient Dialects of the Maoris."

Kangaroo had lost his slip of paper, and he didn't remember the title quite correctly. However, the gentleman from Melbourne smiled good-humouredly. Kangaroo confided to the juniors afterwards that Carrington was a first-class brick—and nothing would convince Kangy that he hadn't had a suspicion all along that Franz Goetz wasn't a genuine Australian.

Tom Merry & Co., when they had had a little more experience of Mr. Carrington, fully subscribed to Kangaroo's declaration that he was a brick. And the juniors agreed that Herr Schneider was a brick, too. The old Herr did not forget the service the juniors had rendered him, and it made a big difference to his temper—and even when news came of German defeats at the front the Herr did his best to be reasonable—and the German class did their best to be patient with him—so that, upon the whole, matters were very much improved since the time of Herr Schneider's Secret.

THE END.

(Another grand tale of the chums of St. Jim's will be published in next Wednesday's "GEM" Library. Order in advance at your newsagents', and make sure of getting it!)

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SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.

Bob Hall, a fine, strapping, young fellow, succeeds in joining a famous hussar regiment known as the Die Hards, where he incurs the enmity of Private Cole, who makes a cowardly attempt on Bob's life. Captain Lascelles, a no-or-do-well cousin of Bob's, discovers the attempt, and uses his knowledge to make Cole do Bob an injury. Lascelles accuses his cousin of stealing a diamond ring, and also insults his dead father. Bob forthwith knocks the officer down, but escapes punishment owing to the adjutant's intervention. Alf Payne, a new recruit, surprises everybody by claiming Lascelles as an old friend. Bob suspects that his cousin is in the man's power, and he determines to find a solution to the mystery. The Die Hards are ordered to Ireland, and on the voyage Bob learns that Lascelles is indeed in Alf Payne's power, and that he is himself connected with the affair in some way. When the regiment reach Dublin a ball is held. Bob Hall is on guard, and is recognised by an old gentleman, but Lascelles defames Bob's character, and leads the gentleman away. Suddenly, when the ball is at its height, fire breaks out, and the music ceases abruptly.

(Now go on with the story.)

The Hero of the Hour.

A sword clanked to the ground, a tall, strong figure sprang forward and hewed its way through the rush of panic-stricken fugitives. Men were hurled aside by those muscular arms, and tattered to save themselves from falling.

Like a wedge driven into the hard wood, the dense throng parted against its will, forced backwards and aside, and Bob Hall, with face grim and eyes flashing, dashed to the fire-escape, seized a tiger-skin, cast it round a lady, and bore her to the floor. Her magnificent ball-dress was ablaze, and the lad unhesitatingly plunged his hands into the flames as, enveloping her in the costly rug, he quenched the fire without thought of his own danger.

Next moment he had lifted her in his strong arms, and stood, cool and impassive, facing Lascelles.

"I'm only a trooper, and I have not the honour of knowing this lady," the lad said, simply and firmly. "You were her partner in the dance, and I saw you hesitate and turn livid when you knew the greatness of her peril. To-night you have traduced me cruelly, and I have been the subject of scorn and contempt at the hands of your aristocratic friends. They can judge now between the officer and the trooper—between one who has proved himself a coward, and one who can boast that at least he is a man."

A hand fell on Bob's shoulder, and, turning slightly, the lad saw that he was face to face with the Viceroy, whose breast glittered with orders.

"Unwittingly we have wronged you, and willingly we make atonement," the Viceroy said, with a ring in his resonant voice that gripped the heartstrings of all who heard. "Yours is the honour of saving this lady's life, let yours also be the happiness of restoring her to her father. Lord John, your child, Lady Miriam, has fainted, but I think she is but slightly injured. This gallant hussar will carry her to her carriage. There is no gentleman in this room who will grudge him a privilege he has so well deserved."

As he spoke, the Viceroy raised his hand to his forehead in a parting salute, and it was down a lane-way of officers, each

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following the example of the representative of the King, that Bob clanked out of St. Patrick's Hall with the earl's daughter in his arms, bashfully but proudly, like the hero that he was.

Down the long stairway and across the wide hall, past scores of astonished flunkies, and out into the square, where his comrades stood on duty, Bob strode along, followed by the old earl.

"The Earl of Dalkey's carriage!" a commissionaire shouted.

A superb landau, drawn by two magnificent bays, rolled up to the porch. The footman jumped to the ground, opened the door, and stood rigid. Bob laid Lady Miriam on the cushioned seat, and stood to one side. Lord Dalkey held out his hand.

"I cannot thank you enough!" the old gentleman began agitatedly. "You've saved my daughter's life, and I shall be always in your debt. I must drive home at once and get a doctor; but I'd like you to promise first that you'll call on me to-morrow. Twelve o'clock—will that suit?"

"I'll be at your house at that hour," Bob replied smilingly. "I'm glad I was able to befriend the lady. I don't deserve any thanks for that, though, for, of course, it's only what any decent chap would have done."

"No, no! Few would have shown such presence of mind," the old earl insisted tremulously. "If only I was not so upset I might be able to thank you better, but this terrible accident has so unnerved me that—that—"

The lad took the old gentleman by the arm.

"Get into the carriage, and drive home and rest yourself, sir," he suggested kindly. "To-morrow you'll be all right again, and so will Lady Miriam, too, I'm sure. That's better! Good-night—good-night!"

The lad closed the door, the footman jumped up on this box, the horses sprang forward, and, with a wave of his hand in adieu, Bob wheeled round to re-enter the Castle.

Half a dozen of his chums in the Die Hards were leaning against the wall, their eyes wide open, their cheeks bulging out with astonishment, their carbines grasped anyhow, and their whole appearance testifying to amazement and an utter disregard of discipline.

