

READ "THE WORLD WRECKERS!" GRIPPING ANTARCTIC ADVENTURE YARN INSIDE.

The GEM

2^D



THE DORMITORY DANCE!

2
COME ABOARD THE CONDOR, CHUMS, AND SAIL THE SEAS WITH—

"ALL ABOARD



"Gerooh! Gerooh! I feel so ill!" The voice is Fatty Wynn's. The sea is rough and poor old Fatty's paying for his sins! . . . Read and enjoy this grand yarn of Tom Merry & Co. afloat.

CHAPTER 1. Not Up to Scratch!

"TOM MEWVY!"
"Well hit, Blake!"
"Tom Mewwy—"
"Bravo!"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, I wish you would pay me a little attention when I am makin' a wemark," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy with some asperity in his tone.

Tom Merry looked round. He was standing by the pavilion, watching Jack Blake at the wicket on the junior cricket ground at St. Jim's, when Arthur Augustus tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hallo, Gussy! By Jove, there's Blake hitting out again! That's really ripping—good for three at least! Kerr won't get the ball in time—"

"Tom Mewwy, will you pay me some attention?"

"Bravo! One—two—three! Didn't I tell you so, Gussy?"

"I weally did not notice what you said, Tom Mewwy. I considah—"

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"My dear Gussy, how am I to pay you attention and watch Blake batting at the same time?" said Tom Merry in a tone of mild expostulation.

"It is a most important mattah."

"Well, go ahead then," said Tom Merry resignedly. "What is it? Have you thought out a new and really startling pattern in fancy waistcoats?"

"Nothin' of the sort!"

"Has your tailor sent in his bill?"

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, what is it, then?"

"We are leavin' St. Jim's to-morrow, Tom Mewwy, to go to sea for the vacation, and undah the circs—"

"Bravo, Blake!"

"I insist upon—"

"Well hit! Go on, Gussy! Do you think Figgins will get Blake's wicket?"

"I don't care a wap whethah Figgins gets Blake's wicket or not, Tom Mewwy. I have somethin' more important to think of than cwicket."

"Well, I'm waiting for you to explain," said Tom Merry, still with his eyes on the pitch, where Blake and Digby were running, and running again. "Ripping! The New

—TOM MERRY & CO. OF ST. JIM'S, ON THEIR HOLIDAY CRUISE!

THE CONDOR!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

House will have to sing small this time! That's two! Don't try it again—Kerr's got the ball!"

"The ideah was mooted in Study No. 6 in the School House," went on Arthur Augustus, "of givin' a farewell feed in celebration of—"

"That's a tricky ball, if you like. Figgins knows how to bowl."

"Hang Figgins—"

"With pleasure, if you like. Blake's stopped it all right, you see. What were you saying, Gussy—something about something, wasn't it?"

"Yaas, wathah! I was saying' that the ideah was mooted of waisin' a subscription to give a farewell feed before we left St. Jim's—"

"By Jove! Look! Out!"

Figgins had sent in a ball with a twist on it that baffled the batsman, good as he was. There was a clatter of falling balls.

Jack Blake made a grimace, and tucked his bat under his arm and walked off. A cheer followed him. His wicket was down at last, but he had done very well for his side. He joined Tom Merry and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy outside the pavilion. Tom Merry gave him a slap on the shoulder in hearty appreciation.

"Good for you, Blake!"

"I wasn't quite ready for that last ball," said Blake in a tone of explanation. "I thought it was going to be a wide."

"Looked like it. Figgins is awfully tricky sometimes."

"Oh, I suppose it was a fluke, you know! A bat can't be always looking out for flukes," said Blake.

Tom Merry laughed.

"If you think it wasn't a fluke—" said Blake.

"My dear chap, it was anything you like. It's not easy to stand up against Figgy when he's in form."

"Blake, deah boy—"

"What do you think, Gussy?" asked Blake warmly. "Do you think—"

"I think it's a wippin' good ideah to give a farewell feed before we go to sea for the vac on board the Condor—"

"Who's talking about going to sea? I was asking you your opinion of that ball—"

"I weally was not watchin', deah boy."

Blake grunted.

"I was just explainin' to Tom Mewwy," resumed Arthur Augustus, "that it was a wippin' ideah to give a farewell feed to celebrate the bweakin'-up of St. Jim's. We are goin' to sea, the lot of us, for the whole of the summer vac, and I should not be surprised if we do not return to St. Jim's. Things are vewy uncertain. Undah the circs, a weally wippin' feed is a good wheeze. I twied to waise a subscription for the purpose, but it turned out to be impos."

"Well, then, if it can't be done—"

"I wefuse to admit defeat," said D'Arcy with a great deal of dignity. "The ideah of a subscription certainly turned out to be a fwost, but I have had anotheah ideah, and a weally much bettah one."

"Oh, go ahead!"

"I have witten to my governah to ask him to send me a tennah—"

"A what?"

"A ten-pound note, deah boy. I have explained the whole circs—that we are leavin' St. Jim's for a long time, perwaps for evah. Undah the circs he cannot do less than send me the tennah to stand a big feel to all the Lowah Forms."

Blake chuckled.

"I wish I had a governor who could be depended upon to send a tennah at short notice," he remarked. "It's a good idea in one way, Gussy, but I don't like sponging on you like this. I'd rather have the subscription."

"The subscription was a fwost."

"Yes, that was because you tried to run it all on your own," said Blake. "If I take the matter in hand it will be all right."

D'Arcy screwed his monocle into his eye and turned it upon Jack Blake.

"I weally fail to perceive, Blake, how you could possibly win the mattah bettah than I did," he said freezingly.

"There are lots of things you fail to perceive, Gussy; this is only one of them."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Anyway, we'll have the feed. We ought to do something to celebrate the occasion. I'm in favour of a general subscription."

"Weally, if my governah—"

"Well, if your governor sends the tennah I suppose we ought to honour him by blueing it," said Blake thoughtfully.

"What do you think, Tom Merry?"

Arthur Augustus beamed.

"That's wight, deah boys. You can always wely upon me to tell you what's the pwopah thing to do. We can get a wippin' feed for ten pounds, and have all the Lowah School chaps to it in the Fourth Form dormitow—"

"What a ripping wheeze!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, joining the juniors. "The only doubtful point is, will your noble governor come down with the cash?"

"I have asked him particularly to do so, Lowthah."

"But he mayn't, all the same. Hallo, there's the postman, and— By Jove! He's got a registered letter in his hand!"

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"It's for me, deah boys, and there is a tennah in it!"

"Let's see," said Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Come on!"

The four juniors surrounded the postman.

Blagg grinned amiably, with an eye for tips at the end of the term.

"That wegstahed lettah for me, Blagg?" asked D'Arcy.

"Yes, Master D'Arcy."

"Hand it ovah, thank you! What did I tell you, deah boys?"

"Any for me, Blagg?" asked Tom Merry.

"Sorry, none for you, young gentlemen," said Blagg, and he shouldered his bag, D'Arcy having signed for the letter, and went on towards the School House.

Tom Merry had taken the letter while D'Arcy was signing.

"Open it, deah boy," said the swell of the School House, with a wave of the hand. "You can wead it out to me."

Tom Merry opened the registered letter, while D'Arcy flicked some specks of dust from his immaculate trousers. A grin overspread the face of the hero of the Shell.

"Wead it out, deah boy."

"Certainly! My dear Arthur,—As I sent you a five-pound note last week I really do not see what you want with ten pounds now."

"That's just like the governah," said D'Arcy confidently. "He always starts with a lecture."

"I am not rolling in money, as you seem to think—"

"Oh, that's wot! The guv has lots of tin!"

"And consequently I cannot see my way to sending you a ten-pound note—"

"Eh?"

"I enclose herewith one pound—"

"What?"

"Which I think will be quite sufficient. Your affectionate father—"

"Bai Jove!"

"Here's the pound," said Tom Merry.

D'Arcy screwed his monocle tighter into his eye and looked at the pound note. That was all the cash there was in the letter.

"Bai Jove! I can't say that I approve of the governah's taste in pwactical jokes," he murmured. "I wegard this as wotten."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughin' mattah, Lowthah! This knocks our feed on the head."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall wite to the governah and wemonstwate upon the

tone of his lettab, but I am afraid this sounds as if he has made up his mind," said D'Arcy ruefully. "Bai Jove! I must say this is wathah wotten!"

"Never mind," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We'll have the subscription, after all."

"Yaas, that's the only thing to do, and I'll contvibute this pound as a start, at all events," said D'Arcy. "Bai Jove! You know, it is weally too bad of the governah!"

CHAPTER 2.

Tom Merry Packs Up!

ST. JIM'S was in a buzz of excitement and preparation. Dr. Holmes' new scheme had come as a surprise to the whole school, and most of the school welcomed it.

The idea of spending the August holidays together, afloat, instead of breaking up and scattering to the four corners of the kingdom, as usual, was novel and attractive to most of the boys of St. Jim's.

Not all of them would be able to go on the cruise of the Condor.

There were some whose arrangements for the holidays were made, and could not be altered, and others who were prevented by various reasons from joining the cruise. But a very large proportion of the boys adopted the plan, and received the assent of their parents.

The Condor, now lying in Southampton Water, was a large steamer, and had been engaged in the Atlantic passenger traffic. There was ample accommodation aboard her for more than a hundred boys who had elected to spend the holiday afloat. Most of the fellows were looking forward to the embarkation with eagerness, and, of course, there were endless preparations to make.

The busy excitement of approaching departure, however, did not prevent the juniors from finding time to make the arrangements for the farewell feed.

It had been D'Arcy's idea originally, but his subscription had been a lamentable failure, owing, as he complained, to the fellows failing to back him up in a proper manner. But in the capable hands of Tom Merry and Blake the idea promised to become a complete success.

A farewell feed in the dormitory was an attractive idea, both to those who were going on the cruise and those who were not; and it found supporters in the New House as well as in the School House.

The two Houses were keen rivals, but, as Fatty Wynn nobly said, on an occasion like the present no one could think of such a thing as rivalry.

"The more I think about the idea, Figgins, the better I like it," Fatty Wynn remarked. "It's simply ripping. It's some time since we had a really first-class feed, and I wonder I didn't think of the idea myself. I get so jolly hungry in this weather, you know."

"Blessed if I know any kind of weather when you don't get jolly hungry," said Figgins. "What time has Tom Merry fixed for the feed?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"That's jolly late."

"Well, we shouldn't be safe from the prefects before then," said Kerr, with a shake of the head. "We don't want to be interrupted and have the grub confiscated, you know."

Fatty Wynn looked horrified.

"Don't suggest such a thing," he said. "You make me feel quite faint. Eleven o'clock is a good time. We can easily get out of the House by a back window."

"It will be a bit of a procession, all the Fourth, Third, and Shell going out of the House. Somebody is bound to make a row."

"We'll scrag him if he does. If old Ratty were to come down the game would be up."

"I'll warn all the fellows to be careful," said Fatty Wynn anxiously. "The feed really ought to be held in the New House, as Cock House of St. Jim's; but Tom Merry says as he's getting it up it's got to be held in the School House."

"Like his cheek!"

"Well, it's a School House wheeze, and D'Arcy has subscribed a pound towards the subscription as a start," observed Kerr. "We can't object. I only hope there won't be a row, that's all."

"I think I'll look in at the School House to see if they've got the things in yet," Fatty Wynn remarked carelessly.

"Cheese it, Fatty! Tom Merry won't let you start on the grub now!"

Fatty Wynn looked indignant.

"Who's talking about starting on the grub?"

"I know jolly well what you're thinking about."

"You're awfully suspicious, Figgins. As Tom Merry has all the trouble of getting up the feed, it would be only civil to look in and ask him how he's getting on. I offered my services to purchase the grub."

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"And they were refused?"

"Yes; some of them didn't seem to think it quite safe to let me get the grub from the village. They might have trusted me!"

"They could have trusted you—to scoff half of it before it got to St. Jim's," said Figgins.

"Oh, really, Figgins!"

"You see, they know you."

"Well, I think I'll just look in at the School House, anyway," said Fatty Wynn, and he left the study, leaving Figgins and Kerr to get on with the packing, upon which the three chums had been engaged.

Tom Merry & Co. were also packing when Fatty Wynn looked into their study in the School House, and they were busy.

Fatty looked in with a genial smile.

"Hallo, Merry, how are you getting on?"

Tom Merry looked up with a flustered face from the exertion of making a strap that was two inches short meet round a leather trunk.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "Have you come to lend a hand?"

"Certainly, if there's anything I can do. If you wanted any help in getting in the grub for the feed to-night—"

"Oh, that's all done!"

"Nothing else required?"

"Nothing!"

"If there were any trifles wanted I could get them at Dame Taggles in the school shop, you know, and save you time."

Tom Merry grinned.

"My dear kid, we've laid out all the tin with the exception of threehalfpence, and we can't have any on tick. We don't want to go away owing a bit to Dame Taggles."

"No, I suppose not," said Fatty. "You must have got in a jolly lot of things, if all the subscribed funds are laid out now."

"Yes, it's a good spread. Lend me a hand with this trunk, will you?"

"I'd like to have a look at the grub," said Fatty Wynn carelessly. "Only just a look at it, you know; one doesn't often see a spread like that. There was about eight pounds raised altogether, wasn't there?"

"Eight pounds seven shillings and fourpence-halfpenny."

"Well, that amount of grub would be worth looking at. I'd like to have just a look at the spread, Merry, if you don't mind."

"Not in the least," said Tom Merry genially. "You shall have a look at it when we get it out in the dormitory to-night."

"I mean—"

"Now lend a hand with this strap."

Fatty Wynn took hold of the strap.

"Pull, old chap! I say, Lowther, can't you give me a hand here?"

"Can't you see I'm busy?" retorted Lowther. "If I don't finish packing this tool-chest now the things will get lost."

"Will you, Manners?"

"I'm looking after my negatives and films."

"If you like to wait five minutes—"

"Why don't you say five hours? Hold on to it, Wynn, you and I can manage it between us, I dare say. It's been round the trunk before, so there's no reason why it shouldn't go again. Pull the beastly thing!"

"I'm pulling it!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "Mind you don't let go your end."

"I'm not likely to let go my end. Pull!"

"I'm pulling. Where are you keeping the grub?"

"In a safe place. Pull away!"

"All right. I'd like to—"

"Oh, come, old chap, if you want to help, don't waste your breath talking! Pull that beastly strap and put your beef into it!"

Fatty Wynn tugged away till he was purple in the face, and Tom Merry tugged at the other end of the strap, and the leather trunk creaked and groaned with the contraction; but still the ends did not meet.

Fatty Wynn gasped and eased off.

"Pull up!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You're letting it go! Another jolly good tug and the rotten thing will go! Ow!"

The rotten thing did go! The strap broke, and the ends flew away from the trunk, and Tom Merry went head over heels in one direction and Fatty Wynn in the other.

"Ow!" roared Fatty Wynn, as he brought up against Lowther's legs and received a shower of tools and nails which Lowther had been packing up. "Oh! Wow!"

"You ass!" roared Lowther. "You'll have to pick all those nails up now!"

"Oh! Grooogh!"

Tom Merry sat up in the fender.

"My hat! I think the strap's broken!"

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

Tom Merry rubbed the back of his head. Fatty Wynn sat up and gasped.

"You shrieking idiot!" he said. "You screaming lunatic! Catch me trying to help you fasten a rotten strap again!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm sorry! Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty Wynn staggered to his feet and, bestowing one last glare of indignation upon the chums of the Shell, departed. Tom Merry jumped up, laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha! He came here after the grub, and he got more than he bargained for," he remarked. "Blessed if I know what I'm going to do for a strap for this trunk, I shall have to take the straps off yours, Lowther."

"You'll get a thick ear if you do."

"Look here, my trunk must be strapped!"

"Give Taggles tuppence to put a cord round it. You shouldn't pack it so full. And you shouldn't buy rotten straps. Good ones are cheap enough."

To which fatherly counsel Tom Merry made the brief and classic reply:

"Rats!"

home, and may even visit foweiign countwies, and there may be occasions when it will be necessary to appeah well dwessed. Now, you know nothin' looks so beastlay dwessy as a silk hat."

"I suppose you're not going to wear three at a time, are you?" said Digby.

"Pway don't be iwivoluous on a sewious subject, Digby, deah boy! I have two silk hats in that box, and I want to take an extwa one in case of accidents."