"Well, I'm blowed!" a familiar voice gasped. "Private Hall, eh? Hobnobbing with dukes and earls! Don't presume to speak to him, chaps. His Excellency the Viceroy of Ireland is a-waitin' for him. Present arms! Ye never know yer luck. Mebbe he'll put in a good word for us."

"That you, Dent, you silly old fossil!" Bob chuckled. "Just stow your row, or else—"

The lad turned, as he heard an officer's voice.

"Hallo, Hall! What's the meaning of all this? Everybody is talking about you, and all the ladies!"

Haines shook his head wagglily.

"You weren't in the ball-room just now, sir!" Bob inquired.

"No, worse luck. I'm on duty here, and I can't get up there. Stand to attention!" he rapped out, as a dozen eager faces bent forward to listen to the conversation. "What happened, though? I was never so amazed in my life as when I saw you strolling down the stairs like a knight of olden times, rescuing—"

"Lady Miriam's dress caught fire, and I put it out, and I was told to carry her to her carriage," Bob explained hur-

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riedly. "They're making no end of a bother about nothing, sir. If you'd put me on duty here I'd be awfully obliged. I don't want to go back and have to stand there and—"

"I know. The hero of the night sort of business. I'm a bit bashful myself, and I sympathise with you." Haines grinned. "Still, when a chap will go and rescue fair dames from danger and— Up you go again, Hall! Bear your blushing honours as best you can."

"Let Dent take my place, sir. He's cold standing out here, and—"

"No, no!" Dent growled, whilst his chums chuckled heartily. "I'm as warm as toast. I'm—"

"Haines!" Lascelles, his face black as thunder, was striding across the hall. Being on duty, Haines turned around and saluted the captain.

"Send Private Hall home. He's not wanted here any more."

Lascelles shot a glance full of venom at Bob as he spoke. Then, crossing to the cloak-room, the captain donned his cloak, hailed an outside car, and drove rapidly away.

Delighted to be released from duty, Bob walked down the line of his chums, playfully advising them to keep warm, and to alter the colour of their nasal organs, which had become too blue to look respectable.

Dodging a blow from Dent, and thereby running against Hesty, who surreptitiously gave him a hearty thump, the lad, with a chuckle of glee, tramped out into Dame Street, and hurried back to barracks.

He tumbled into his bunk; but, far from going to sleep, he lay staring, wide-eyed, in the dark. The events of the evening, the strange remarks that Lord Dalkey had made, Lascelles' conduct, all kept him wide awake, puzzling out many things which had only occurred to him since he had joined the Die Harde.

That there was some mystery in which he was concerned, and which Lascelles wished to keep hidden, had now become evident. Bob felt he was on the verge of some discovery which probably would alter the whole of his life. Yet there was nothing tangible he was able to grasp. All was vague and misty.

Whatever Fate might have in store, good, at all events, had come out of his gallant conduct at the Castle. This he realised as soon as he awoke next morning after a short and troubled sleep.

His comrades were delighted that one of themselves had shown true grit in a moment of extreme danger and panic; the officers, too, were pleased, and the colonel singled out Bob after parade and warmly congratulated him.

The lad was once again in favour with his superiors and more popular than ever with his chums. From that day on he was one of the leading men amongst the rank-and-file, and all his troubles and difficulties as a recruit were over once for all.

That in itself was a great deal, and Bob, as he left the barracks to pay his visit to Lord Dalkey, smiled grimly, as he looked back on his eventful career from the day, a few months before, when he had enlisted in London.

He had had a full share of hard knocks; there had been much to learn, and many demands on his courage and self-control. But by grit and common-sense he had come through the ordeal with flying colours. He now knew his duty as a soldier, and promotion lay ahead.

Looking back on the past, he felt delighted that he had adopted a military career, and he would have gladly gone through all he had experienced once again sooner than relinquish the life. Every muscle in his body tingled with health, and his heart beat high with a proud hope that he had never known in the old days. He felt he could face anything.

He walked along the quays, crossed the river, passed through the broad streets of Dublin, and entered its most fashionable square. There a policeman readily pointed out the residence of the Earl of Dalkey. Bob mounted the steps, and knocked at the door.

The flunkey who opened it asked no questions. Beckoning to the lad to enter, after one glance at his uniform, he led the way to a comfortable library, and bade Bob take a seat.

A few seconds later there was a light step outside, and Lady Miriam, flushed and happy, appeared, holding out her hand in welcome.

"Father will be here in a moment, and I'm glad of this chance to thank you for saving my life so gallantly," she began eagerly. "I was so terrified that I fainted away, which, of course, was very silly, and if— But what are you looking at? Oh, that picture! Do you know—?"

She stopped, and looked curiously at the lad. Around the room were several magnificent oil paintings, and immediately on entering, Bob's attention had been arrested by a portrait from which he had been unable to withdraw his gaze. Some-

how the face stirred him greatly; old times came back as he gazed. Wonderingly he had kept his eyes on the picture whilst he was carried back to scenes of the country, and a splendid park, and a broad, winding river, and a noble mansion, of which he often dreamt, and yet which he could not recall.

He started as Lady Miriam stopped, and he made haste to answer her.

"I was looking at the painting over there," he stammered. "I'm awfully sorry if— Please don't bother to thank me about last night. I'm glad, though, to see that you're none the worse for your accident."

"But if it wasn't for you I'm afraid I'd be in a very bad way indeed," Lady Miriam persisted, whilst Bob hoped there'd be no more said about the matter. "You were so— Ah, here's father! He'll thank you for me."

The earl had crossed the threshold, and now he shook hands very cordially with Bob.

"My daughter is quite well, I'm glad to say, and once again I thank you, Hall!" he began heartily. "If ever I can be of any assistance, be sure and— Oh, by the way, I don't want to seem rude, but I should much like if you'd tell me something about yourself. One of my best friends was of your name; that's his portrait yonder."

And the old gentleman pointed to the very oil painting at which the lad had been gazing so intently.

"I don't know very much about my family," Bob admitted ruefully. "We had hard times, and my father and mother both died when I was quite a kid. I had to get on the best way I could ever since then. Who was that gentleman, though, sir? I fancy I've seen his face somewhere before, in a picture, I suppose."

"Alec Hall was his name, and he was the finest soldier that ever wore uniform," the earl explained. "He and I were lads together, and for years afterwards we were like brothers. He went to India, and died there—at least, he disappeared after a scrap with the natives in one of our tribal wars, and he was never heard of since then. When I saw you last night it seemed to me as if my old friend Alec Hall had come to life again. I was never so surprised in all my— Hallo! Here's Lascelles! How do, my boy? Now, you can help us, I feel sure. Do you think that Hall yonder can be possibly be any relation to his namesake in the portrait yonder? If so—"

Lascelles' face was like a mask as he strode into the room. He looked coldly at Bob, who instinctively drew himself to attention, and then he gazed long and earnestly at the picture.

"There is a likeness," he admitted critically, "but, still, I don't think that your friend and Hall can be any relation whatever. I didn't expect to see Hall here, and I've just turned in myself to inquire for Lady Miriam. It's a pleasure to find that she's not laid up as a result of my carelessness. I was pushed away from her when the panic began, and—"

"Oh, don't bother about that!" the earl cut in quickly. "All's well that ends well, and we have known you too long, my dear fellow, to think anything but what's good of you. But about that picture. I'd like much to clear up the doubt I have in my mind. I can't help thinking that—"

"Why not ask your solicitor, Herbert Betts?" Lascelles interjected quickly. "He knew more about your old friend than anyone else, so you've often told me. Yes, that's about the best thing you can do. Let Betts see the private and make full inquiries. These lawyer chaps are much better at ferreting out a mystery than your or I, Lord John. He, ha, ha! It's more in their line, and once they get on the trail they never leave off—not likely!"

"A capital suggestion!" the old earl cried gleefully. "I'll see Betts before the day is out. You say you want to send Hall on a message—oh! Oh, all right! I'm dining at your mess next week, and I'll look him up then. Good-bye for the present, my lad! Don't forget that I am your friend from this hour. If ever I can help you, I shall be always delighted."

Lascelles hurried Bob from the room, and, giving him a letter to deliver to an officer in another barrack, he saw him out of the house before he returned to the library; and Bob, as he strode away, clenched his fists, for the villainous captain's subterfuge had not been lost upon him.

Haines Comes Out Strong.

"Funchestown! Why, that's the greatest race-meeting in Ireland—eh, Hamshaw?" Lieutenant Haines inquired, as he glanced over the top of his paper at the popular adjutant of the Die Harde.

Hamshaw stood up and rested his broad back against the mess-room fireplace.

"Funchestown is known to every sportsman in the Empire," he explained. "It's one of the best steeplechase

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meetings anywhere. Why, there's a regular pilgrimage from England to Dublin every spring to see the Irish Grand National. I wonder, kid, that you never heard of it. Your education has been sadly—

"Yes, I know. No lectures now, though, Taffy; work's over for the day," the subaltern grinned cheekily. "I'm interested in this sporting country, though, and so I'm going to Punchestown. Why, every chap one passes in Grafton Street is talking about it. Dublin is quite the maddest place about horses I ever struck in all my nat'ral."

"We're all going together on the drag, and I suppose we'll find a place for you as a footstool," Hamshaw grinned. "That's the way you'll have to travel, my son, until another youngster comes along from Sandhurst and you go up a peg. Don't worry. We won't spoil—"

Haines was staring vacantly out of the window. "Wild Cat is carrying 12st, 4lb.," he murmured. "Well, what about that?"

"Not much; only I believe I can lick him," Haines replied, with youthful calmness. "Say, Taffy, wouldn't it be a rare joke if the Die Haras pulled off the race?"

"It would be a very excellent piece of fun, truly," Hamshaw assented. "It's very thoughtful of you to interest your noble self in us feeble-minded johnnies, kid. All the same, if I were you, I'd bring my great brain to bear on some other scheme; for the Die Haras can't win this race, as they haven't even entered for it."

"Thanks awfully! You do me proud!" Haines chuckled unblushingly. "Still, if I care to enter a horse on my lonesome, I s'pose I can—eh? Now, you didn't know, did you, that Lascelles has a half-interest in Wild Cat? That's a fact. The more I see of Lascelles the less I like him, but I allow that he's a very artful dog."

Hamshaw's eyes displayed his astonishment.

"I never heard that Lascelles went in for racing!" he cried. "Why—"

"There really are some things that a mere kid can teach a full-blown, domineering taskmaster of an adjutant!"—Haines smiled, addressing the chandler: "What a blessed world it is, after all! Dear me—dear me! Just to think that all you fellows know so little of Lascelles! Tootle round the town, Taffy, and turn in at Sewell's. There you'll hear a few things that will surprise you. But I'm wasting time, I see. I don't s'pose you'll help me."

"Well, you're not going the best way about getting assistance, you cheeky young bouncer!" Hamshaw grinned as he eyed his young subaltern, for whom deep down in his heart he held a great liking. "You're up to one of your usual tricks, I fancy. If it's not altogether too bad, I don't mind it—"

"It's this way," Haines chuckled, his bright face lighting up with merriment. "I've got a horse that I think will beat Wild Cat. Now, don't look so awfully sick, but just listen quietly. I've often told you of Firebrace, haven't I?"

"Yes. The good 'un you hunted in the shires last time you were on furlough. Your gov'nor thinks a lot of him, you know."