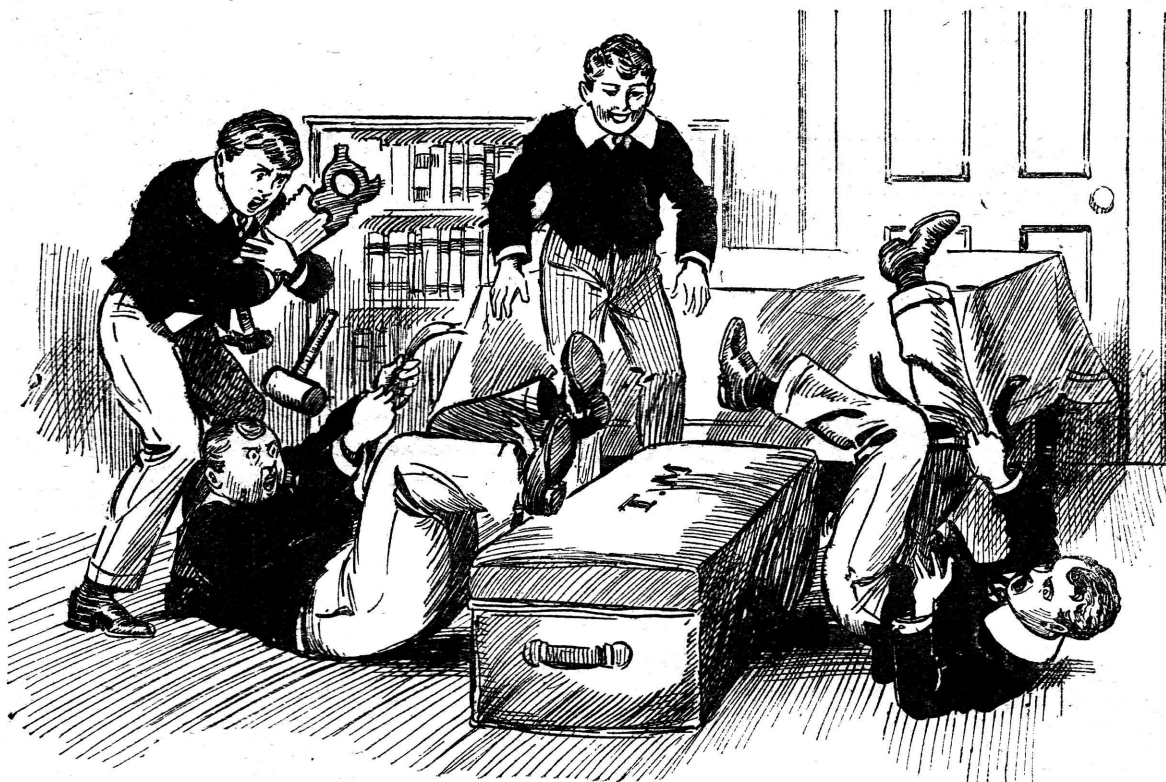
"Well, there's something in that," assented Blake. "If you take three silk hats on board the Condor, some accident is certain to happen to some of them."

"If you mean that there will be any diswespctful twicks played on my toppahs, Blake, I must observe that I should wefuse to tolewatate anythin' of the sort."

"You mayn't have the choice, Algy."

"I weally wish you would not call me Algy. As it is not my name it is uttably wicidulous to address me as Algy."

"My mistake; I meant Adolphus. Now, if you'll take a friend's advice, you'll chuck away two of those silk hats—"



Fatty Wynn tugged at the strap till he was purple in the face, and Tom Merry tugged at the other end. "Pull up!" exclaimed Tom. "Another good tug and the rotten thing will go! Ow!" The rotten thing did go! Tom Merry went head over heels in one direction and Fatty Wynn in the other. "Ow!" roared Fatty Wynn.

CHAPTER 3.

Wynn Makes a Discovery!

"CAN you spare me any woom in your twunk, Blake?"

"Not an inch, Gussy."

"Can you, Hewwies?"

"Not a fraction of an inch."

"You, Dig?"

"Not room for an eyelash," said Digby.

Arthur Augustus looked worried. The chums of Study No. 6 were packing, too, and they had been busy some time. Blake, Herries, and Digby had nearly finished, but the swell of the School House was very far from that. He was not content with a single cabin trunk; three large trunks and two hat-boxes surrounded him, and they were filled to overflowing.

"I weally do not know what I shall do," he remarked. "I have no woom for seveal of my waistcoats, and there is my silk hat!"

"What have you got in that hat-box?"

"Silk hats!"

"How the dickens many silk hats are you going to take?"

"Well, you see, a fellow must always be prepared for emergencies," said D'Arcy. "We may go a long way fwom

"Pway don't be absurd!"

"And half the waistcoats—"

"Weally, Blake!"

"And sell half a dozen pairs of trousers to an old-clothes dealer for what they will fetch."

"I should uttably decline to dispose of any of my twousahs to an old-clothes dealah."

"And throw away half of everything else," said Blake.

"Wot!"

"Then you may be able to take the rest on board the Condor. We're only allowed one trunk each."

"It is simply impos for me to crowd all my pproperty into the limits of one twunk, Blake."

"Well, Mr. Railton said plainly enough only one trunk each, so it's your own look-out."

"Mr. Wailton cannot have fully considahed the mattah. I shall point out to him that it is impos for a fellow to be well-dwessed with only one twunk to contain all his clothes and his othah pproperty."

Blake grinned.

"Well, I hope you'll convince him, that's all, Gussy."

"As a weasonable human being he cannot fail to comprehend the force of my argument. At all events, I shall send the twunks along to Southampton. But the ppresent

trouble is, that I haven't woom in my twunks for all my things, and I weally think that you chaps might find a little space for me."

"Rats!" said Blake.

"And many of 'em!" said Herries.

"Weally, deah boys—"

Fatty Wynn looked into the study.

"Getting on all right?" he asked genially.

"Oh, ripping!" said Blake. "Rather bothered by silly asses poking their heads into the room and asking idiotic questions, but all right otherwise."

Fatty Wynn gave a sickly sort of smile.

"Ha, ha, ha! Very funny! I thought I'd look in—"

"Well, you've looked in now," said Blake, as a hint that it was time for the New House junior to look out.

But Wynn was not to be rebuffed.

"I hear that you've laid in all the grub ready for the feed to-night," he remarked.

"Have you?" said Blake.

"Yes. It must be a jolly good spread."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Any harm in a fellow having a look at it?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Not at all, if he knows where to look."

"Ha, ha, ha! Of course you will have to tell me that."

"Of course I'm not going to do anything of the kind."

"Wathah not! I wondah how much there would be left for to-night if Fatty Wynn knew that the gwub was stowed away in the box—"

"Shut up!" roared Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I wish you would not woah at me in that sudden and startlin' mannah! You thwow me into quite a fluttah."

"You utter ass!"

"I wufuse to be chawactewised as an uttah ass!"

"In a box, is it?" said Fatty Wynn innocently. "Where's the box?"

"Find out!"

"Really, Blake—"

"Oh, travel along! You'll have your whack in the Fourth Form dormitory to-night, and until then you can go and eat coke!"

"I think—"

"Bunk!"

"Yaas, wathah! Bettah tavel, deah boy! Your face wowwies me!"

"Oh, very well," said Fatty Wynn, with unaccustomed meekness. And he travelled.

But there was a curious twinkle in Fatty Wynn's eyes—a curious grin upon his plump face.

"My hat!" he murmured to himself, as he went down the passage. "D'Arcy was going to say 'box-woom' when Blake stopped him. They've stowed away the grub in the box-room. I'd better have a look to make sure. It was rather rotten of them to refuse to let me just see it. As if I'd touch any of the grub before the time for the feast!"

Fatty Wynn glanced up and down the passage. There was no one in sight. He ran quickly to the box-room and let himself in.

The interior of the box-room was very dark. Fatty Wynn closed the door, struck a match, and lit the gas. Then he looked eagerly round. The box-room had lately been disturbed, many boxes having been dragged out of their dusky places. There was an old trunk in a corner with the initials "T. M." on it—evidently belonging to Tom Merry. Fatty Wynn spotted it at once and tried to raise the lid. It was locked. He tried to move the trunk, and found it too heavy.

The fat junior's eyes sparkled.

"That's the grub, and no mistake. I remember noticing this old trunk when I was in here before, and it was empty then. The lock is rusty, and I could snap it open with the poker. Shall I?"

Fatty Wynn thought of grub to the amount of eight pounds seven shillings and fourpence-halfpenny packed in the trunk, and his eyes danced.

"After all, as one of the subscribers I have a right to look at the stuff," he murmured. "They have no right to refuse me. Of course, I shan't touch any of it—I'll just have a look at it."

To take a little iron poker from the grate and prise open the lid of the trunk was the work of a minute. Fatty Wynn gave a gasp of admiration at the glorious sight disclosed by the raising of the lid.

The trunk was packed full to the very brim with the good things provided for the farewell feed. Fatty Wynn gazed upon cakes, tarts, puffs, and biscuits, upon pies and puddings, currant wine and ginger-beer, with rolling eyes.

"My—my hat!" murmured the fat junior. "This—this is spiffing! What a night we're going to have!"

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He looked cautiously round. There was no danger of discovery. Why should he not taste the glorious feast spread before him?

"Just a little snack!" murmured Wynn. "I don't see why I shouldn't take a bite or two. I ought to do so, really, if only to punish them for not trusting me! As if I should have touched the grub! I think— Oh!"

He gave a jump as the door of the box-room opened. Then he turned round with a sickly smile, expecting to see Blake or Tom Merry. But it was Skimpole of the Shell who entered.

Skimpole, the brainy man of the School House, blinked at Fatty Wynn through his big spectacles.

"Is that you, Wynn? What are you doing in the School House?"

"Quiet, Skimmy!" said Fatty Wynn mysteriously. "Close the door and I'll tell you something!"

Skimpole closed the door.

"I came here to get my box," he said. "What have you got there, Wynn? Dear me! That looks like 'tommy' in that trunk! This must be the grub for the feed to-night."

"That's it," said Wynn. "I was just looking at it, you know. Of course, I wasn't going to sample it. But when you come to think of it, why shouldn't we both take a snack, Skimmy. Are you hungry?"

"Yes, I am rather hungry," said Skimpole. "I have not had any tea as I gave away the last of my grub in the study to a beggar at the gate."

"Well, you are a mug!"

"You may call me a mug, Wynn, but—"

"I say, not so loud! You'll have somebody hear! We don't want anybody to drop on us and stop the feed."

"There is a certain amount of common sense in your observation, Wynn. We will partake of the feed without making a row."

"Good!"

The two juniors sat down on the edge of the box and started. They were too busy to speak. The silence of the box-room was broken only by the steady munching of two pairs of powerful jaws.

CHAPTER 4.

Caught!

"THAT'S done!" said Tom Merry, with a grunt of relief.

"Glad to hear it," remarked Monty Lowther.

"You've been grunting and snorting over that trunk for a jolly long time."

"A good half-hour by the clock," said Manners.

"If you fellows had lent a hand instead of grinning there like a couple of gorillas—"

"How could I lend a hand when I was packing my camera?"

"How could I lend a hand when I was packing my tool-chest?"

"Oh, rats! I'm going for a turn in the quad now to cool down," said Tom Merry. "I've finished my packing now!"

"I've just about finished mine," said Lowther. "I'll come along with you. Coming, Manners?"

"How can I come when I am packing up my camera?"

"Oh, don't ask me conundrums!"

Tom Merry and Lowther left the study, leaving Manners still busily engaged in packing up his precious camera. The evening was warm, and the chums of the Shell were tired with sorting out things and packing them up. It was cooler in the quadrangle.

"By Jove! Packing makes me hungry!" Monty Lowther remarked. "I'm rather looking forward to that spread to-night."

"So am I. It will beat most of our previous records in the supper line," said Tom Merry. "Eight pounds seven shillings and fourpence! My hat!"

"What's the matter?"

"Look there!"

Tom Merry pointed towards the box-room window. He had glanced in that direction as he thought about the dormitory feed, unconsciously, and the light in the window had struck him at once.

Lowther uttered an exclamation.

"There's somebody in the box-room."

"That's it."

"Might be somebody going in for a box—or to find something—"

"Yes, to find the grub!" said Tom Merry grimly. "The light isn't moving, and it's on the side of the room where the grub is in the box."

"By Jove! You're right!"

"You remember that young cormorant—Fatty Wynn—"

"Come on!" exclaimed Lowther, without waiting for Tom to finish.

And the chums of the Shell ran quickly into the School House and up the stairs.

The light gleamed under the door of the box-room as they came running up the passage. Tom Merry opened the door, and there was a startled exclamation within.

“You—you—you—” began Tom Merry.

“You—you—” said Lowther.

They looked at the surreptitious feasters, and at the open box. Fatty Wynn and Skimpole had started with the intention of being moderate; but the delicacies had tempted them to keep on. Innumerable paper bags had been unfastened, and their contents had disappeared. Fatty Wynn had done his duty nobly. Skimpole had done well, but he had not been able to keep pace with the Falstaff of the New House.

“Hallo, Tom Merry!” he said, with a sickly smile.

“Fancy seeing you here!”

“You didn’t expect us,” said Lowther.

“No. Have you come to sample the grub? I don’t mind. Will you have one of the cream puffs? They’re ripping!” said Fatty Wynn nervously.

“Tom Merry is welcome to join us,” said Skimpole, blinking at the chums of the Shell. “I have no objection.”

“You young cormorants!” said Tom Merry.

“I thought I’d just sample it,” said Fatty Wynn, with a feeble smile. “I get so hungry in this weather, you know, and—”

“You’ve scoffed about a quarter of the grub between you!” exclaimed Lowther. “By Jove! You’re going to be made an example of!”

“Really, Lowther—”

“Collar them, Tom!”

Tom Merry and Lowther promptly collared the delinquents.

Fatty Wynn and Skimpole began to struggle. Skimpole was soon lying on his back, with Monty Lowther sitting on his chest; but Fatty Wynn put up a stouter fight. Tom Merry and Fatty went reeling to and fro, staggered against the box, and fell—into it!

There was a crash of currant-wine and ginger-beer bottles, and a terrific squash of pies and puffs and tarts.

“Oh!” roared Tom Merry.

“Ow!” shrieked Fatty Wynn.

An amazed face looked in at the door of the box-room.

“Faith, and what is the row about entoirely?”

It was Reilly of the Fourth.

“Lend a hand here!” gasped Tom Merry. “They’re raiding the grub!”

“The spalpeens!”

Reilly lent a hand very quickly—two, in fact. He grasped Fatty Wynn by the collar and dragged him over and sat on him. Tom Merry extricated himself from the box with squashed tarts clinging to him.

“We’ll make an example of the rotters!” he gasped.

“They’ve squashed a lot of the tarts—”

“You did it yourself!” gasped Fatty Wynn. “Now, you know—”

“I know what I’m going to do,” said Tom Merry. “Hold him tight, Reilly.”

“Faith, and I’m doing it entoirely!”

“Lemme go—”

“Kape still, ye gossoon!”

“Hold the rotter!”

Tom Merry picked out the broken bottles and emptied what was left of their contents over the plump face of Fatty Wynn. The fat junior gasped and squirmed. But the hero of the Shell was not finished yet. He followed it up with the squashed tarts, the cream puffs, and the damaged pies. The state of Fatty Wynn’s countenance was horrid when he had finished, and Fatty Wynn was gasping wildly.

“Ow! Ugh! Grooo! Grooo! Grooo! Geroooh-ow!”

“You came here for these things!” panted Tom Merry.

“Now you’ve got ’em!”

“Goo-geroooh!”

“Let the fat bounder go!”

Reilly rose, and Fatty Wynn staggered up. He was choked and blinded with jam and gravy and cream, sticky from collar to crown.

“Ow! Geroooh! Beasts!”

“Now give him the boot!”

Two feet were projected simultaneously towards Fatty Wynn, and both Tom Merry and Reilly landed a kick. Fatty Wynn went towards the door with a rush, staggered through, and disappeared.

“Now, then, Skimpole!”

“I protest,” said the brainy man of St. Jim’s, blinking nervously at Tom Merry as he scooped up a double handful of ruined tarts. “As a sincere Determinist I am entitled to— Ow-wow-wow—”

Tom Merry plastered the squashed tarts over his face with a liberal hand.

Skimpole squirmed under the weight of Lowther, but he could not escape.

“There,” said Tom Merry, when he had finished, “that will be a lesson for you to remember next time you want to become an enterprising burglar!”

“Really, Tom Merry—”

“Oh, travel!”

“I am in a shocking state—”

“Well, you do look rather shocking. Ha, ha, ha!”

“As a sincere Determinist—”

“Get along!”

Skimpole got along. He felt badly in need of a wash. Tom Merry fastened up the box of good things, and the chums left the rooms. They found Skimpole in the passage, the centre of an admiring crowd.

“Don’t be in a hurry,” said Jack Blake, as the freak of the Shell tried to pass. “We want to have a look at you. Don’t he look a brute, chaps?”

“Yaaa, watah!”

“My word!” said Digby. “How did you get in that state, Skimmy? Have you been trying to mix up a jam pudding with your face?”

“Please let me pass—”

“He’s been raiding the grub!” said Tom Merry.

“Raiding the grub!” exclaimed Blake, aghast. “Raiding the grub got in for the farewell feed! The—the burglar!”

“As a sincere Determinist—”

“The wottah!”

“I am entitled to take anything I like—”

“The fearful burglar—”

“From anybody—”

“You’ll take something you don’t like, too!” exclaimed Herries. “The order of the boot, for instance.”