"Rather! He won the Point-to-Point race. He's Irish bred, a splendid jumper, and the dad says he's too fast for hunting, so he's stopped that. Oughtn't Firebrace to have a chance, don't you think?"

"Why, certainly. But Firebrace ain't here, sonny, and you've got no one to ride him, and—"

"Well, of course, if you say so, it must be all right," Haines argued derisively. "Only, Taffy, you're just a triffo out. Firebrace is in Dublin, and he's used to Irish fences, seeing as how he was broken in with the Meath hounds, and I have got someone to ride him. Firebrace belongs to me now, for the gov'nor has made me a present of him, and if the horse with some good training and good hands is not fit to go the Punchestown course, then, Taffy, I'd feel obliged if you'd kindly put me in a packing-case and send me straight home."

Hamshaw whistled.

"He's bit!" Haines laughed gleefully. "Our noble adjutant has taken on!"

"What do you want me to do?" Hamshaw inquired, with a sudden interest. "This idea of yours is not half bad. I'm into it, my lad, like a shot!"

"There'll be trouble if I run Firebrace. I'm sure of that," Haines explained. "Never mind how I got the information; but I'm only saying what I know to be the case. So I want you to help me with the horse and with Bob Hall. When Lascelles hears that Firebrace is in the running he's bound to turn nasty."

"Then is young Hall to ride Firebrace for you?"

"Mean to ask him. He's just the weight, and he's better on a horse than he knows himself. But he, the riding-master, thinks a lot of him. Besides, Hall has lots of pluck, and, one way and another, he'll be tried to the pin of his collar. I want a chap, too, whom I can trust."

"Then you've hit on the right man," Hamshaw agreed cordially. "All right, kid, we'll keep the game dark as long as we can, and we'll make a move at once. Where's Firebrace, by the way? We must make sure he's not doctored; and the sooner you get hold of Hall, too, the better."

"Then let's dig him out. You back me up if he finks the job, though that's not likely. We must have our spins on the quiet. So altogether, old chap, you see now that I can't work this job single-handed, so I rely on you to help me."

"I'll do all I know." The big adjutant grinned heartily. "We'll pull the deal off together, or it'll go hard with us. I'm in it, up to the neck."

The news, which could not long be concealed, that Firebrace, the property of Lieutenant Haines, of the Die Haras, had been entered for the Irish Grand National, created an enormous stir in military circles, though the public at large was not influenced by the fact. Wild Cat was the favourite, Firebrace was unknown, and Irishmen merely regarded the latter's entrance in the list of starters as a sportsmanlike action on the part of a regiment which had already become highly popular amongst all classes in Dublin.

Amongst the officers and men in the Die Haras itself the event was hailed with unbounded enthusiasm. Haines was pestered with questions, and he had to submit to a great deal of chaff, which, as usual, he accepted with good-natured indifference. He kept his own counsel, though, declining to say where his horse was being stabled, or who was to be his jockey; and as the days went on and the great race drew near, the mystery enshrouding Firebrace caused a strange feeling of perplexity, and gave rise to much speculation.

Then Firebrace began to be quoted in the betting, and rose steadily from long odds to second favourite. His name

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at once was on everyone's lips, in the street, in the Four Courts, in the clubs; men spoke of the mysterious animal of whom none knew anything, not even where he was being trained. Paragraphs appeared in the papers, Haines was surrounded by reporters whenever he crossed the barrack gates; gradually the excitement and curiosity rose to fever point. Yet he still held his tongue, only affirming confidently that his horse would run, and that he felt certain that the animal would win.

During these days Bob, with a twinkle in his eye, would sit amongst his chums listening silently to their speculations about Haines, his horse, and the unknown jockey. The lad could have told them all they longed to know had he so wished, for he had readily agreed to ride the horse. He was hand and glove with Haines and Hamshaw in its preparation for the race, and every night when his comrades were sleeping he used to steal from his bunk, meet the two officers outside the barracks, drive with them to Chapelizod, and there put Firebrace through his spins with the first grey streaks of morning.

But there was one man in the regiment to whom the news of a fresh competitor in the race caused a terror that was akin to despair. As Haines had discovered, Lascelles was part owner of Wild Cat, but the subaltern did not know how deeply the villain was involved, and how his prosperity or ruin depended on the result of the contest. If Wild Cat won, then Lascelles could pay off the moneylenders, and start again with several thousands to the good; if the animal lost, the scoundrel's creditors would swoop down on him, and he would be bankrupt and disgraced. Lascelles was not the man, however, to take defeat quietly; in the rage and bitterness which consumed his evil heart he resolved to dare everything rather than suffer exposure.

When his comrades were otherwise engaged he slipped away; his brow was dark, and his swarthy face full of a terrible vengeance, as, unseen by all, he changed into mufti, passed out into the streets, hailed an outside car, and was rapidly driven away.

Alighting at O'Connell Bridge, he strode down to the General Post Office, crossed into Henry Street, and, taking several turnings, he at last reached a small public-house in a low neighbourhood, and disappeared between its swinging doors. The bar was empty, except for one individual, dressed in sooty black, whose small, watery eyes blinked a glance of recognition as he recognised the fashionable scoundrel.

"What news?" Lascelles inquired hoarsely. "Have you heard anything useful yet? Every moment now is precious."

His disreputable companion chuckled exultingly. "My boss—Mr. Betts—is on your side," he replied, with a leer. "He'll stick to you if you agree to his terms. Lord Dalkey was with him to-day about that young Hall, but nothing need come out if you pay Betts well. I shall want a bit myself, too, but I don't s'pose you'll mind that, either. Five thousand a year is a big figure, mister, and it's worth paying for."

"Did Betts instruct you to tell me this?"

"He as good as said so, but we lawyers ain't fools; we don't run our heads into a noose. A wink from Betts is enough for me, and I know what he means. I haven't worked for him for twenty years for nothing."

The sooty law clerk grinned again as he spoke. "How will he manage about Hall?"

"You can leave that to us. Hall will never know."

"And I'll be blackmailed for ever—no, no!" Lascelles scoffed. "I know what villainy you rogues can practise when you get a man in your clutches. No, Mr. Whitty, that's not good enough for me! I'll tell you what I'll do, though."

—and the scoundrel lowered his voice to a tense whisper— "I'll put you in the way of dealing with young Hall once and for all. You have your acquaintances who will gladly do the job for you for a trifle, and when it's over I'll pay you a thousand pounds. There's no help for it; nothing less will do. Is that a bargain? If not, I'm done with you for ever."

The gin-sodden clerk sat tremulously for some seconds, his lips twitching, and his bleary eyes dimly glistening with greed. Then he had a dirty, shaking hand on Lascelles' immaculate coat-sleeve.

"It's a bargain!" he hissed. "I'll see that you're troubled no more by the puppy if you tell me where he is."

"He's at Chapelizod," Lascelles whispered back. "I know more than that fool Haines fancies. The job must be done, though, before the race is run, so look sharp and strike while you can."

A Villainous Deed.

The night was dark, and a mist was falling. Down below where he sat Bob Hall could hear the rippling of the River Liffey as it rolled towards the Salmon Leap. Behind him were the Dublin mountains, now blotted from view; around was the great silence of the country, and away to the right

was the murky sky lit up into a yellow haze where Dublin City shot the glare of myriad lamps into the vaulted dome above.

So far all had gone well. Firebrace had come on splendidly, his turn for speed was capital, he could jump any fence he was put at, and his staying powers had been fully proved to Bob's and Haines' satisfaction. There was nothing wrong with the horse, and the lad had got on such good terms with him that he felt sure he would carry him first past the post. Yes, the outlook was more than hopeful. Thinking for the hundredth time over the coming contest, Bob became convinced that, barring accidents, he was bound to win.

He heard a footstep approaching, and, expecting a visit from Haines and Hamshaw, he started to his feet. 'Out of the gloom came a wisened figure, with battered bowler-hat and sooty clothes, and the lad instinctively got on his guard as the forbidding-looking creature approached.

"Hallo! What do you want here?" the lad rapped out, with military directness.

"Is that Mr. Robert Hall?"

"Yes, I'm Bob Hall. Who are you, though, that you know my name?"

The man touched his hat with servile humility. "Beg pardon, sir!" he began. "I've come a long way to see you, and—"

"How did you know I was here?"

"I was up at the barracks, and Lieutenant Haines told me where I'd find you. I've come from Mr. Betts, the lawyer, as had an interview with Lord Dalkey about you. I'm clerk to Mr. Betts, and he'd be glad if you'd arrange to see him first thing to-morrow morning."

Bob started, and looked suspiciously for a moment at the disreputable individual who spoke. The lad stepped forward, and looked down at the pinched, sallow face of the shifty-looking clerk.

"Do you know what Mr. Betts wants with me?" Bob hazarded. "What's your name, by the by?"

The man clutched the lad by the arm.

"I'm Whitty, and it's about the property as is yours by right," the villain croaked, his hand shaking tremulously as he gripped Bob. "Mr. Betts knew your father; he knows as Captain Lascelles is your cousin. He can prove—"

"What can he prove?" Bob cried, carried away with excitement.

"Easy, there, easy!" Whitty croaked, drawing Bob after him, as he pretended to stumble in a cart-ruck. "I'm not supposed to know. I'm only a poor clerk, and it's as much as my place is worth to—"

"Don't bother about that!" the lad cut in eagerly. "You may bet your life I won't split on you. Why, man, if what you say is true, if I am entitled to a pot of money, and if through you and Mr. Betts I come into my own, the first thing I'd do, of course, would be to reward you handsomely. I'd owe you—"

Bob stopped abruptly in his generous speech, and even as he turned his head he caught a look full of sinister meaning in the treacherous villain's face. Firebrace was snorting and plunging in his stall, and the lad, astonished and somewhat alarmed, started to rush back. To his amazement, the disreputable clerk clutched him the more tightly.

"Let me go!" the lad cried angrily.

Whitty gave a loud yell as he struggled fiercely to retain his hold on the lad, whose passion was quickly rising, and, as if in answer to the scoundrel's cry, two burly ruffians crept forward from the shadow of the stable, into which they had slipped, and flung themselves on Bob.

He was borne backwards, staggering desperately in his efforts to keep his footing. Roughly he was flung to the ground, a rude gag was thrust into his mouth, his hands and legs were quickly pinioned, and, without a word, he was again lifted up, and hurriedly borne down a sloping bank to the water's edge.

Splash!

Bound and helpless, the lad disappeared into the river, and was swiftly borne away on the strong current. He struggled to save himself. In vain—in vain! The icy water swept mercilessly over his head; his clothes, heavy with moisture, dragged him deeper and deeper; his struggles, his kicks and plunges, his frenzied, frantic efforts to burst the thongs that gripped his wrists, only served the more to keep him from the surface.

There was the roar of a gale in his ears, his head throbbled to bursting point, his senses seemed slipping away, strange, fantastic figures danced in a red glare before his eyes. Far away he heard the hoarse shouts and yells of men, and then consciousness passed from him, and like a lifeless thing he was tossed to and fro in the black, sullen waters of the river.

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THE FIGHT FOR THE CANAL.



"Here they come again, man! Look at them—just food for the guns! It doesn't matter a bit how we mow them down—there are more to come. Friend, it is the side that can stand the waste of living targets that is going to win this war. And the guns they have—why, they are covering Belgium with scrap-iron!"