“What-ho!” exclaimed Blake. “Boots to the fore!”

“Really, Blake— Ow-ow-ow!”

Skimpole, assisted from behind by a shower of powerful kicks, rushed down the passage. He disappeared amid a roar of laughter.

Meanwhile, Fatty Wynn had scudded across the quadrangle into the New House. He hoped to escape into a bath-room and get cleaned before he should be observed, but as luck would have it he ran right into Figgins and Kerr.

Figgins caught him by the shoulder and stopped him.

“What on earth is the matter?”

“N-nothing! Lemme go!”

“You’ve been after the grub!” exclaimed Kerr.

“And got it, it seems!” grinned Figgins.

“Those School House rotters found me in the box-room, where the grub is,” confessed Fatty Wynn. “I was just sampling the stuff.”

“You greedy young gormandiser!”

“Well, I thought I’d just taste it. I have only had some rabbit pies and a few puddings, and some salmon and cakes and biscuits and apples and jam, tarts, and a few cold sausages and a jar of cream and some currant-wine—”

“Hardly enough for a taste,” said Figgins sympathetically. “And they caught you, and jammed you up like this?”

“Yes.”

“Serve you jolly well right, too!”

“It’s an insult to the New House,” said Fatty Wynn.

“See how they’ve made me look.”

“Well, you do look funny. Ha, ha, ha!”

“It’s an insult to the House—”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“I think you ought to take it up.”

“Ha, ha, ha!”

There was evidently no sympathy to be got out of Figgins and Kerr.

Fatty Wynn sniffed indignantly and made a bee-line for the nearest bath-room.

CHAPTER 5.

The Farewell Feed!

BOOM! It was the first stroke from the clock-tower of St. Jim’s—the first stroke of eleven. Tom Merry sat up in bed in the Shell dormitory in the School House.

“Are you awake, you chaps?”

“Gr-r-r-r!” said Manners.

“M-m-m-m!” said Lowther.

Tom Merry laughed as he slipped out of bed. He shook Manners and Lowther with forcible shakes.

“Get up! What about the feed?”

“By Jove! I believe I was asleep,” said Manners.

“By Jove! I believe you were. So was Monty. So are all the other asses. Wake up, you fellows, or we shall be late. If the New House chaps get in and Fatty Wynn gets to work there won’t be much left for us.”

“Right-ho!” said Gore. “I shan’t be a tick, for one.”

“Buck up there, all of you!”

The Shell were soon ready. They left the dormitory in THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,279.

their socks, and found the passage was by no means as deserted as it should have been at that hour of the night. Juniors from all quarters were proceeding to the scene of the feast. Nothing but an earthquake or a dormitory feed could have fetched them out of their beds at that hour, but they were lively enough now.

Tom Merry entered the Fourth Form dormitory. The door was open, and a candle-light glimmered in the room. The beds were all empty. The Fourth-Formers, in their pyjamas or trousers, were busy. The night was warm, and they required nothing more on. There was a buzz of talk, which could be plainly heard in the passage.

"Büsy?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I'm lookin' for the awwival of those kids fwom the New House, but they haven't come yet."

"I advise you to keep the door shut if you don't want the light to be spotted," Tom Merry remarked.

"Some ass keeps on leaving it open, unless I tell him every time to shut it," said Blake. "Shut the door behind you, Lowther."

"If you mean that—"

"Don't make a row. I don't see what everybody wants to talk for. Are you keeping an eye on the quad, Gussy?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"You stand by the door, Reilly, will you, and shut it after every confounded idiot who comes in and leaves it open?"

"Faith, and I will!"

"Let the rope ladder down as soon as you see Figgins, Gussy."

"I shan't be able to see him in the dark, deah boy."

"He's going to signal by throwing a pebble up at the window."

"You can twust me to look out."

Arthur Augustus was craning over the sill, standing on a chair inside to get up to the level of the window. The quadrangle was very dim below, and the swell of the School House could see nothing but here and there the faint waving shadow of an elm.

The School House boys were all in at last, and the door was closed for the last time. Then more candle-ends and bicycle lanterns were lighted.

"Can't you see Figgins yet, Gussy?"

"Oh, where, and oh, where can he be?" sang out Lowther. "Shut up, Lowther! Don't be funny at this time of night."

"Bai Jove! I think I see— Ow!"

"What's the matter?"

"Some wotten beast has thwown a stone at me and stwuck me on the nose."

"Ha, ha, ha! It's Figgy's signal."

"He has no wight to stwike me on the nose."

"You shouldn't put your nose in the way. Let down the rope ladder."

D'Arcy leaned over the window-sill.

"Is that you, Figgins?"

"Yes, rather!" came the cautious voice from below. "We're all here."

"Was it you who thwew that stone?"

"Yes."

"It stwuck me on the nose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughin' mattah, Figgins. That stone stwuck me on the nose, and I wequiah an assuawhance that it was not an act of intentional impertinence before I—"

D'Arcy did not finish. He suddenly disappeared from the window, and the rope ladder came rattling down.

The end of it gave Figgins a clump on the head, and Figgins gave a yell.

"Careful, you ass!"

"Oh, come up!" said Blake.

D'Arcy was sitting on the floor of the dormitory. Blake had jerked him away from the window. The swell of St. Jim's was too dazed for a few moments to know what had happened. When he recovered himself he jumped up.

"Blake—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Blake, I have wemonstwated with you seveal times upon this wuffness of yours. I do not like it."

"Lump it, then!"

"Figgins thwew a stone and stwuck me on the nose."

"Serves you right!"

"I wufuse to admit for a moment that it serves me wight. I shall wequiah an assuawhance fwom Figgins that it was an accident if the harmony of this convivial meetin' is not to be intewwupted."

"Oh, rats!"

Figgins was coming in at the window now. The rope ladder—which consisted simply of two stout ropes knotted together—was swarming with New House juniors. Figgins put a leg in at the window, and Blake gave him a hand.

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"Here we are again!" said Figgins cheerfully.

"Yes, here we are. Don't make a row."

"Who's going to make a row?"

"Well, don't, then!"

"Figgins, deah boy, I have a wathah important mattah to settle with you."

"Nothing wrong with the grub, is there, Gussy?"

"Not that I am aware of, Figgins. I am not thinkin' of the gwub. You thwew a stone up to the window, which stwuck me on the nose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you did that on purpose, Figgins, I shall have no alternative but to administah a feawful thwashin' on the spot—"

"Is that how you always greet your guests, Gussy?" asked Kerr, who was next in at the window.

"Weally, Kerr—"

"Is it the D'Arcy special brand of politeness?"

"Weally, as Figgins contwibuted to the feed, I can hardly wegard him as a guest—"

"Isn't he under your roof, fathead?"

"I wufuse to be addressed as a fathead. He is certainly undah our woof."

"Therefore, he is a guest," said Tom Merry. "D'Arcy owes Figgins an apology."

"Nothin' of the sort! Figgins thwew a stone which stwuck me on the nose."

"Apologise!"

"I wufuse to apologise. Figgins thwew a stone—"

"That was agreed upon."

"It was not agreed upon for it to stwike me on the nose."

"You shouldn't have such a long nose," said Figgins. "I put it to all of you—is it my fault that Gussy has such a long proboscis?"

"Certainly not."

"I wufuse to have my nose alluded to as a long pwoboscis. Undah the circs, if Figgins assuahs me that it was an accident—"

"Don't mind him, Figgins," said Tom Merry. "He's been rather badly brought up, you know, and his manners aren't above par—"

"Weally, Tom Merry—"

"Or else he would apologise at once like a gentleman."

"Undah the circs, as opinion seems to be against me, I apologise; but, all the same, I wufuse to admit that Figgins had a wight to stwike me on the nose."

So the incident closed.

The New House juniors were pouring into the window, one after another, and ere long they were all in the dormitory. The long room presented an unusually crowded aspect. Blake closed the window after the last one.

Fatty Wynn looked round him anxiously.

"Where's the grub?"

"Here it is," said Blake—"what you left of it, that is!"

"Oh, really, Blake—"

"Sit down, all of you. There's not enough pillows and bolsters to go round, so most of you will have to sit on the floor."

"That's all right," said Figgins.

"I say, Gussy, lend me your bolster," said Kerr.

"I would with pleasure, deah boy, only I'm afraid of spoilin' my twousahs if I sit on the floor. Pass me the wabbit pie, Lowthah."

And the feast commenced.

CHAPTER 6.

The Dormitory Dance!

"MAKE a good time of it," said Figgins, as he carved the cold leg of mutton. "This is the last feed we're to have under the hospitable roof of the School House."

"The last we shall have at St. Jim's," said Lowther.

"This time to-morrow we shall be leading a life on the ocean wave."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And who knows what may happen before we get back?" said Figgins. "Fatty Wynn may die of too much grub, and Skimpole may get drowned as a bore that can't be stood within the narrow limits of a ship."

"Oh, really, Figgins!"

"Tom Merry and Manners may expire in agonies under the infliction of Monty Lowther's jokes, from which there will be no escape—"

"Look here, Figgins," began Lowther wrathfully.

"D'Arcy may find himself far from land without a clean collar, and die of a broken heart."

"Oh, weally, deah boy—"

"Or we may get wrecked and go to the bottom of the sea," continued Figgins cheerfully. "Or we may—"

"You giddy Job's comforter!"

"Cheese it!"

"What I mean is, that we must make this a really grand

occasion. All sorts of things may happen to us, and if they don't, they may happen to the school while we are gone. St. Jim's may get burnt to the ground. Anyway, we ought to celebrate this great and mournful occasion—"

"Oh, ring off, Figgy!"
 "And after the feed I propose a dance to wind up the festivities."

"A dance?" said Tom Merry. "What sort of a dance?"
 "Oh, any old dance—a barn dance, or a dormitory dance, or anything as a final kick-up to celebrate the event!"

"Rot!" said Blake. "We shall have the masters up."
 "They can't very well do anything to us. Term's over, and we're only staying on to go to Southampton to-morrow to embark. I regard myself as being as free as a bird in the air."

"Yaas, wathah!"
 "Who ever heard of knuckling under to a schoolmaster at the end of term?"

"Yes, I do!"
 "Still another bottle of lemonade," said Figgins. "What offers?"

"Pass it this way, Figgins."
 "Who says cream puffs—there's half a dozen left."
 "I think I can manage them, Lowther."

"My hat!" said Kerr. "Where does he put it all? I say, Wynn, here's a couple of sausages and some cold beef—would you like them with the cream puffs?"

"I'll have them after, Kerr."
 "Ha, ha, ha! Why don't you mix them? Here's some watercress and sardines, too."
 "Hand them over."

The juniors, entering into the joke, gathered up the fragments of the feast and passed them on to Fatty Wynn, and there was very little left by the time the fat junior was completely satisfied.



"Collar them!" hooted Monty Lowther, and he promptly downed Skimpole and sat on him. But Tom Merry and Fatty Wynn, fighting hard, staggered against the box and fell into it. There was a crash of currant wine and ginger-bear bottles, and a terrific squash of pies and puffs and tarts. "Faith, and what is the row about entirely?" asked Reilly of the Fourth from the doorway.

"Bai Jove! You're wight!"

"That's all very well," said Blake. "Only if Mr. Railton were to look in at the door just now I fancy you'd change your mind all of a sudden."

"Yaas, I considah that extwemely pwob."

"Oh, pass the salt, and don't argue!" said Figgins.

Figgins' gloomy prognostications had no effect upon the convivial spirits of the party. They ate, drank, and were merry. In spite of the raid of the evening, there was ample left for the feed, and the juniors enjoyed themselves.

The solids vanished at a great rate, washed down by the liquids, and the spread gradually diminished.

The juniors finished with tarts and puffs and fruit, and at the end all but Fatty Wynn were constrained to cry "Enough!" But Fatty was invincible. He never refused an offer.

"Have some more cake, Wynn?" asked Tom Merry.

"Yes, thank you, Merry."

"Another tart, Wynn?" asked Blake,

"Yes, please."

"Anybody say biscuits?"

"I think I'm about done," he remarked at last.

"I should think you are," said Figgins. "Blessed if I think you will get out of the window again."

"We shall have to roll him home across the quad," Kerr remarked.

"Oh, really, Kerr—"

Figgins jumped up.

"Now, what about that dance?"

"Good wheeze," said Tom Merry. "What about a band?"

"I'll whistle, if you like," said Skimpole.

"No, you won't," said Blake. "I know that horrid toot of yours. Don't you start whistling here!"

"I'll hum a tune," said Lowther.

"I'll sing, if you like, deah boys."

"We don't like, Gussy."

"Weally—"

"If you want to sing, Gussy, you'll have to go up in the box-room."

"I don't want to sing!" exclaimed the swell of the School House indignantly. "I only made the offah to be obligin'!"

"You'll be still more obliging if you don't sing. Two or

three fellows who can't dance can buzz a tune through a comb and paper."

"Not too loud, then," said Tom Merry. "We don't want the prefects here."

"I will sing—"

"You can sing if the prefects come, Gussy—and serve 'em right. Now, then, how many of you fellows can buzz through a comb?"

There were plenty of volunteers. Blake arranged the band, and the beds were dragged as quietly as possible out of the way. The juniors entered heartily into the fun of the thing. A dormitory dance was a novelty, and a fitting wind-up to the many scenes of fun they had enjoyed under the ancient roof of St. Jim's.

"Now, then, go it!"

"Who's leading off?"

"I am, fathead!"

"Then go it yourself."

"If you're going to start arguing, Tom Merry—"

"Oh, cheese it, and go ahead!"

"I'll go ahead when I like! I—"

"When's that band going to start? Band, start!"

Buzz, buzz, buzz!

There were four members in the orchestra, and as they all started at different times and with different tunes, the result could not be called either musical or encouraging to the dancers.

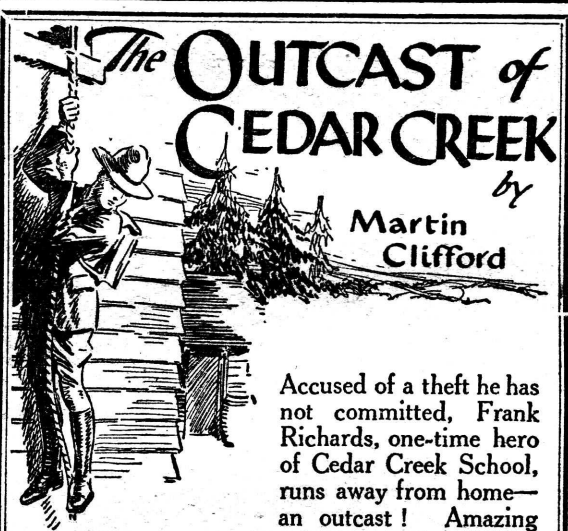
Blake stopped his ears.

"Hold on, you asses!"

"Sure, and what's the matter?" asked Reilly, the leader of the orchestra.

"Keep to the same tune and the same time!"

"Sure, it's mighty particular ye are."



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"Keep your rotten orchestra in time, I tell you!"

"Oh, all right! Kape the same tune, ye spalpeens."

The spalpeens kept the same tune, and almost the same time. Then the dance commenced. The buzzing, having once got into the swing, went more or less regularly, and the dance was soon in full progress.

"By Jove, this is ripping!" said Tom Merry. "Figgy's idea is a good one, for once. Hop it!"

The juniors hopped it in the most lively way.

As the excitement increased the dance became more irregular, and couples went whirling in mazes, in sublime indifference to the nature of the dance and the time of the music.

Naturally enough, accidents happened. They bumped into one another with great frequency, and several rolled on the floor. But good-humour reigned supreme. Even D'Arcy, when he was rolled over and Figgins sprawled across him, only gasped and said: "It's all wight. Don't mention it, deah boy."

The fun was at its height, and in their excitement the juniors had forgotten all caution. The din was increasing, and it would have been surprising if it had not been heard in other parts of the House.

The band was buzzing away at full speed, and the dormitory was alive with gliding, rolling, bumping, whirling dancers, when the door suddenly opened.

Unnoticed for the moment, Mr. Railton, the master of the School House, stood looking upon the scene.

CHAPTER 7.

Called to Account!

"BOYS!"

The paper-and-comb orchestra suddenly ceased. The terpsichorean revel ceased with equal abruptness.

The juniors of St. Jim's stood as if suddenly turned to stone, and stared in blank dismay at the Housemaster.

Mr. Railton stared at them as blankly.

He had met with many little surprises during the course of his acquaintance with the juniors of St. Jim's, but never one quite like this.

He stood almost nonplussed for the moment.

"Boys!"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry meekly. "Did you speak, sir?"

"Did I speak, Merry? Yes, I did. What is the meaning of this—this unheard of scene?"

"It's a dance, sir," said Tom Merry demurely.

"A—a what?"

"A dance, sir. As we are leaving St. Jim's for a long time—"

"It may be for years, love—it may be for ever," murmured Monty Lowther.

"We—we thought—"

"You thought what, Merry?"

"We thought there would be no harm in a little celebration, sir."