This is how I addressed my companion, a Belgian officer of engineers, whilst we were watching a fierce engagement between the retiring Belgian Army and the Germans, near the heap of smoking ruins that had once been the town of Ferryse. The little men, after all their weeks of hard fighting, were offering a stubborn resistance to the hordes of the War Lord.

"What are we stuck here for, mon enfant?" asked the Belgian, with the field-glasses to his eyes. "We are doing no good."

"I was wondering the same," I replied, with dour calm. "But your commandant knows what he is doing, we may be sure. When I got the order to bustle over to the help of your fellows, and saw the canal and the river here. I guessed it was a good spot to stand. But I didn't expect to see quite so many of the Germans rolling up. I wish I was there, with a bayonet, instead of here with a spade. I am tired of digging and delving like a mole."

"They are forcing us back! They have won the first line of trenches! They are crossing the canal!" cried his companion. "Nothing living can stand against the rain of fire and steel they are pouring upon us!"

Little by little the brave Belgians, worn by long days of war, were giving way before the storm of shrapnel that the German gunners hurled upon them with mechanical precision. Human bravery was of no effect against that pitiless storm, and so the first lines of the enemy crossed the Yser Canal, singing as they came.

The fierce exclamation that rose to my companion's lips was cut short by the arrival of an orderly, who brought him a summons to the presence of the commandant in charge of that section of the line.

"We have to retire further, corporal," said that officer. "But we must have the position prepared before we move. You shall have all the help you need, but the position must be ready by nightfall."

"It shall be done," I returned, saluting. "More digging," I remarked. "And, with the river and the railway at the back of us, there isn't much choice of ground. But work's the word."

We began at once, to the accompaniment of a scattering fire of long-range German shells. We were all seasoned men, and the fact that as time went on the German fire grew hotter and nearer, did not give us a moment's pause. Even when a huge shell—a "coal-box," as our Tommies have christened them—fell right amongst us and wiped out several men, the sappers did nothing but reverently take the mangled bodies aside and utilise the excavations made by the bursting charge.

So the long lines of new entrenchments grew, and when dusk fell I was supervising the finishing touches to the earthworks that were to shelter the Belgians when the signal was given to retire. The German guns now seemed less active, and I was beginning to think of supper. The position seemed fairly safe, out of the enemy's reach.

And then, when the worn Belgians, under cover of the darkness, stole back to these new lines, came the rude awakening. Scarcely had they time to settle, when a terrific

rain of howitzer shells fell upon them—a veritable hail of shells hung from hidden German "Jack Johnsons." The Germans had somehow got the exact distance to a few inches. The carnage was awful, as the bursting missiles, fired at a flanking angle, swept along the trenches.

Worming my way out of a great heap of soil that a shell had buried me under, I'm afraid I used some very picturesque language indeed.

"Spies!" I muttered disgustedly. "The place is full of the mean skunks! How could they know our range to a nicety like this if there were no trenchery? The next time I do a bit of digging I will take care to mystify the slym Tontons."

Many of my own comrades were killed by the shells, as well as a great number of the Belgians, and there was nothing for it but further retreat. The Allies were quickly up to the railway embankment, and to this they held grimly all the night.

In the morning I was called to a meeting of the general staff. The whole position was precarious in the extreme. A fine, handsome man sat at the head of the rough table, to which I advanced, and he saw that no less a person than King Albert was presiding. This didn't abash yours truly in the least, for his brain was already busy with the glimmerings of an idea that might save the situation.

"Gentlemen," said the King, "we are meeting reversees here because we are overwhelmed by numbers and outclassed by artillery. I am not boasting that we have held the enemy back a long time—but we have; and the nature of the ground has been somewhat in our favour. Now the advantage is on the enemy's side. He has entrenched himself in the dry bed of the Yser Canal, and it is making a splendid base for his guns, as well as a natural fortification. Here is a map of the district. Now, Corporal Charles, as you came to us with some very high qualifications, we are hoping you will be able to advise us. What do you think of the situation?"

"I think it's a deuced awkward position, sire."

"Sacre nom!" cried one of the officers. "We know that. War is all awkward positions. It is our business to get rid of them."

"That's very true," I replied solemnly. "Well, what do you advise?" asked another. "My advice," I remarked, "is for us to have another try to get the canal back; and if some of you will give me a run round in a car, to inspect the ground, I will be much obliged."

"You shall come with me," said King Albert. "And if you have any carpenters or wood-cutters about," I added, moving towards the door, "I'll be glad if you'll send them along to my company as early as you can."

"You want—" someone began. "I want some wooden guns," I replied shortly, as his Majesty and I went out together.

Not even to the King did I divulge all that was in my mind.

During that morning run across the front as near as was, and much nearer, for the car several times ran within the firing zone, I got a good grip of the general position and the lay of the land. The Germans, well entrenched, were resting after their effort of yesterday, preparing for another forward move, and the Belgians were also strictly on the defensive. There was little rifle-firing, little evidence of either force, except the occasional whistle of a great shell.

(Continued on page 111 of cover.)

The hull in the fighting lasted for two days, during which time the Germans were bringing up more guns and men. On the Belgian side, there was a big war going on with the pick and spade, and perhaps in the end these useful weapons would win. I was very busy indeed.

Though I had the King on my side, there were objections from some of the staff.

"What you want to do is very good, corporal," said one officer, "but it is impossible." He tapped the map he held.

"Here," he said, "is the dry canal where the enemy are entrenched, and where they are even now fixing more guns. We cannot move them. Your suggestion of flooding them out is excellent, but it would take three weeks to dig a trench from the river to the canal. We have had not yet three days, and at any time they may advance."

The roar of heavy guns began at that very moment, and a despatch cyclist dashed up. The enemy were renewing their attack; they were getting their heavy howitzers to work.

The officers dispersed to their posts, forgetting me for the time being in the excitement of the fight.

It promised to be a severe struggle. The Belgians were posted in trenches more or less parallel to the dry canal in which the Germans lay, and from which the dreadful artillery fire came. On their left were the Belgian guns, which were worked bravely, but which were soon outclassed and gradually silenced by the heavier weapons of the Huns. On the Belgian right there stretched the straggling positions of our own men, their unfinished work extending from the upper part of the canal towards the shining waters of the River Yser in the distance. If only I could have completed my digging, the waters of the Yser would at that moment have been pouring into the canal. At the most unworked part of my line the black forms of my wooden guns poked into the air in a row.

The group of staff-officers watching the fight were very depressed. Once more they were outraged, overwhelmed by bigger guns and hordes of men.

A couple of German aerial scouts soared overhead, getting the range, and from the row of dummies came several flashes of fire. The officers started.

"What battery is that?" exclaimed one.

"Oh, that is one of the corporal's ideas" answered his nearest companion. "All along the unfinished part of his line of connection he has stuck up those wooden guns to deceive the aimon. He has put a couple of old field-guns amongst them just to make the deception complete. In a few minutes you will see the big German shells dropping that way."

"What good will that do, mon ami?"

"Not much," was the reply. "It may give us a little time, that is all. Between ourselves, I do not think this Britisher is more than a well-meaning fool. There come the shells, and there go his men, you see!"

The Jack Johnsons were at work, the huge shells pitching amongst the dummy guns, falling along the line of the incompleting trench, ploughing up the ground for yards, digging enormous holes in the loose soil. The soldiers retired quickly, in short rushes.

Then I sprinted like blazes along the lines of shell-holes, towards the canal end of them, as the German fire slackened. I disappeared into a trench, then came up, and ran for my life.

There was a tremendous explosion, the earth rose into the air, and the water of the river, which by this time had filled the line of dug ditches and flowed into the deep gaps that had been made by the howitzer fire of the Germans themselves, now rushed through into the dry bed of the canal with irresistible force. Gurgling and splashing, it poured along like a devouring giant seeking its prey. Within a few minutes the guns were silent, and hundreds of startled figures were scrambling from the depths of the canal to escape from the torrent of waters.

"Well, you see, comrades," I explained, "I thought that as we had no time to finish the digging ourselves, it might be a good thing to let the Germans put the last touch upon it themselves. Their Jack Johnson shells are rare good excavators, you know. They couldn't resist popping at my wooden gun, and so they dropped their shells just where I wanted."

"But what were you doing there alone, after the firing?" asked one of the Belgian officers.

"That was just the last bit that had to be broken through," I explained cheerfully. "Fixing the fuse was a job I didn't like to trust to anybody else. And directly that mine blew up, the water began to trickle in on them."

The staff, watching the rushing torrent in the now abandoned canal, laughed.

"Our friend the corporal has his head screwed on the right way, eh?" said they.

THE END.

THIS WEEK'S CHAT.

The Editor's Personal Column.

For Next Wednesday—

"THE RIVAL PATRIOTS!"

By Martin Clifford.

As its title suggests, next week's magnificent, long, complete tale of Tom Merry & Co. deals with the stirring ambition which is roused in many junior breasts to do good for the cause. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy is first in the field with a splendid scheme whereby help can be afforded to the relatives of certain Tommies; but for some time Gussy's generous motives are misunderstood, and his aristocratic form is subjected to much bumping. The desire to be "up and doing" is also very strong in the New House, where the great Figgins gets his mighty brain to work. Many kindly actions are wrought on both sides, and

"THE RIVAL PATRIOTS"

are never given cause to regret their splendid enthusiasm.

MORE ATTACKS ON THE "GEM."

When, a few weeks ago, I printed on this page a letter from one who signed himself the President of the Anti-Gem Society, and proceeded to thank my chums for the splendid way in which they backed up the old paper, I expressed the desire that this unpleasant topic should be closed down for good and all. It appears that I was somewhat premature, for since that time I have received at least half a dozen ill-spelt and ill-written communications from various parts of the country, the writers of which not only endorse Master Carlton's views, but inform me that they also have formed leagues with the avowed intention of doing all they can to injure "The Gem" Library.

Now, I have no wish to transform my Chat Page into a medium for unsavoury subjects, but it is well that all Gemites should be made acquainted with the evil which has sprung up in their midst. Forewarned is forearmed, and I know that if these Anti-Gemites fall foul of any of my staunch supporters they will receive but short shrift. Several of my correspondents have already expressed themselves in decidedly emphatic, if not warlike terms. Moreover, the leaders of these organizations which have waged war upon the old paper had better be wary, for in the event of unfair or inaccurate statements being circulated regarding this journal, they may be called upon to prove their allegations.

It is a matter for regret that certain individuals have no better means of employing their time than by going out of their way to besmear the fair name of a paper like the "Gem" with ill-founded insinuations and venomous slander. My advice to this little army of malcontents is that if they do not like the "Gem" they should leave it alone. I really cannot conceive how any boy can put himself on the offensive against a journal which has done him no harm. It isn't British. And it isn't playing the game.

However, whilst I am on this subject, I might say that the letters sent me by these precious presidents have been far, far outnumbered by letters of a different sort—letters which make me feel proud indeed of such a proof of grand, genuine loyalty towards the good old "Gem."

I suppose I ought really to render thanks to Master Carlton and his satellites for having stirred up the feelings of all true Gemites to such an extent that they are more eager than ever to rally round and stand shoulder to shoulder in defence of the little journal which is second to none in the affections of the youth of Great Britain.

REPLIES IN BRIEF.

"A Very Regular Reader."—The team which did duty for St. Jim's when the school last met Greyfriars was: Wynn; Figgins, Kerr; Dane, Noble, Reilly; Manners, Morry, Talbot, Lowther, Blake. Many thanks for your good wishes.