"As a mattah of fact—" began Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I hardly know what to say to you, Merry."

"As a mattah of fact—"

"Ring off, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to wing off. As a mattah of fact, Mr. Waitton—"

"You need not speak, D'Arcy. I hardly know—"

"As a mattah of fact, the coll term is ovah, and we are weally enjoyin' a little of the holiday in advance—"

"Silence, D'Arcy!"

"Yaas, Mr. Waitton; but, as a mattah of fact—"

Blake and Herries clapped their hands over D'Arcy's mouth, and silenced him.

Mr. Railton looked round upon the dismayed juniors.

"I hardly know what to say to you," he said. "You deserve a severe punishment. You New House boys will immediately leave. I leave your punishment to your Housemaster."

Figgins grinned slightly.

Mr. Ratchiff, the master of the New House, would be willing enough to inflict punishment if he knew of the delinquency, but he would not know of it unless Mr. Railton told him; and Figgins did not think that Mr. Railton would do so.

D'Arcy succeeded in pushing off the hands that had been clapped over his mouth, and gasped out again.

"As a mattah of fact—gwooh!"

"Figgins, you and the other New House boys will immediately go back the way you came."

"Yes, sir," said Figgins.

The New House leader walked towards the window. Mr. Railton called him back.

"Where are you going, Figgins?"

"Back the way I came, sir."

"Did you come in by the window?"

"Yes, sir!"

"You will please go out by the door, Figgins."

"Very well, sir!"

"Go at once. As for you School House boys, go back to your own dormitories at once. I will deal with you in the morning."

Figgins & Co. and the crowd of New House juniors went downstairs. Mr. Railton had neglected to ask them how they had left their own House. Some of them had been nervous that he would march them across the quad and wake up Mr. Ratcliff to receive them.

Mr. Railton stood in the dormitory, with a grim look, while the School House juniors dispersed.

"Good-night, Blake!" said Tom Merry. "It's been a jolly good celebration, anyway!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Good-night, deah boys! We shall have to face the music, though, as a mattah of fact—"

"Get into bed, Fourth Form."

"Certainly, Mr. Wailton. I wish you would let me explain to you—"

"Get into bed at once!"

The Fourth Form went to bed again, while the juniors of the Shell and Third Form retired to their respective dormitories. Mr. Railton carefully extinguished all the lights, and quitted the room, closing the door behind him.

"Well, this is rather rotten," Jack Blake remarked. "I suppose we were really making too much row."

"Yaas, wathah! But if you had let me explain—"

"It will be all right," said Digby confidently. "He won't be rough on us just before clearing out, you know."

"Perhaps not."

"I wish to point out to Mr. Wailton that, as a mattah of fact, the term was ovah, deah boys, and—"

"Good-night!"

"As a mattah of fact—"

"Oh, go to sleep!"

"I wefuse to go to sleep. As a mattah of fact—"

Snore!

"I wegard this as diswespectful; and I do not believe you are weally asleep. I wegard you as a set of wottahs!"

Snore!

D'Arcy sniffed indignantly, and laid his head upon the pillow.

Meanwhile, the New House juniors had crossed the quadrangle and reached their own House. Figgins had left by means of the hall window, which he had left unfastened to facilitate the return. At that hour no one was likely to observe the fact that the window was unfastened—unless the alarm had been given. Mr. Ratcliff possessed such an unpleasant faculty of smelling out wrongdoers that Figgins would not have been surprised to have the whole thing discovered.

"It's all right," murmured Figgins, with relief, as he came close to the New House in the gloom. "There's no light in old Ratty's window. There was when we came out. That shows he's gone to bed."

"Unless he's making his rounds," grinned Kerr.

"He never makes them as late as this—it's struck twelve."

"That's so. Let's get in."

"Give me a bunk up first."

In the deep shadow of the New House porch Figgins received the required bunk and mounted upon the sill of the Hall window. The next moment he fell off it and bumped down among the juniors as a thin, acid voice came from within the window:

"Is that you, Figgins?"

Kerr groaned.

"Ratty, by Jove!"

The pale, thin face of Mr. Ratcliff was looking out at them. The Housemaster had opened the window.

Figgins rose to his feet. He had rolled off the window-sill as the sudden voice startled him, and the bump had hurt him. He rubbed his limbs ruefully.

"Is that you, Figgins?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where have you been?"

"Having a feed, sir."

"At this hour of the night?"

Figgins did not reply.

Mr. Ratcliff knew what hour it was, so there was no need for Figgins to speak. The Housemaster's grey-green eyes glinted like a cat's in the dark.

"You are all there, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good! I will open the door for you. I missed you, and I thought I should meet you if I waited here," said Mr. Ratcliff. "This is a nice proceeding—"

"As it's the last night at St. Jim's, sir—"

"As it's the last night at St. James' you ought to be in bed getting a good night's rest before your long railway journey to-morrow."

"I never thought of that, sir."

"I dare say you did not; but the punishment you will receive will perhaps make your memory better," said Mr. Ratcliff. "This is too serious an offence, and on too large a scale, for me to deal with it. I shall report you to the Head."

Figgins gave an inward groan. He would rather have been flogged than have been reported to the Head to-morrow, of all days. Mr. Ratcliff probably knew that.

The Housemaster opened the door, and the juniors filed in and went to their dormitories. Mr. Ratcliff went back to his room in a very satisfied mood.

"Rotten!" said Figgins, as he tumbled into bed. "It will look bad to be hauled up before the Head the last day here. He will think we might have behaved ourselves, the last night."

"Rotten!" said Kerr. "And just like Ratty!"

And Figgins gloomily agreed.

CHAPTER 8.

Off at Last!

THE last day at St. Jim's dawned bright and sunny. There was no school work to be done, but the rising-bell went at the usual hour. Some of the juniors were heavy-eyed—the result of the previous night's festivities. But that soon wore off in the bright sunshine and general expectancy.

At morning chapel Figgins confided to Blake the scrape into which Mr. Ratcliff's watchfulness had brought them. Blake was sympathetic, but he could only suggest to Figgins to grin and bear it.

"I wouldn't mind a licking," said Figgins dismally, "but I don't want to be yanked up before the Head to-day. It will look bad for me, you know."

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy. "Suppose I go up to the Head and explain?"

"Oh, cheese it!"

Arthur Augustus chesced it as requested, but there was a resolved expression upon his face. The boys were at liberty after chapel, instead of turning into the class-rooms, as in term time. They were to leave St. Jim's in a variety of charabancs for the railway station at eleven o'clock.

Blake and his chums went off to give the finishing touches to their packing, and missed D'Arcy.

Arthur Augustus was not in the study, nor was he to be seen. As a matter of fact, he was tapping at the door of Dr. Holmes' study.

"Come in!" said the deep voice of the Head.

Arthur Augustus entered. Mr. Railton was with the Head, and he looked rather curiously at the swell of the School House.

"Well, D'Arcy, what is it?" said the Head.

"If you please, sir, I should like to explain—"

"You may speak, but be quick."

"Yaas, wathah—I mean, yaas, sir. It's about an event—a wathah unfortunate event—that occurred in the Fourth Form dormitory in the School House last night."

"I have already acquainted Dr. Holmes with that, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir. But what I wanted to remark is that Figgins & Co.—I mean Figgins and the othah chaps, sir—were caught goin' back by Mr. Watcliff."

"Oh!" said the Head.

"Now, sir, as a mattah of fact, the term is ovah, and with all respect, sir, we are entitled to have some high jinks in the vac," said D'Arcy, gently but firmly. "That is weally what I wanted to explain to Mr. Wailton last night."

"I hope you are not attempting to justify last night's proceedings, D'Arcy," said Dr. Holmes sternly.

"Well, no, sir—not if you don't think they are justifiable," said Arthur Augustus. "I only want to point out, as a mattah of fact, that the term is weally ovah, and that we meant no harm. It was just a little celebvation on an important and auspicious occasion, sir, and undah the circs—"

"I leave the matter to be dealt with by my Housemasters," said the Head. "You may go, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir. But Mr. Watcliff isn't goin' to deal with it—he's goin' to weport it to you because he thinks that will be vewy wuff on Figgins—"

"D'Arcy!"

"So I thought—"

"You may go, D'Arcy."

"Certainly, sir; but as a mattah of fact——"
Dr. Holmes half-rose, and D'Arcy hurriedly left the study.

The Head looked at the School House master with a smile.

"We have already decided that this prank should be overlooked in the circumstances, Mr. Railton."

"Yes, sir; but Mr. Ratcliff——"

"If he brings the matter to me—— Ah, come in!"

There was a knock at the door, and the New House master entered the study.

"I have a rather serious matter to report to you, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I thought it too serious to deal with myself—nothing less than the whole of the juniors of my House being absent at midnight."

"That sounds very serious, Mr. Ratcliff."

"Yes, sir. A general flogging——"

"On the last day at St. Jim's!"

"It is necessary sometimes to be severe. So serious an offence——"

"It is not so serious as it appears, Mr. Ratcliff. I have learned that the boys were, as a matter of fact, in the School House, attending a farewell feast in the Fourth Form dormitory."

"A sufficiently serious breach of discipline."

"In the circumstances I can find excuses for the youngsters," said the Head, with a smile, "and as the School breaks up to-day I think it would be a more graceful act to pardon than to punish."

Mr. Ratcliff bit his lips.

"Of course, it is just as you think best, sir."

"Very good! Then let no more be said about the matter."

It was rather a bitter pill for Mr. Ratcliff to swallow, but he had no choice about it.

Nothing more was said about the matter, much to the amazement of Figgins & Co. The time came for the departure from St. Jim's, and not a word had been heard.

"I suppose it's all right," said Figgins to Blake. "Blessed if I understand it, though. Ratty doesn't look any more amiable than usual, this morning."

"I think I can explain it, deah boy," said D'Arcy, joining them.

Figgins stared at him.

"What do you know about it?"

"Oh, I just drowped into the Head's study, you know, and explained mattahs. You won't heah any more about it."

"Gammon!"

"If you chawactewise my wemarks as gammon, Figgins——"

"Well, you'll see for yourself," said Blake. "The Head's a good old boy, and he wouldn't like to have any trouble on the last morning. Railton has made it a point to forget our little lark, and he's forgotten that I owe him a hundred lines. Hallo, here are the charabancs!"

Vehicles of all sorts and conditions were streaming into the quadrangle to take the boys of St. Jim's to the station. They were soon crowded with luggage and boys. A hundred of the Saints were to go to Southampton, including a portion of each Form. All the leading lights of the Lower School, as well as Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth, and a number of Fifth-Formers.

Taggles, the porter, was grunting under the weight of the boxes he had to carry down. Taggles welcomed breaking-day, as he scored in two ways on that date—he got rid of the boys for a long time, and he pocketed a harvest of tips.

"Have you bwright down my twunks, Taggles?" asked D'Arcy anxiously.

"I brought down your trunks, Master D'Arcy," said Taggles very civilly, as he noted the School House swell's hand at his waistcoat pocket.

"Yaas, but there were thwee——"

"The 'Ead said one trunk for each boy, sir."

"Yaas, but there were thwee for me."

"I've warned you that you won't get them aboard at Southampton, ass," said Blake.

"I shall wisk that, Blake, and I wequest you not to address me as an ass. I wegard the expression as disrespectful. Pway bwing down the west of my boxes, Taggles, and don't forget the hatbox and the handbox."

"What on earth have you got a handbox for?" asked Tom Merry.

"It contains an extwa toppah."

"Well, I hope it will get safe to Southampton."

D'Arcy had a half-crown in his gloved fingers, so Taggles made no difficulties about bringing down the extra boxes. It did not matter to Taggles if they were left on the pier at Southampton. There was room in the charabanc, which Tom Merry & Co. had arranged for themselves, and which was a large one.

"All aboard!" said Tom Merry. "We may as well start. Come on, Figgins. Come early and avoid the crush."

"Good!" called out Figgins from his charabanc. "I don't know where my driver has got to, but I'll drive, and I'll race you to the gates."

"Agreed!"

"You will do nothing of the kind!" said the voice of Mr. Railton. "Come out of the driving-seat, both of you!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Figgins. "I can drive jolly well, sir, if you'd rather trust me than one of those chauffeur chaps."

"I would not, thank you, Figgins," said Mr. Railton, laughing.

The procession, as Lowther termed it, was ready at last. It moved out of the gates of St. Jim's, followed by the Head's car. The Head was coming to the station to see his boys off before going on his own holiday. The adventurers were to go to sea in charge of the two Housemasters.

Rylcombe Station was reached, and the special was waiting. It was to make a straight run to Southampton, without the usual change at Wayland. The boys crowded into the train, and the luggage was stacked in. The Head stood on the platform, shaking hands with many of the Sixth, and speaking very earnestly to Kildare as he bade him good-bye.

"Off!" cried Tom Merry, as the engine whistled and the train began to move.

Dr. Holmes stood on the platform, waving his hand, and the windows of the train were crammed with boys, cheering and waving handkerchiefs. And so the train swept out of the station.

CHAPTER 9.

A Look Round!

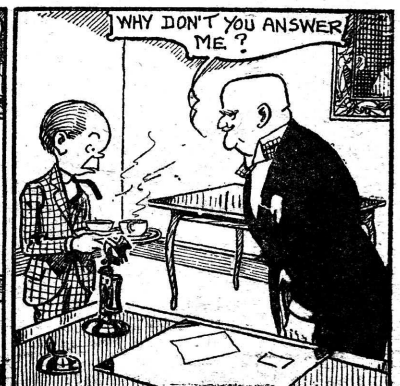
"SOUTHAMPTON!"

"Here we are again!" explained Figgins.

The journey had seemed long to the juniors, yet it had been very swift. The special drew up at last at the Dock station, and the juniors from St. Jim's poured out.

Arthur Augustus looked round him.

Potts, the Office Boy!



"I say, you portah chap, take care of my luggage, will you? There are three twunks marked 'A. A.D.'A.' and a hat-box and a hand-box."

"Yessir!" said the porter addressed, pocketing the shilling D'Arcy offered him, and then going about his business.

"I say," murmured Tom Merry, "the Condor doesn't up-anchor till late in the afternoon, Blake."

"I know that," said Blake.

"What I mean is, why should we go on board with the common herd?"

Blake's eyes sparkled.

"You mean we ought to have a look at the town?"

"Exactly."

"Phew!" said Figgins. "There would be a row if we marched off on our lonesome now!"

"Yes. But if we wandered away and got lost—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And walked off into the town by mistake, I don't see how we could reasonably be blamed."

"Certainly not," said D'Arcy. "But we are not likely to wandah off, are we?"

"Very likely indeed," replied Tom Merry. "I am, for one, anyway. Who's for a look round Southampton?"

"I am," said Kerr. "I'm curious to see the Bar Gate fellows tell you about when they have been here. We didn't have time to look round when we ran down here the other day."

"The Bar Gate? What on earth's that?"

"A gate, or something, built by the Trojans, or the Ancient Britons, or somebody," said Figgins vaguely. "I've heard about it."

"Well, we'll take that in," said Tom Merry.

"Come into the crowd here. It's pretty thick, and we shan't be noticed."

"Good!"

"But, I say, Tom Mewwy, what about our beastlay luggage, you know?"

"Blow your luggage!"

"It's most important—"

"Raillon is looking after those things. What's the good of a Housemaster if he doesn't look after one's luggage? Come on!"

"Vewy well, deah boy, I'm comin'."

Half a dozen juniors lost themselves in the crowd. Tom Merry, Lowther, Blake, Figgins, D'Arcy, and Kerr emerged together from the railway station, and Arthur Augustus signalled a taxi.

"Ere you are, sir!" said the driver.

"What on earth do you want with a cab, Gussy?"

"Bettah lose ourselves as soon as possible, Blake."

"Oh, vewy well, if you're rolling in tin!"

"Where to, sir?"

"Oh, anyweeah!" said D'Arcy. "We want to lose ourselves, you know. Anyweeah will do so long as we lose ourselves, my deah fellow."

The taximan stared, as well he might.

"Take us up into the town, right up the other end," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We want to have a look at the place, you know."

"Yes, sir."

The taxi sped off, with the juniors in it. Whether they were missed or not at the station they did not know. They drove off at a great pace, and soon left all danger of pursuit behind them.

"After all, why shouldn't we have a look at Southampton?" said Tom Merry. "It's a grand, historic city, and jolly well worth looking at."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Cabs come expensive," said Kerr. "Of course, that doesn't matter when we've got a giddy millionaire with us."

"Are you alludin' to me, Kerr?"

"Of course I am, Gussy."

"Then you are labouwin' undah a misappwehension. As I am, unfortunately, in a stony bwoke condition, I shall not be able to pay for the taxi."

"You—won't—be—able—to—pay?" said Tom Merry, in a measured tone.

"No. As I have explained, I am unfortunately wathah stony, thwough contwibutin' vewy libewally to the farewell feed at St. Jim's."

"And who is going to pay for the taxi, then?"

"I weally am not particulah at all," said D'Arcy, settling back as comfortably as he could in his seat. "One of you fellows."

"You shrieking ass—"

"If the vehicle was not too crowsed, Tom Mewwy, I should certainly chastise you for addressin' me as a shwiekin' ass."

"You howling duffer!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake—"

"You've stuck us for an expensive cab fare. I've a jolly good mind to get out and let you settle with the driver."

"Oh, don't be a wottah, you know!"

"It will come to six or seven bob," said Kerr. "Of course, we could stop at a pawnbroker's shop and put in Gussy's watchchain."

"I should wefuse to give you permish for anythin' of the sort."

"We shouldn't ask your permish, ass! Never mind, we'll whip round and raise the fare between us, and if Gussy calls any more cabs we'll throttle him."

"I should uttably wefuse to be thwottled."

The cab drive was a long one. In the heart of the old city the juniors alighted, and the taximan was satisfied with six shillings.

The juniors walked about, looking at the sights, where ancient and modern jostled one another strangely. Kerr, who had a friend who had spent a holiday in Southampton, took upon himself the office of cicerone, and showed his friends about the city as if he had lived there all the days of his fifteen years.

"Ah, this is the West Park!" he remarked. "Better come in here and have a look at the Watts Monument!"

"Watts!" said D'Arcy. "Who is he? The word weminds me of electwicity, or somethin'."

"He was the steam-in-the-tea-kettle chap," said Kerr.

"There's a monument—"

"Let it remain there, deah boys! I don't think we ought to exhaust ourselves with too much walking."

"Well, there's the East Park over the way," said Kerr.

"There's a monument in that, too, of—"

"Oh, weally, I don't think much of monuments. I would wathah have a feed."

"We shall have to get down into the town for that," said Kerr.

"This is the High Street. If you bear off to the left there's Palmerston monument—"

"Bai Jove, they seem to live on monuments. There was a chap I wead of once, they wote a poem about him, his name was St. Simon or somethin', and he lived on a monument or somethin', someweeah—"



A SOFT ANSWER!



"Let's get on a tram," said Tom Merry. "It's all very well to take a run, but we don't want to overdo it, and my old governess is coming down to see us off, too."

"I asked my Cousin Ethel to come, too," said D'Arcy. "I weally think she might come—"

"By Jove, I hope she will!" exclaimed Figgins, and then he suddenly turned red.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the long-limbed junior.

"I weally don't see why you should be so beastly enthusiastic about it, Figgins," he said. "Ethel's not your cousin."

"Hallo, here's the tram!"

"Jump on!"

The juniors swarmed on top of the tram. It sped along the lines through the city, and D'Arcy peered about with great interest through his eyeglass.

"Sit down!" called out the conductor suddenly, looking along the top of the tram.

D'Arcy stared at him. He noticed that all the others on top of the tram were seated, but he was standing up and looking back along the road.

"What did you say, my deah fellow?" asked D'Arcy, seeing that the conductor was staring at him and gesticulating.

"Sit down!"

"I weally have no desire to sit down!"

"Sit down!" yelled the man excitedly.

"Weally— Oh!"

A passenger on the tram-top suddenly grasped D'Arcy and dragged him down. Tom Merry had been reaching for him, but it was not needed.

D'Arcy plumped down, as the tram passed under a great arch—the famous Bar Gate of Southampton High Street.

The swell of St. Jim's struggled to his feet the next moment. The tram was through the arch.

Arthur Augustus turned upon the passenger who had pulled him down, with the light of battle gleaming behind his eyeglass.

"You wude, wuff person—"

The passenger grinned.

"Did you want your head knocked off, young shaver?"

Tom Merry seized D'Arcy by the collar and jerked him round so that he had to look at the arch the tram had passed under. Arthur Augustus turned pale.

"Bai Jove!"

"This gentleman has saved you from a serious accident, you ass!"

"Bai Jove! I weally apologise for the expressions I used just now, sir, and I thank you vevy much indeed!"

"That's the Bar Gate," said Kerr. "It was built by the Normans. They started it soon after the Conquest, and didn't finish till the reign of Edward the Third—"

"Bai Jove, they must have been pretty tired when they knocked off," said D'Arcy.

Kerr glared at him.

"Ass! That's the Guildhall over the gate—"

"What do they gild there?" asked Lowther.

And Kerr gave up the attempt to impart any further information. The juniors alighted from the tram in Below Bar Street, and strolled about for a time, and enjoyed a solid lunch before they set out to look for the Condor.

CHAPTER 10.

D'Arcy's Thanks!

"MY darling Tommy!"

"Bai Jove, it is Miss Pwiscillah!"

Miss Priscilla Fawcett threw her arms round Tom Merry's neck and hugged him, with a sublime disregard of the crowd, who looked on curiously:

"My darling boy! I thought you were lost! I feared—"

"I'm all right!"

"Where have you been? I was sure that you had fallen over the quay, or tumbled into the dock, or been run over by a tram—"

"Only been having a look round," said Tom Merry, disengaging himself, and turning red as he saw about a hundred pairs of eyes fixed upon him and Miss Fawcett.

"It's all right. Is Miss Cleveland with you?"

"Yes, she has come with me to see you off."

Cousin Ethel came up with a smile. Figgins coloured very much when he shook hands with Cousin Ethel; he always did, for some reason best known to himself. Arthur Augustus noticed it, and he noticed Cousin Ethel's sweet smile, and sniffed. What Ethel could see in that chap Figgins passed the comprehension of Arthur Augustus.

"Bai Jove, Ethel, it's awfully wippin' of you to come and see us off!" the swell of St. Jim's remarked.

"Yes, Miss Fawcett was kind enough to bring me with her," said Cousin-Ethel, "and, of course, I was glad to come. I wish I was coming on the cruise."

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"By Jove, I wish you were," exclaimed Figgins, so eagerly that Cousin Ethel coloured and laughed.

"Weally, Figgins—" began D'Arcy.

"And you are quite well, my dear Tommy?" said Miss Fawcett. "And you have carried out all my instructions?"

"Yes, dear," said Tom Merry, keeping at arm's length in case Miss Priscilla should hug him again.

He was very fond of his old governess, but he was keenly conscious of the amusement of the onlookers.

"You have packed up all the things I sent you?"

"As many as could be got into my trunk."

"Dear me! Surely you are not restricted as to the amount of luggage you take?"



Half-a-dozen steps from the bottom a roll of the steamer sent Lowther reeling or seven juniors were rolling down the stairs. "Ow!!" "Ow! Oh

Tom Merry laughed.

"If we weren't, dear, we should want another steamer in attendance to carry it."

"Ah, yes; but you surely must be allowed to take the actual necessities of life!" said Miss Fawcett. "Did you find room in your trunk for the half-dozen bottles of Dr. Bones' Wonderful Elixir for Pining Persons?"

Tom Merry coloured guiltily.

"No; they were crowded out."

"You put in the Purple Pills for Pining Patients?"

"No; I was going to, but they had to be left over."

"The Tiny Tablets for Troubled Tummies—"

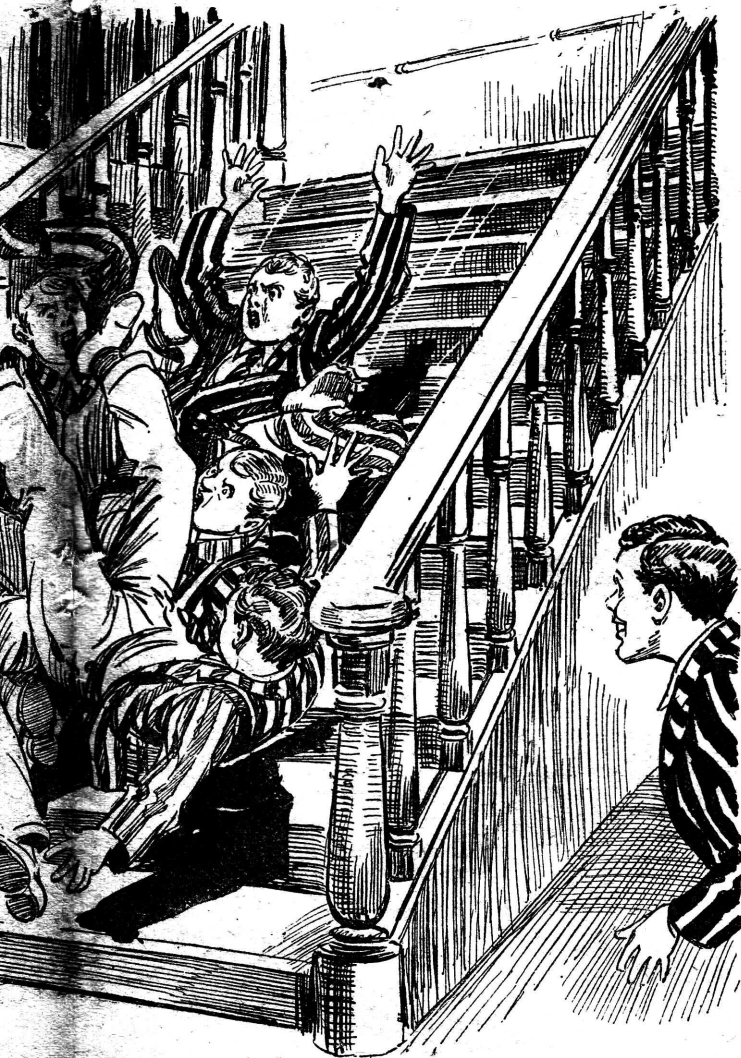
"They were left out, too."

"My dear child, it is as much as your life is worth to go to sea unprovided for in this way!"

"That's all right."

"It is not all right. I am very much alarmed."
 "Suppose you send me some to the first port we touch at," suggested Tom Merry. "We can let you know, and you can send a parcel to wait for the Condor there."
 "Yes, that is a good thought, my child. It is better than nothing, though I wish you had been able to find room in your box for some of the Purple Pills, at least. Fortunately, you will not be without ample cod-liver oil—"
 "I am afraid that got left out, too," murmured Tom Merry.

"But I have brought an extra bottle in my bag," said Miss Priscilla triumphantly. "It is a large bottle, and will last you some time, if you take it all yourself, though if



Lowther reeling into Figgins, who fall against Blake, and the next moment six "Ow! Oh! Ow!" "Geroff, you ass!" Their howls rent the air!

any of the other boys should want some, of course you will share with them.

"Willingly!" said Tom Merry.

"That is my own generous boy—"

"B'y'r leave!"

"Dear me, what is that curious noise?"

"It's a porter," grinned Tom Merry. "He's saying, 'By your leave!' You're in the way of the trolley."

"Dear me! I beg your pardon, my good man!"

The good man grunted, and rolled his trolley-load of trunks onward to the gangway of the steamer.

Arthur Augustus stepped forward eagerly.

"Bai Jove, there they are! They're my twunks!"

"You won't be allowed to take them all on board," said Blake.

"But they're goin' on now, deah boy!"

Mr. Railton was looking over the side of the steamer.

He caught sight of the juniors, and came hastily ashore. His brow was very stern, but it had to clear when he found himself in the presence of Miss Fawcett and Cousin Ethel. He greeted them very courteously, and saved up his wrath for the truants.

"B'y'r leave!"

"Stop a minute, my good man," said Mr. Railton, glancing at the trunks. "I see by the initials, D'Arcy, that all these trunks belong to you."

"Yaas, wathah—I mean, yaas, sir!"

"Each boy is allowed to take only one trunk," said Mr. Railton. "That was notified to the whole school by Holmes."

"Yaas, but—"

"No exceptions can be made in favour of any particular person. You can take which ever trunk you like on board, D'Arcy, but you can take only one."

The face of Arthur Augustus fell considerably.

"But, undah the circe, sir—"

"Come, you are keeping a busy man waiting."

"But—"

"Leave two of these trunks standing here, my man," said Mr. Railton. "Any two. They are to be sent back."

"Weally, Mr. Waiton—"

"Better choose one quick," said Blake, grinning

"Yaas, wathah! I will take this one, please," said D'Arcy, laying his gloved hand on the largest trunk. "But, weally, it is wathah wotten, as my things are divided among the twunks, and I can't open them now to sort them out."

"No, you certainly cannot," said Mr. Railton, smiling.

"I suppose I can have the hatbox as well as the twunk."

"Well, yes, I suppose so."

"And the handbox?"

"Yes, you may take that."

Two trunks were left standing. The other went with the luggage on board the Condor, with the hatbox and handbox.

Mr. Railton escorted the ladies on board, the juniors forming a sort of guard of honour round them.

The rest of the passengers had long been on board.

Mr. Railton took the first opportunity of speaking to Tom Merry, unheard by Miss Fawcett:

"You left the party at the station without permission, Merry?"

"Wandered away in the crowd, sir."

"Accidentally?"

Tom Merry coloured.

"No, sir," he said frankly.

Mr. Railton smiled.

"H'm! Well, you are at least frank about it, Merry. Perhaps I can overlook the matter this time; but, mind, nothing of this sort must occur again!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom Merry. "We really meant no harm, sir; only just wanted to have a look at the town. It's a fine city, sir!"

"Very well, the matter is ended."

Mr. Ratcliff came along the deck. There was a sour look upon the face of the New House master.

"Ah, the truants have returned, I see!" he observed.

"Yes, Mr. Ratcliff."

"Have you punished them?"

Mr. Railton's cheek showed a slight deepening of colour. "No. As we are sailing to-day I did not wish the occasion to be marred by any punishment, so I have forgiven them, as no harm is really done."

"You are too lenient, Mr. Railton."

The School House master was silent. He was junior master there, and authority, in the last resort, rested in the hands of his senior.

"With the boys of your House I shall not interfere—at least, at present," said Mr. Ratcliff. "But some of the trunks belonged to my House."

"Only two of them."

"Figgins and Kerr, I think?"

"Yes."

"Ah, I will speak to Figgins and Kerr presently!" said Mr. Ratcliff, in a very significant tone.

"If I were to ask you, as a personal favour, to overlook this incident, Mr. Ratcliff?"

The New House master looked very sour.

"I am afraid I could not consent to do so, Mr. Railton. Discipline must be maintained—at least, among my boys."

"Very well," said Mr. Railton, quietly biting his lips. And he turned upon his heel.

Tom Merry had heard what was said, and there was a gleam in his eyes as he looked at Mr. Ratcliff. He began to have an idea of what the senior master's rule in the ship would be like.

CHAPTER 11.
A Misfortune for D'Arcy!

"TOMMY!"

"Yes, dear?"

"I missed you. I was afraid you had fallen over the side of the ship!" said Miss Fawcett, slipping her hand through Tom Merry's arm. "This vessel seems to be very crowded and noisy, my dear."

"Oh, that's only the hurry of getting off!"

"Yes, I suppose so. I hear that we shall have to go ashore soon, and I have many things to attend to before then. I want you to show me your cabin——"

Tom Merry laughed.

"But I haven't a cabin, dear."

Miss Fawcett looked blank.

"But—but where——"

"I shall have a berth with the rest of the fellows," explained Tom Merry. "The School House chaps have the after end, and the New House the fore end of the ship. We haven't the space here that we had at St. Jim's, you know."

"I—I suppose not."

"It will be jolly comfy, though!" said Tom Merry reassuringly.

"I suppose there is a bell handy to your berth——"

"A bell! What for?"

"To ring for the steward or—the Housemaster, in case you should be ill."

"Oh, I'm not going to be ill!" said Tom Merry, grinning at the idea of ringing up Mr. Railton in the middle of the night. "I'm a pretty good sailor, you know."

"You were very ill on the ship coming from India, when you were a tiny tot," said Miss Fawcett anxiously.

"Well, I am older now. Some of the chaps will be ill, I expect. Fatty Wynn is bound to have a high old time. He's been getting round the steward for grub already, and he's full up to the chin. I've warned him."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "He's sitting on the other side of the funnel now, eating pork-pies, bai Jove! He will be sowwy for it. For my part, I'm not goin' to eat anythin' more at all before we sail."

"Well, I will go and look at your berth, Tommy," said Miss Fawcett. "I must see that the sheets are well aired, and——"

"The berths are not awanged yet," said Arthur Augustus, coming to Tom's rescue. "It would be bettah to speak to Mr. Waitton about it."

"Yes, that is quite right," said Miss Fawcett, and she bore down upon Mr. Railton.

Figgins was showing Cousin Ethel over the ship, and the girl was delighted with it. The dimensions of the great steamer surprised her. There was ample room for one hundred boys, and the Condor could have crowded in almost as many more again.

"We've got the forepart of the ship," said Figgins. "See, here are our quarters."

"How nice!"

Miss Cleveland spoke quite unsuspectingly, and did not appear to be aware that the forepart of the ship was less agreeable than the stern. Figgins was relieved.

"You see, it's quite appropriate, as the New House takes the lead," he explained.

And Cousin Ethel smilingly assented.

"Jolly big saloon, isn't it? This will be used as a school-room. We're going to have lessons every day while we're at sea, same as at St. Jim's, but shorter, of course. Some of the chaps don't want lessons—say we oughtn't to have them as it's vacation-time. Something in that, too; only the powers that be think it's better for us."