"Bill Sykes."—I am glad you like the Talbot tales so much. I will see what can be done with regard to the serial you mention.

G. J. Rainey.—I hope you enjoyed the "Gem" and "Magnet" Christmas Numbers. You will see that Levison is reforming.

"Snip."—My apologies for not answering your letter sooner. I hope you have obtained the information you require regarding the London Scottish. Thank you indeed for your expression of goodwill.

THE EDITOR.

A Cash Prize for Every Contributor to this Page.



Our Weekly Prize Page.

LOOK OUT FOR YOUR WINNING STORYETTE.

NOT WHAT SHE MEANT.

A teacher was instructing a class of infants in the Sunday-school, and was letting the children finish her sentences to make sure they understood her meaning.

- "The fool had eyes," she said, "but it couldn't—"
- "See!" shrieked the class.
- "It had ears, but it couldn't—"
- "Hear!" they yelled.
- "It hid lips, but it couldn't—"
- "Speak!" they shouted.
- "It had a nose, but it couldn't—"
- "Wipe it!" howled the whole class.—Sent in by Miss V. Milner, Ilford.

THE FIRST INSTALMENT.

It was a wet, miserable night, and the car was crowded. Suddenly a coin was heard to drop.

- An old man stooped and picked it up.
- "Has anyone lost a sovereign?" he inquired anxiously.
- Nine passengers hurriedly searched their pockets, and one, quicker than the rest, shouted:
- "Yes, I have! Thank you very much."
- "Well, I've found a penny towards it," said the old man.—Sent in by Miss F. Snowball, Cleckheaton.

THOCKING!

The young engaged couple were enjoying themselves in the drawing-room, chaperoned by her small brother.

- Presently he bustled in.
- "Well, what are you two talking so earnestly about?" she asked.
- "We—er—we were discussing our kith and kin, mamma," volunteered the girl.
- "Ma looked doubtful, and then the little brother, anxious to support his sister, exclaimed:
- "Yes, mamma, I heard her. Mr. Jones asked her for a kith, and Sis said 'You-kin.'"—Sent in by S. W. Peters, South Lambeth Road, S.W.

JUST THE AGE.

The report of little Tommy's work for the term was being read by his father, who was none too pleased with it, when little Tommy himself arrived.

- "Tommy," said papa, "I see your work has been very laudably done this term. Do you know that George Washington at your age was at the head of the school?"
- "Yes, papa," replied the boy. "And when he was your age he was President of the United States."—Sent in by G. Carr, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

PUZZLED HIM.

The celebrated soprano was in the middle of her solo, when Johnny, pointing excitedly to the conductor of the orchestra, said:

- "Why does he hit at that woman with his stick?"
- "He is not hitting her," replied his mother. "Keep quiet!"
- "Well, then, what's he hollering for?"—Sent in by Miss Dorothy Wright, Middlesbrough.

BARBARIC.

"No more Germans for me, begorra!" howled Pat, clenching his chin tenderly. "I've just had a shave in that villain Schmidt's place, and, sharp, he's cut me about the face some'thin' cruel."

- "Then, bedad," replied Murphy, "he's practising German barbarism here, same as the spalpeens be doin' in Belgium!"
- Sent in by H. Myers, Reading.

NOT WHAT HE MEANT.

A sour-looking sergeant was drilling a squad of new recruits.

- "Eye—s front!" he yelled.
- Pat Murphy, however, turned his eyes the wrong way. The sergeant saw the mistake.
- "Murphy, don't yer know where yer front is?" he roared.
- Pat replied:
- "Bedad, see, I do! It's at the laundry!"—Sent in by F. G. Goff, Leicester.

THE BIGGER LIAR.

Two men, an American and an Irishman, were arguing as to who could tell the biggest lie, the loser to forfeit five pounds.

- "I guess I know a man in the Yewnted States who fell out of an aeroplane one thousand feet from the ground, and he wasn't hurt at all—not even a bruise," drawled the Yankee.
- "Share, that's so. I be that man!" chuckled the Irishman. "And I'll trouble ye for the five pounds."—Sent in by F. Mercer, Stockwell, S.W.

SARCASTIC.

Harassed Sergeant (to dull recruit): "Yer blithering wooden-headed dummy, is there anything you can do?"

- Dull Recruit: "Yes, sir, I can sing."
- Harassed Sergeant: "Sing! What can yer sing?"
- Dull Recruit: "I can sing 'We ave a Navy—a fightin' Navy—'"
- Harassed Sergeant (sarcastically): "Yes, and it's a jolly good job we have!"—Sent in by I. Tuckley, Wolverhampton.

DOUBLE HONOURS.

German Soldier: "I have just shot at an English aeroplane, your Majesty."

- Kaiser: "Good! Give him an Iron Cross. Did you fetch him down?"
- German Soldier: "No; but I told the newspapers that I did."
- Kaiser: "Excellent! Give him another Iron Cross!"—Sent in by J. Crotty, Kingsland Road, N.

FRUSTRATED.

"Ha, ha—er—! I will follow you to the ends of the earth," hissed the villain.

- "Oh, no, you won't!" replied the heroine calmly.
- "Why won't I?" queried the villain, aghast at her coolness.
- "Because I'm not going there," she replied.—Sent in by J. Lamplugh, Bridlington.

MONEY PRIZES OFFERED.

Readers are invited to send ON A POSTCARD Storyettes or Short Interesting Paragraphs for this page. For every contribution used the sender will receive a Money Prize.

ALL POSTCARDS MUST BE ADDRESSED—The Editor, "The Gem" Library, Gough House, Gough Square, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

THIS OFFER IS OPEN TO READERS IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD.

No correspondence can be entered into with regard to this competition, and all contributions enclosed in letters, or sent in otherwise than on postcards, will be disregarded.