"So it is," said Cousin Ethel, and Figgins laughed.

"Well, yes, we might get bored doing nothing all day," he admitted. "But we're going to rig up netting when we get out to sea, so that we can play cricket and tennis on deck. This is the grand staircase. There is a lift up to the top deck, you see, but it's not working just now."

"That will be very useful."

"Yes, when it gets going. We can have some larks on this staircase, too," said Figgins, as he led the way up.

"Jolly big place, isn't it? Hallo! What on earth's that?"

Something came rolling downstairs from above. It proved to be a silk hat. It bumped down past Figgins before he could stop it, and the next moment Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into view in hot pursuit.

"Stop it, Figgins!"

"Jump for it, Gussy!" said Figgins encouragingly.

"Jump, and you'll land on it if you're careful."

D'Arcy did not take his advice. He ran down the stairs, and after the escaped hat, which had been blown off by a gust of wind. The hat was an easy first at the bottom, and unfortunately several juniors in the room below sighted it before the swell of St. Jim's could overtake it.

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"On the ball!" shouted Lowther, making for the hat.

"Hold on, Lowthah——"

"Pass!" yelled Reilly.

"Pway don't be an ass, Weilly! That is my hat——"

"Pass, you spalpeen!"

Lowther reached the hat, and manfully passed to Reilly, who centred to the saloon, and Manners captured the hat and dribbled it in fine style along the length of the great apartment.

A dozen juniors promptly joined in the game, Arthur Augustus following them with shrieks of dismay and wrath.

"Pass!"

"Play up there!"

"On the ball!"

"Stop, you wottahs! I uttahly wefuse to have my hat tweated as a footah, and I insist upon its bein' westored to me. Stop, I say! You uttah wottahs!"

"Pass!"

"Play up!"

D'Arcy made a desperate rush into the midst of the footballers, and rescued his hat. It was a wreck. The swell of St. Jim's gazed at the broken crown and damaged brim and burst sides with feelings too deep for words.

"I say, I hope we haven't damaged it," said Reilly.

It was insult added to injury. Arthur Augustus dropped the ruined topper, and went for Reilly like a bolt from the blue. The Irish junior had just time to grapple with him before he was bowled over, and they rolled on the floor in deadly combat.

"You uttah beast!"

"You silly ass!"

"Bai Jove, I'll give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Sure, and it's yerself that will get that same entoirely."

"Go it!" exclaimed Lowther. "This beats cock-fighting! Go it, Gussy!"

"Play up, Reilly!"

"Go for his boko, Gussy!"

"Whatever is the matter?"

It was Miss Priscilla's voice. The good old soul had arrived upon the scene, escorted by Tom Merry. Tom had endeavoured to guide her footsteps in another direction, but Miss Fawcett had been alarmed by the noise, and insisted upon coming to see what was the matter.

"Dear me! Is it possible that they are fighting?"

"Fighting!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, in amazement. "Whatever can make you think of such a thing, Miss Fawcett?"

"Dear me! It looks very much like it."

D'Arcy and Reilly separated at once. D'Arcy rubbed his mouth, from the corner of which came a trickle of red, and Reilly caressed his nose, which was swelling visibly.

"I—I am sure you are hurt, my children!" exclaimed Miss Fawcett anxiously. "What have you been doing?"

"I was just instwuctin' Weilly," said D'Arcy. "I—I was showin' him a new twick, you know."

"Faith, and I was showing D'Arcy one!" said Reilly.

"Dear me! It looked just as if you were fighting."

"Oh, Miss Pwisioillah!"

"Oh, Miss Fawcett!"

"I am sure I beg your pardon for my mistake," said Miss Fawcett. "Of course, I know that two such nice boys would not fight."

And she passed on with Tom Merry.

"Faith, and it's ashamed of yourself ye ought to be, Gussy!" said Reilly. "Fighting before a lady like a hooligan."

"I wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort," retorted D'Arcy. "Aftah your impertinence, I had no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'. My hat is wuined."

"Well, you've got lots of them," said Lowther. "One silk topper more or less doesn't make any difference to you."

"I have only thwee more on board this ship, and I shall not be able to get any new ones until we weturn fwom the cwuise."

"Well, surely three at a time are enough, even for you!"

But D'Arcy only sniffed indignantly and turned away.

CHAPTER 12.

Off to Sea!

DEAR me! What is that dreadful noise, Tommy darling?"

"That's the engines, dear."

"The ship seems to be moving——"

"That's all right! We haven't cast off yet."

"It is time for all who are not going to sail to go ashore, Miss Fawcett," said Mr. Railton, coming up. "May I see you off the ship?"

"Thank you, Mr. Railton! Good-bye, Tommy!"

"Good-bye, dear!" said Tom Merry, kissing his old nurse affectionately. "Good-bye, and keep your pecker up—I mean, don't be anxious about me."

"You are sure you have the bottle of cod-liver oil safe?"

"Yes; I was careful to put it in a safe place."

"You promise me to change your socks immediately, if you should get your feet wet?"

"Certainly."

"And always to wear flannel next—"

"Yes, yes; certainly."

"Remember that you are a delicate child, and that it is necessary to be very careful of your darling health."

"I am afraid there is no time to lose," said Mr. Railton. "Yes, yes. Good-bye, once more, my sweet child. Where is Ethel?"

"Ah, I have not seen Miss Cleveland!"

"I'll look for her," said Tom Merry.

Miss Fawcett accepted Mr. Railton's aid to the deck. Tom Merry went in search of Cousin Ethel. Arthur Augustus was seeking for her, too. The swell of St. Jim's had taken the extra topper out of the handbox, and brushed it up well, and was wearing it in the place of the one that had been basely used as a footer.

"Have you seen Cousin Ethel, Tom Mewwy?"

"I'm looking for her now."

"Bai Jove! I wondah where she is? Have you seen Figgins?"

"He was with Cousin Ethel when I saw him last."

Arthur Augustus frowned.

"I weally don't see why that chap is always hangin' wound Cousin Ethel," he observed. "He must bore her feahfully. I wondah—"

"I can hear Figgy's voice," said Tom Merry.

"Bai Jove! So can I!"

Figgins' voice could be heard from the other side of a huge pile of luggage.

"That's the whistle sounding, Miss Ethel. I suppose you must go. By Jove! I do wish you were coming on this cruise!"

"It would be very nice."

"Do you care for picture postcards?"

Tom Merry grinned, and dragged D'Arcy away from the spot. The swell of St. Jim's stared at him.

"What are you up to, Tom Mewwy?"

"Oh, that's all right; there's a few minutes yet."

"It's like Figgins' cheek to say good-bye to my cousin, and it's time for Ethel to go ashore."

"That's all right; there's a few minutes yet."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"But Figgins must be borin' Ethel feahfully—"

Tom Merry laughed.

"Don't worry about that, Gussy. Keep off the grass."

Cousin Ethel did not look as if Figgins was boring her. They had paused, quite accidentally, of course, in the screen of the huge luggage pile to exchange a few words of farewell.

"Do you care for picture postcards, Cousin Ethel?"

"Very much," said Cousin Ethel.

"Would you care for me to send you some—from every place we stop at?" said Figgins eagerly.

"But that would be a great trouble, surely?"

"Trouble!" said Figgins reproachfully.

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"Well, I should like it very much."

"I'll just stick my initials on them, you know," said Figgins; "then you'll know from whom they come. I—I wish I weren't going. I—"

"Ethel!"

"Dear me! That is Miss Fawcett calling."

Cousin Ethel and Figgins emerged from behind the pile of luggage and joined Miss Fawcett.

The old lady looked relieved.

"I was afraid you had fallen into the water, my dear," she said. "Still, I might have known Figgins would look after you."

Figgins turned crimson, and Cousin Ethel put up her parasol.

"Yes, yes," she said hurriedly. "Is it time to go ashore?"

"Yes," said Mr. Railton, with a smile. "I am sorry, but there are only a few minutes now. Let me see you over the gangway."

There was a final handshaking, a final injunction from Miss Fawcett to Tom Merry to be sure not to get his feet wet, and the ladies left the ship with the Housemaster.

Mr. Railton returned hastily. Miss Priscilla waved her hand to Tom Merry, and Cousin Ethel waved a little handkerchief, to whom we cannot specify.

"Bai Jove! We're moving at last!" said D'Arcy, leaning on the rail and waving his glove to Cousin Ethel. "How wippin' of them to come to see us off! See, Ethel's wavin' her handkerchief to me!"

The ship was in a buzz now. Captain Bolsover was rapping out orders on the bridge, and Thropp and Green, the mates, were excited and busy, as was everyone else on board. The Condor began to rise and fall on the water.

The engines were thumping away noisily. The boys of St. Jim's crowded the rail and waved hats and handkerchiefs and hands. Many of the fellows had had friends to see them off, and there was quite a crowd at the landing-place. Among them could be seen Miss Fawcett and Cousin Ethel. The white handkerchief still fluttered from Miss Cleveland's hand, and her eyes were still on the ship. The great steamer floated out, the water widening more and more, and the objects on shore growing smaller and more confused.

Figgins stood up on the lower rail, one leg twisted round the upper rail to keep himself steady, and waved his cap wildly. D'Arcy took off his silk hat a dozen times at least, and Tom Merry waved his hand. Miss Fawcett, as the distance increased, left off waving her hand, and waved her umbrella instead. Tom Merry saw the umbrella crash into a white top-hat worn by an old gentleman standing near her, and that was the last he saw of Miss Fawcett.

The white handkerchief still fluttered, and Figgins waved his cap frantically.

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the long-limbed junior on the rail.

"I weally think Figgins is off his wockah, Tom Mewwy," he remarked. "He has had nobody down here to see him off, and yet he's wavin' his cap as if all his friends and relations were there."

"Curious," said Tom Merry, laughing.

"Yaas, I wegard it as extremely cuwious. Hallo! Cousin Ethel is still waving her handkerchief to me."

And D'Arcy raised his silk hat for the thirteenth time. Unfortunately for the swell of St. Jim's a gust of wind caught it, and swept it from his hand, and it splashed into the water. In a moment it was whisked into the white wake of the ship.

Arthur Augustus gave a shout.

"My hat's overboard! Pway stop the ship at once!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy ran towards the bridge.

"Captain Bolsovah, pway turn the steamah back for a few minutes. My hat's dwooped ovahboard!"

The captain did not even look down. Blake and Digby and Herries dragged the swell of St. Jim's away, and held on to him to keep him from further moderate requests to the captain.

D'Arcy protested, and, finding his protests useless, gave it up, and relaxed into indignant silence, watching his silk hat whisk away in the wake of the steamer till it disappeared from view.

CHAPTER 13.

Mal-de-mer!

SKIMPOLE was leaning on the rail and thoughtfully watching the water churning away from under the steamer, when Jack Blake tapped him on the shoulder.

The brainy man of St. Jim's looked round, blinking through his spectacles in the sunlight.

"Got it?" asked Blake.

Skimpole looked puzzled.

"Got what?"

"It!"

"I really do not understand you, Blake. I was thinking of my airship. If it had been completed it would have been much more satisfactory for us to have made this holiday trip on board of it, instead of on a common steamer."

"Ripping!" said Blake. "Why didn't you finish it?"

"Well, there were a few structural details I had not quite decided upon, such as the method of raising in the air and the method of propulsion. Otherwise, it was practically perfect."

Blake smiled, and was turning away when a deep groan caught his ear, and he looked round to see Fatty Wynn sitting in the shadow of a boat, his face as white as chalk.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed D'Arcy, coming up, and looking really concerned. "Fatty Wynn looks as if he is ill."

"I am dying!"

"Good gwacious! Have you hurt yourself anywhere?"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"Where do you feel the beastlay pain, you know?"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"Poor chap! He does look wotten," said D'Arcy anxiously. "What do you think is the mattah with him, Blake?"

"Pork pies," said Blake. "Porkpieitis!"

"Porkpieitis?" said D'Arcy, looking puzzled. "I have nevah heard of that disease before."

(Continued on page 19.)

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SEE WHAT'S IN—



Address all letters : The Editor, The GEM, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! Are you enjoying Tom Merry & Co.'s holiday adventures? I'll say you are! Then stand by for some more thrills, fun, and healthy excitement. Next week's grand long yarn is "loaded" with them. In

"THE FLOATING SCHOOL!"
By MARTIN CLIFFORD,

you will find your favourite author at the top of his form. (He likes writing these stories of the St. Jim's juniors as much as you like reading them.) And what do you think of

"THE WORLD WRECKERS!"

Great, what? I told you in advance to expect a corking good story and now you can judge for yourselves. Tell all your non-reader pals about it. Potts the Office-Boy has "squeezed" himself into next week's all-star programme, so look out for your weekly tonic laugh, while for News turn to the Notebook. One more word—Order your GEM NOW!

THE OBSTACLE RACE!

He was a gallant beast—as good as any coster's horse in the district. But one day he got the "wind up" and bolted for dear life. Listen to the "obstacles" he encountered in that short whirlwind gallop. First he barged into a lamp-post. Next, he found the clattering barrow behind him a bit of a bother, so he promptly freed himself of it. Later, he saw a sandpit—and too late he discovered that the pit was filled with rainwater, so was obliged to swim across it. Even that didn't satisfy him. He kept on galloping through field after field, met a factory yard and went through it like a flash, and so on to some real marshy ground. But here his wind was beginning to crack up, and the story ends with the coster's horse stuck fast in the marshland, where he allowed himself to be recaptured.

FIRE CAUSED BY RAIN!

It was a leaky roof, and under it were umpteen sacks of quicklime, surrounded by quantities of timber. The falling rain "got at" the quicklime, which soon began to seethe with heat. The timber helped matters so far as making a fire was concerned—and the local fire brigade spent sixty minutes putting out this unusual blaze!

LUCKY DOG!

There's a frisky dog running around in the Kakamega gold-mining area which owes its life to General Sir Joseph Byrne—the GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,279.

Governor of Kenya. But a short time ago that selfsame dog stood a great risk of being hewn in two—a pleasant native custom which consummates the swearing of an oath. Briefly the story is this. The natives of the gold mining district were afraid that their land was going to be taken from them, and a deputation, headed by the chieftain, called upon the British Governor. He assured them that their land would not be interfered with, whereupon the chief stepped forward and asked the Governor to supplement his promise by swearing in the tribal custom. He handed the Governor a hefty sword, produced the dog, and begged the Governor to cut the dog in half and sprinkle its blood around. Quite naturally, Sir Joseph declined, and using great tact, managed to convince the natives that his word was good enough. Whether they were completely satisfied is not known, but, needless to say, the dog is!

'WARE THE SNAKE!

A Rochester man had an unusual experience recently when he went to fetch his motor-cycle out of its shed, for on the handlebars was what he thought to be a length of rope, tightly wound round them. But the moment he touched that "rope" it woke up and revealed itself to be an angry snake, two feet and a half long. Needless to say, that snake did not live long. If you want to see him to-day pay a visit to the Rochester Museum, for that's where he is "buried." Another snake story comes from a Peckham resident, at the end of whose garden runs the Grand Surrey Canal. One day he heard a strange noise coming from the canal, and upon investigation saw the head of a large "eel" rise above the surface. A quick movement with a handy stick and that "eel," which measured three feet six inches long, was flung on to the bank. Then its captor realised that he had caught a snake—and a very deadly snake at that! The viper turned upon him, flashing its fangs and whipping its tail round his legs. For half an hour a desperate fight for life ensued and the Peckham man won. But he won't forget his strange experience for a long time. In America the snake is called "the silent death," a bite from which is calculated to kill a human being inside five minutes, and it is assumed that it "shipped" to England in a cargo boat and escaped while being "unloaded" into a barge.

THE SAFETY SEAT!

Some of the "latest" aeroplanes are fitted with special "life-saving" seats, attached to which are parachutes that automatically open. In emergency, these seats can be released and "dropped" through the floor of an aeroplane by a simple movement of a switch. Once clear of the aeroplane the parachutes open and your passengers land eventually without mishap. Parachuting made comfortable, so to speak!

GOLF BALL RACES A MOTOR-CAR!

They get up to some queer stunts in America. Listen to the latest. Gene Sarazen, the famous golfer, is said to hit a golf ball at a velocity of between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and thirty miles an hour. How did they find that out? Why, they synchronised a "drive" from a tee, with all Gene Sarazen's skill and energy behind it, with a motor-car which travelled at a steady speed of one hundred and twenty miles an hour. In the first hundred yards the golf ball was actually ahead of the car. Then for a while the car and ball travelled at the same speed, but eventually the car got home first. Along the "course" were men with stop watches, who timed the drive of the golf ball in two hundred and thirty yards at 4.5 seconds, whilst the car took 4.1 seconds. What next we wonder?

SCHOOLBOY ORATOR REPRESENTS ENGLAND!

Master G. G. P. Smith, a pupil at Windsor County Boys' School, is a very proud young man to-day, for he has been picked to "speak for England" in the forthcoming International Oratorical Contest, which is to be held at Washington, U.S.A., in a month or two's time. Smith will compete with the representatives of more than twenty nations on the great day, and he has chosen for his subject, "Gladstone"—the famous statesman. Once he has got through that "selected subject" he will have to make up another speech as he goes along on some topic connected with Gladstone which the organisers will decide upon. It's a great test for a youngster, and all Gemites will wish G. G. P. Smith the best of luck when his turn comes to show the mixed audience that he has got "the gift o' the gab!"

A DELIBERATE CRASH!

Holidaymakers at Sandown, Isle of Wight, experienced a strange thrill some time last month. They were gazing out to sea when, before their eyes, an aeroplane dived straight into the water, and in a few moments only its tail was left visible above the surface of the waves. Close at hand stood the aircraft-carrier, Ark Royal, from which boats were quickly lowered and rowed to the scene of the "tragedy." The people on shore, especially those with binoculars, began to let their imagination run riot after that. Some said that the pilot had been drowned, that he had been rescued, that three or four lives had been lost, etc. Then came the "official" explanation, which gave it out that the Air Ministry were testing a special secret floating gear for metal aircraft, and wanted to note the results of a forced landing. Thus the tragedy became a comedy—which everybody appreciated.

YOUR EDITOR.

"ALL ABOARD THE CONDOR!"

(Continued from page 17.)

"There are lots of things you've never heard of, Gussy, and that's one of them. That's what Fatty's got."

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"He seems to be suffewin' feahfully. Shall I call the captain?"

Blake giggled.

"Yes. I think I can see him coming."

"I suppose he would come, if I called him," said Arthur Augustus, in his most stately manner.

"Ha, ha, ha! Try!"

D'Arcy did not try. Skimpole came up at that moment.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole. "What is the matter with Wynn?"

"He's ill," said D'Arcy. "Blake says he's got somethin' called porkpieitis, but I don't believe it's anythin' of the sort."

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"It is terrible to see a fellow-creature suffering like this," said Skimpole. "Perhaps he has been eating some tinned food. Have you been eating any tinned meats, Wynn? In that case, you have probably got ptomaine poisoning."

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"You asses!" said Blake. "Can't you see that it's the mal-de-mer?"

"The what?"

"Sea-sickness, duffer!"

"Bai Jove, you know, I nevah thought of that!"

"It was the pork pies," groaned Fatty Wynn. "I had a feeling at the time that they would not agree with the cold rabbit and the veal cutlets."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I thought I'd risk it. Oh, oh, oh! I'm dying!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Oh, oh, oh! Help! Murder! Stop the ship!"

"The steamah can't be stopped, deah boy. The captain wewfused to turn back when my silk toppah went ovahboard, so he's pweetty certain to keep on now," said D'Arcy sympathetically. "I say, Skimmy, you're a bwainy chap. Don't you know any cure for sea-sickness?"

Skimpole rubbed his bumpy forehead and reflected.

"I have heard that a piece of fat bacon tied on the end of a string, and drawn slowly up and down the inside of the throat—"

"Ow! Aw! Garrarrerrarrooh!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Dear me, he seems to have become worse all of a sudden," said Skimpole. "It is too late to try that remedy now."

"You cheerful chump!" said Blake.

"Really, Blake—"

"Don't bother him. Let him be ill if he wants to. Here's a glass of water, Fatty, old chap—that's what you want."

"Ooh, ooh, ooh!"

Blake gave it up. He moved along so as not to be a witness of the agonies of the fat junior. He came upon Herries sitting on a trunk, with a far-away look in his eyes, and his lips tightly clenched.

"Hallo!" said Blake, dropping his hand on his chum's shoulder. "You've been pretty mum for some time. Enjoying the scenery?"

"D-don't touch me!" murmured Herries.

Blake stared at him.

"Why not?"

"I—I don't feel quite well."

"Have you got it?"

"I—I—I think so."

Herries' face was becoming paler every moment, and beads of perspiration were standing upon his brow. His gaze was fixed, and seemed to be following the flight of a seagull far away on the blue waters of the Channel. In reality he saw nothing. All his energies and faculties were bound up in a desperate attempt to resist the strange feeling that was creeping over him.

"Have a glass of water, old son?"

"Ye-e-es."

The steward had tin basins and water-glasses all ready in any number. He knew what to expect. Blake brought a glass of water for Herries, and left it beside him. The junior seemed to want to be alone.

The steamer was rolling very slightly, considering, but it was quite sufficient to trouble her passengers, especially those who had, before embarking, lunched not wisely, but too well.

Far away to the north was the blue line of the Hampshire coast and the Isle of Wight, and hills beyond. Round the Condor rolled the waters of the Channel, dotted with white sails and black smoke of steamers.

"Rough on old Herries, isn't it, Dig?" asked Blake, joining his chum at the rail. "He's knocked under."

Digby did not reply.

He had sunk forward on the rail, resting his head upon it, and his face was staring downwards, without a vestige of colour in it, at the sea.

"I say, Dig—"

"Ger-r-r-r!"

"My only hat! Dig's got it, too!"

"I say, Blake, deah boy!" said a faint voice.

Blake turned towards Arthur Augustus. D'Arcy had sunk into a deckchair, and was looking very white.

"Got it, Gussy?"

"I am not seasick, if that's what you mean, Blake. I feel wathah queeah—I think I ate somethin' at lunch that disagreed with me—but I am not seasick. I wathah think I should like a glass of watah."

Blake grinned.

"I'll get you one, Gussy, though you're not seasick."

"Thank you, Blake."

D'Arcy sipped the water when Blake brought it.

"Yaas, that tastes wathah wewfeshin'— Oh!"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothin'. I felt wathah a cuwious feelin', that's all. It was nothin'."

"Nothing like sea-sickness?" grinned Blake.

"Oh, no, not at all— Oh, oh!"

"Anything the matter?"

"No, yaas—I don't know! I certainly feel wathah queeah," groaned Arthur Augustus. "It is poss that I have a slight attack, aftah all."

"I should say it was," remarked Blake.

He looked up and down the deck. A large number of fellows had gone below, and others were sitting or standing about the decks looking very unhappy. Kildare, the captain of St. Jim's, looked comfortable enough, as he chatted with Darrell and Rushden. He was an old sailor, and impervious. But both Darrell and Rushden were looking a little uneasy, and all at once the latter made a rush for the side.

"By Jove, they're all getting it!" murmured Blake. "It's this beastly choppy water, I suppose, and that lovely niff you get now and then from the engines. I'm all right." He paused for a moment, as a curious feeling of uncertainty seemed to float about within him. "I'm all right," he repeated, but less confidently than before. "Hallo, here's the old Ratty! I wonder how he'll stand it?"

Mr. Ratcliff, the senior Housemaster—and monarch of all he surveyed on board the Condor, as far as the boys were concerned—had just come on deck, looking very sour.

CHAPTER 14.

Skimpole the Comforter!

"**F**IGGINS!"

"Adsum!" said Figgins cheerfully.

"Kerr!"

"Here, sir!"

"Come here, both of you!" said Mr. Ratcliff sourly. "I have to deal with a very serious breach of discipline."

"I'm for it!" murmured Figgins, as he came towards his Housemaster. "Why, oh, why didn't they drown him at birth?"

"You absented yourselves without leave immediately on arrival at Southampton. I have had no time to deal with the matter before. What is the matter with you, Kerr?"

The Scottish partner in the Co. was looking very white.

"I—I feel rather queer, sir!" he gasped.

"Nonsense! You will not escape your punishment by an absurd pretence of that kind!" said Mr. Ratcliff sternly.

"I am not pretending," said Kerr, with spirit. "I am feeling sick. There are a good many others the same; you can see for yourself."

"That is not the way to speak to me, Kerr. I—"

Mr. Ratcliff paused. A strange feeling came over him, and he drew a long, quivering breath. "Dear me, how the ship is rolling! Figgins and Kerr, it will be necessary for me to— Oh dear!"

Mr. Ratcliff was looking white himself now. The sight of several sick fellows near him added to the effect of his inward qualms.

"Yes, sir," said Figgins.

"It will be necessary for me," said Mr. Ratcliff, speaking steadily and with great difficulty, "to make an example—an exam—example— Oh dear!"

He broke off abruptly.

"I—I—I— Can you get me a glass of water, Monteith?"

"Certainly, sir," said the New House prefect promptly.

He brought the water, and Mr. Ratcliff sipped it.

Figgins and Kerr stood like culprits awaiting their doom. Secretly they were watching the signs of growing unrest in Mr. Ratcliff's sour countenance with great interest.

"Figgins, you were to blame, and I—I think— Oh!"
Mr. Ratcliff reeled a little, and Monteith put out an arm to steady him. He gasped. His face was not white now—it was almost green.

"Better sit down, sir."

"Ye-e-e-es, thank you, Monteith, I—I will."

"Do you want us any longer, sir?" said Figgins demurely.

"No—er, you may go."

"If we are to be punished, sir—"

"You—you may go; I—I overlook your offence," said Mr. Ratcliff, who would have forgiven anybody anything to be let alone at that moment. "You may go—go—oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Thank you, sir!"

Figgins and Kerr retired. The mal-de-mer had saved them. But Kerr was looking very peculiar, and a minute or two later he collapsed upon a deck-chair. Figgins looked after him as much as he could, and after Fatty Wynn, but after all there was little that could be done. And Figgins was beginning to feel some very uneasy symptoms himself.

"Bai Jove!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I am feeling worse! I am not what you would call seasick, but it certainly feels vewy bad."

"A great pity my airship was not completed—it would have saved all this," Skimpole remarked. "I am feeling very well myself. Can I get you anything to eat, D'Arcy?"

"Ow! Get away!"

"There is no need to be rude about it. I only meant to be obliging. I say, Tom Merry, will you come and help me unpack my trunk?"

"Gr-r-r-r-r!"

"Is there anything the matter, Merry?"

"Yes, ass! Get away!"

"Will you come down with me, Lowther, and help me—"

"Oh, get away! Don't bother!"

"Really, Lowther, I cannot help regarding your reply as almost rude. Perhaps, however, Manners will come and help me. Will you, Manners?"

Manners did not reply. He was clinging to the rail, and gazing at the sea with a deep, deep gaze. At intervals his chest heaved.

"Manners—"

"Get away, idiot!"

"Oh, certainly. You need not be uncivil. Blake—dear me, Blake, you do look queer. "Are you seasick, too?"

"Oh, no," said Blake; "I—I'm enjoying myself. Don't I look as if I were, you shrieking fathead? Oh—oh—er!"

"Dear me! My airship would have obviated all this," said Skimpole seriously. "It is very unfortunate. I seem to be almost the only person who is well. This is doubtless due to a careful diet. It is very sad to hear you groaning like that, Wynn. Do you feel bad?"

"Do you think I'm groaning for fun, you screaming dummy?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"Really, Wynn—"

"Get away!"

"I do not desire to incommode you with my conversation if it is unwelcome to you, Wynn, but I think—"

"Take him away!" moaned Fatty Wynn. "Kill him, somebody!"

Monteith inserted two fingers in Skimpole's collar and jerked him away and sat him down on the deck. The bump on the planks knocked all the breath out of the freak of the Shell, and he sat for some minutes staring and gasping.

Curiously enough, Skimpole was not in the least seasick. He scrambled up immediately.

"Dear me! I wonder why Monteith did that?" he murmured. "It was almost rude of him. I should certainly punch his head, but as a sincere Determinist I am bound not to use violence. And besides, he is a prefect, and might give me a licking. It would have been really useful if I had devoted my vast brain-power to thinking out some cure for sea-sickness—perhaps more beneficial than the invention of an airship. Perhaps some entertaining and instructive conversation, to take their minds off their sufferings, is the best consolation I can offer under the circumstances. I will do my best."

Kerr was hanging upon the rail as if his life depended upon it when the Determinist of St. Jim's tapped him on the shoulder and smiled kindly.

"Would you care to hear an exposition of the first principles of Determinism, Kerr?" asked Skimpole. "I should be very pleased to quote from memory an extract from the hundred and forty-fourth chapter of my great work—"

Kerr turned a glassy glare upon the speaker.

"Get out!"

"Eh?"

"Get away!"

"Really, Kerr—"

"You dummy! Get out!"

Skimpole got out. He was a little discouraged, but his kind heart was not easily chilled. He moved along to the spot where Herries was embracing his knees and looking the picture of abject misery.

"I say, Herries!"

Herries did not move; he did not look up.

"Herries, old chap, you look pretty bad. I'm sorry I have no cure for sea-sickness, but I should like to remove your thoughts from your sufferings by some light and entertaining conversation. Would you care to hear me quote at full length a poem I have written for the 'Weekly'?"

Herries reached out his hand, caught Skimpole by the collar and swung him away.

Skimpole staggered along till he brought up against Monteith, who was making a sudden rush for the side.

Both of them went flying.

Monteith sat down and remained there, looking white as ashes and gasping faintly in the grip of the demon mal-de-mer.

"Dear me!" said Skimpole. "Herries was almost rude—in fact, quite rude! I shall not attempt to comfort Herries again."

He rose to his feet and adjusted his spectacles. Reilly was moaning near him, and Skimpole approached him sympathetically.

"Are you suffering, Reilly?"

"Faith, and I am!" groaned the boy from Belfast. "Sure, and I'd give anything on earth to have me foot on Belfast ground this minute!"

"I am afraid that is impossible; but I can remove your thoughts from your sufferings by conversation. I should be very happy to explain the principles set forth by Schopenhauer in his great book, 'Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung—"

"Get along wid ye!"

"In the first place, he—"

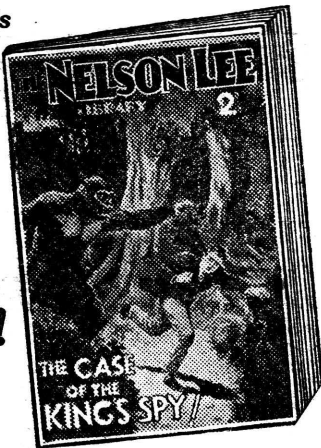
"Faith, and if ye bother me any more I'll scalp ye! Get along wid ye for a silly chattering gossoon!"

"Really, Reilly—"

Reilly made a threatening gesture, and Skimpole retired. He was greatly inclined to give up the role of comforter, but the sight of Gore, sitting on the deck and gasping in anguish, touched him deeply.

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"Hold the rotter!" Tom Merry picked up the broken bottles and poured what was left of their contents over the plump face of Fatty Wynn. He followed it up with the squashed tarts and damaged pies. "Ow! Ugh! Grooo! Grooo! Gerooh—ow!" roared Fatty Wynn. "You came here for these things!! panted Tom Merry. "And now you've got 'em!"

"I am very sorry to see you in this state, Gore," said Skimpole. "Under the painful circumstances I cannot but forget that you are a rotter, and have always treated me like a cad. Would it relieve your mind if I recited you from memory an article I have lately written on Determinism for 'Tom Merry's Weekly'?"

Gore glared at him, and muttered something.

"In this article I point out that the— Ow—wow—wow!"

Gore had reached out with his feet and given Skimpole a shove that sent him rolling over. The brainy man of the Shell rolled near Tom Merry, who was feeling very ill, but found strength enough to give him another shove to send him farther. Lowther and Blake also lent their aid, and Skimpole was feeling decidedly rumbled by the time he escaped below. He gave up the role of comforter on the spot.

CHAPTER 15.

The Captain is Obstinate!

THE sun sank lower into the heaving waters. The Condor steadily churned her way through the growing dusk, gleaming now with lights fore and aft. From the dusk of the sea gleamed points of light from other unseen craft.

Tom Merry rose to his feet.

His face was still a little chalky, but he was feeling better—decidedly better. His sickness was over, and he was beginning to feel more firm in his inside—more as if it belonged to him, as it were. He drank some cold water and felt better.

"I say, Lowther—"

Monty Lowther turned a lack-lustre eye upon him.

"How do you feel?"

"Hallo, Tom!"

"Like a washed-out rag."

Tom Merry laughed.

"And you, Manners, old man?"

"Don't ask me," said Manners. "I can't think how I ever came to be such a shrieking idiot as to set my foot on a ship. Why people go to sea when there's plenty of dry land to stay on puzzles me. Gr-r-r-r!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said a feeble voice. "I wish the captain would turn the ship wound and steam stwaight back to Southampton."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Suppose we get up a wound wobin—"

"A what?"

"A wound wobin."

"He means a round robin," grinned Blake, who was looking almost himself again by this time. "What do you want to get up a round robin for, Gussy?"

"I think we might pwesent a wound wobin to Mr. Waitton to ask him to go back to Southampton at once, as we've changed our minds about goin' to sea."

"I think I can see him doing it!" grinned Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins. "Why don't you go and tell the captain to turn the ship round, Gussy?"

"I have already made a similah request, when my toppah was blown ovahboard, and he wefused to take the slightest notice."

"Curious!"

"Yaas, it was wathah cuwious. He certainly did not tweek me with wopah wespect."

"Dear me, I am glad to see you fellows looking so much better!" said Skimpole, as he came, blinking, out of the gloom. "There's a jolly good meal laid below, and I've been having some. Won't you come and tuck in?"

There was a chorus of groans.

"Don't talk to me about food!" gasped Figgins. "I was feeling better, and now—"

"There's some boiled pork that is very good—"

"Ow! Kill him!"

"You need not be rude about it," said Skimpole. "I only wanted to be obliging. If you feel so bad, why don't you insist upon being set ashore?"

Tom Merry glanced at the dusky sea flowing in ripples past the steamer's rail.

"Rather a wide step to the shore," he remarked.

"As a free born citizen we have a right to have our own way in the matter, and if a majority of us decided to go back, the captain ought to return to Southampton."

"Go and tell him so."

Skimpole blinked resolutely round at the juniors.

"I would certainly do so if I were backed up with a majority of the passengers," he said. "The captain is a hired person, who must naturally do as he is told."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Well, you can see that most of the chaps would like to go back," he remarked. "You've only got to ask them, anyway."

"I shall certainly do so. Would you fellows like to go ashore if possible?" called out Skimpole.

"Yes, rather!"

It was almost a unanimous chorus. Even the sickest of the passengers managed to make that reply.

"Very well," said Skimpole, "I will see to it."

The juniors watched the freak of the Shell curiously as he made his way towards the bridge. Captain Bolsover and Mr. Thropp, the chief mate, were there, and they both stared at Skimpole as he put his foot on the bridge ladder. Mr. Thropp made him a furious gesture, which Skimpole did not understand or heed. He calmly ascended the steps.

The captain waved his hand warningly.

"Get back!"

Skimpole stopped a moment, adjusted his spectacles, and stared at the captain.

"Did you address me?" he asked.

"Yes, you young fool! Get off that ladder!"

"But I want to come upon the bridge."

"You are not allowed here."

"I cannot but regard that statement as absurd," said Skimpole. "This steamer has been hired for our use, and it stands to reason that we are allowed to go anywhere we like upon it."

Captain Bolsover seemed petrified by this reply. Mr. Thropp scowled. Skimpole continued to ascend the ladder.

"Go back!" rapped out Mr. Thropp.

"I cannot accede to that unreasonable request. I want to speak to the captain on a most important matter," said Skimpole.

"Take him away!" yelled Mr. Thropp.

A couple of seamen ran towards the bridge ladder. But Skimpole skipped up it in time to escape their clutches, and approached the amazed captain rather hurriedly.

"If you please, Captain Bolsover—"

"Get off the bridge! You are not allowed here!"

"I have a most important matter to speak to you about. The majority of the passengers have decided that they would rather go ashore, and, therefore, you are requested to turn the ship round and make for Southampton immediately."

The captain gasped.

"I regard the voice of the majority as irresistible," said Skimpole. "You are bound to obey their orders, and they require you to turn the ship round immediately."

"You—you young lubber!" gasped the captain.

"If you refuse I shall certainly advise the majority to remove you from your post and take the ship back themselves."

"Take him away!" said Mr. Thropp to a couple of hands who had come up in obedience to his call.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The two hands seized Skimpole and yanked him away; the freak of St. Jim's struggled indignantly.

"Let me go, you ruffians! Release me immediately while I explain to Captain Bolsover—"

"Throw him down the ladder!" said Mr. Thropp.

"No, don't hurt him," said the captain, laughing. "Take him away, that's all. I shall have to speak to Mr. Ratcliff if this nonsense is repeated, my boy, and you will be punished."

"I must yield to physical force," gasped Skimpole. "But on the principle of the thing, I maintain—"

He was jerked down the ladder and bumped down. He did not renew his attempt to explain matters to the captain. He set his spectacles straight and rejoined the grinning juniors, with a gloomy brow.

"Well, how has it panned out?" asked Figgins.

"I am afraid I have not been successful in making the captain see reason," said Skimpole, shaking his head. "He is obstinate and unreasonable. The only resource would be to compel him to turn the ship round—"

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"Ass!" said Blake.

"Really, Blake—"

"Oh, ring off!" said Blake. "I say, you chaps, I'm feeling better, you know. What do you feel like, Herries?"

Herries looked up with a chalky face.

"Better," he said weakly. "I dare say I shall be all right in a few days."

"In a few hours, you mean," said Tom Merry, laughing. "These things are never so bad as they seem at the time."

Mr. Railton came along the deck, and the boys raised their caps. The Housemaster was looking quite well and jovial.

"Feeling better, lads?" he asked.

"Some of us, sir," said Tom Merry.

"How is Mr. Ratcliff, sir?" asked Figgins, with a twinkle in his eyes.

Mr. Railton smiled slightly.

"I am sorry to say that he is not by any means better," he replied. "He has gone to his cabin, and gone to bed, and he says he will remain there for a few days. I am afraid the sea has upset him very much. Meanwhile, all you boys are under my charge."

The New House fellows did not look displeased. As a matter of fact, they would have been content if Mr. Ratcliff had remained in his cabin the whole of the voyage.

"There is a very substantial supper laid below," said Mr. Railton. "You can come down to it whenever you feel inclined—up to bed-time."

And he nodded and walked on.

There was a deep groan from Fatty Wynn.

The juniors turned towards him anxiously.

"Feeling worse, Fatty?" asked Figgins sympathetically.

"Oh dear!"

"Is it very bad?"

"Oh, no! But to think of a jolly big supper laid out all ready—and not to be able to touch it! Oh dear!"

And Fatty Wynn groaned again.

CHAPTER 16.

A Good Time Coming!

THE stars were coming out in the clear blue sky. A keen, invigorating breeze came over the curling waters.

Tom Merry felt his heart grow lighter as the last traces of mal-de-mer left him, and he drew in deep draughts of salty air.

"By Jove, this is all right!" he exclaimed. "I say, I'm beginning to feel hungry."

"Do you know, I am, too," said Lowther, in a rather uncertain way. "I don't know that I could eat anything, but I certainly feel rather hollow."

"No wonder!"

"Bai Jove, I wathah think we're all a little hollow now!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "As a mattah of fact, deah boys, I am beginnin' to feel wathah a cwavin' for somethin' to eat myself."

"How do you feel, Fatty?" asked Figgins.

Fatty Wynn groaned.

"It was the pork pies," he murmured.

"Eh?"

"I should have been all right, but for the pork pies. It was risky—I knew that at the time. But I was hungry, and they were so nice. I get so hungry in this August weather," said Fatty Wynn pathetically.

"Couldn't you eat just a little bit?" said Figgins encouragingly.

"Oh! I—I can't move!"

"We'll help you down," said Blake. "You can take one arm, Figg, and I'll take the other, and Tom Merry can take his legs."

"I—I'd rather walk!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "Take my arms and bear the weight, and then I think perhaps I can do it."

"Get a good hold, Figg."

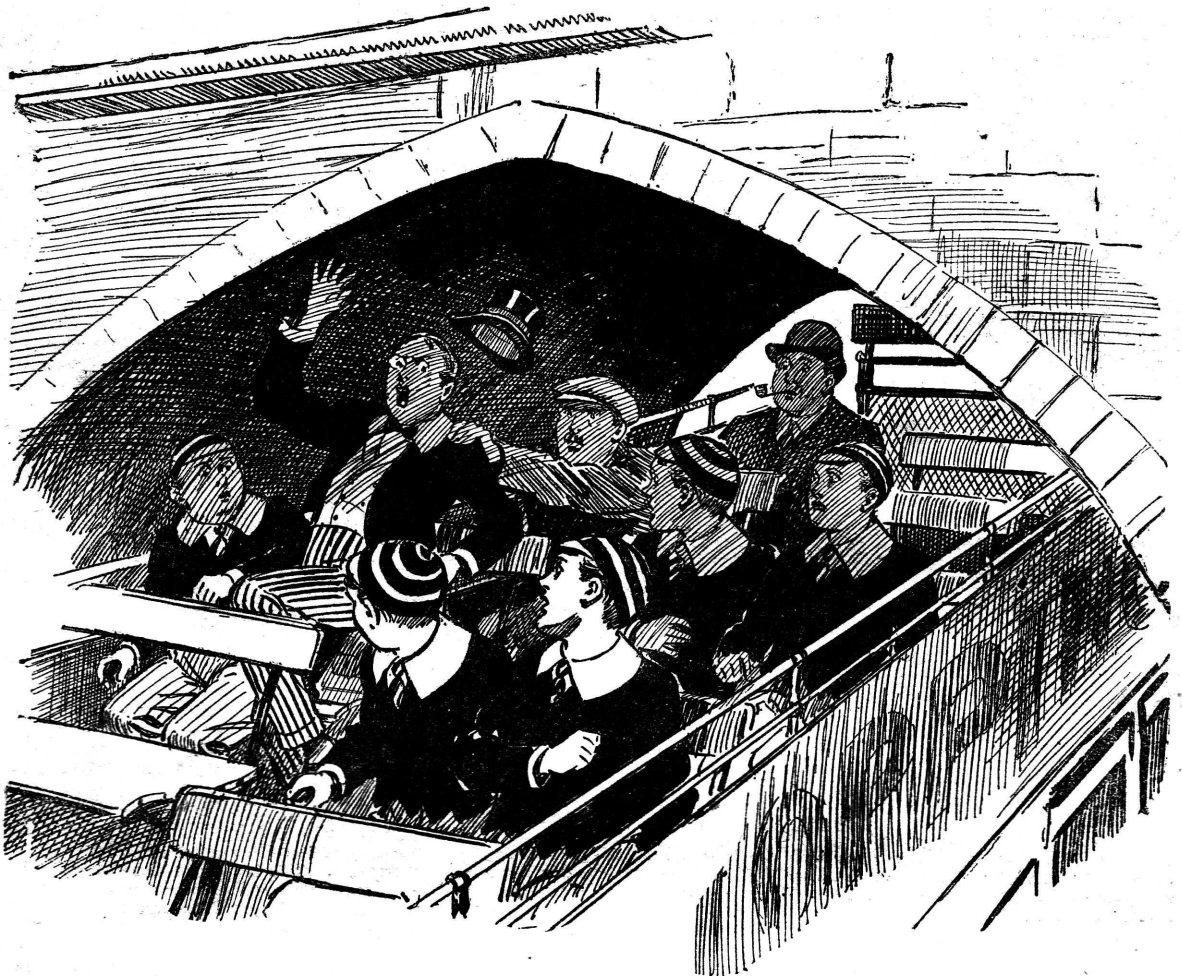
"Right-ho! I've got him!"

"I've got him, too. Now, walk, Fatty."

Fatty, with a deep gasp, heaved himself upon his feet. With the sympathetic juniors all round him helping, he staggered towards the stairs down to the dining saloon. He walked slowly, zigzagging, but his helpers were patient. He had to pause for a few minutes at the head of the stairs.

"I—I don't think I can do it!" he gasped.

"Buck up!" said Tom Merry, who was entering into the spirit of the thing. "You're going to have a good supper, Fatty, and forget all your troubles. Shall I take your legs and go first?"



"Sit down!" "What did you say, my deah fellow?" asked D'Arcy. "Sit down!" said the passenger, excitedly. "Weally—oh!" The passenger suddenly grasped D'Arcy and dragged him down just in time as the tram passed under a great arch.

"N-n-no, thanks; I think I'll walk."

Blake and Figgins helped the unhappy Fatty down. Several other juniors followed to lend their kindly aid.

They were half a dozen steps from the bottom when a roll of the steamer sent Lowther reeling against Figgins, who fell against Blake, and the next moment six or seven juniors were rolling downward.

"Ow!" gasped Fatty Wynn.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"You ass!"

"Gerroff!"

"My hat!"

"Lemme gerrup!"

They extricated themselves at last. Fatty Wynn was puffing like a grampus, and looking very sick. Tom Merry and Lowther lifted him to his feet.

"All right, Fatty?"

"Put me in some quiet corner where I can die in peace!" moaned Fatty. "I only want to die—to die in peace!"

"You came jolly near dying in pieces, with all these silly asses tumbling over you!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Bring him in here," said Tom Merry. "The smell of the grub will revive him if anything will!"

Tom Merry was right.

An appetising scent from several hot dishes on the table reached the nostrils of Fatty Wynn, and he was observed to sniff appreciatively.

"I say, that's nice," he said, in something of his old tone. "That's jolly nice. I—I really feel as if I could gat something, after all."

"Bring him in!" grinned Tom Merry.

They helped Fatty Wynn in, and put him into a seat. His eyes glistened as he looked over the well-spread board. Skimpole was there, making a second supper, and several

other fellows had strolled in, too. The grip of the mal-de-mer had relaxed, and there was a general recovery all along the line.

Tom Merry carved for Fatty, and gave him a generous helping. It disappeared as if by magic. As Fatty explained, he had plenty of room for it. Arthur Augustus came in, and he also made a vigorous onslaught upon the good things.

"Bai Jove, you know, I feel wathah bettah!" he remarked. "As a mattah of fact, deah boys, I wasn't what you call seasick at all—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, I wegard this laughtah as diswespectful! I wepeat that I was not what you weally call seasick. It was just a twifling—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think I'll have some more of that beef," said Fatty Wynn. "And while you're carving the mutton, Lowther, you may as well cut for me. I shall be ready in a few minutes. Those sausages look nice, Manners—"

"Here you are!"

"Shove 'em over this way, will you? Yes, I'll have potatoes, and cauliflower, and celery. Rabbit pie, rather—I like that with beef—and some ham and tongue, certainly."

By which it would be seen that Fatty Wynn was getting over his mal-de-mer.

Tom Merry filled his glass with ginger-beer.

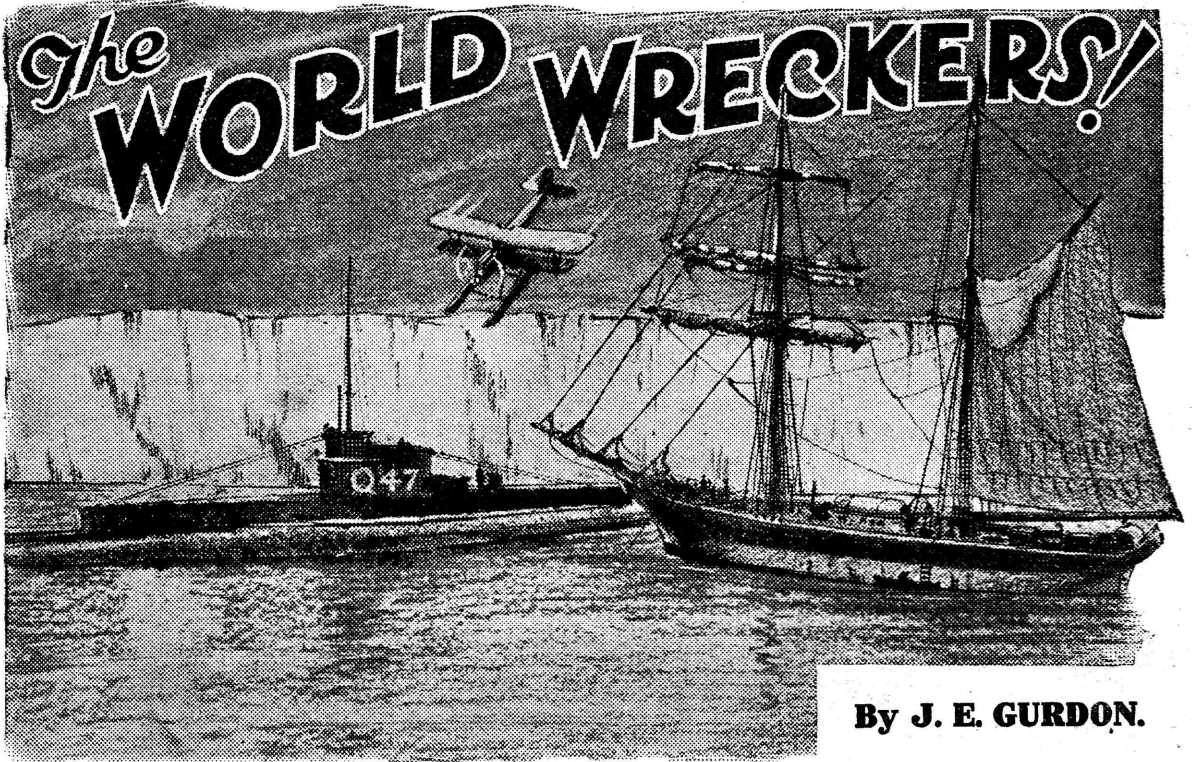
"A toast, you chaps! Success to the voyage of the Condor, long life to ourselves, and may Fatty Wynn's appetite never grow less!"

And the toast was drunk with enthusiasm.

THE END.

(Next week's ripping yarn of the Condor, "The Floating School!" is better than ever! Whatever you do, don't miss it!)

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The World Wreckers, a band of criminals, have discovered the secret of controlling the earth's weather, and have threatened to destroy the British Empire if they are not paid a huge sum of money. The British Government's reply is to send a submarine, an aeroplane, and a base ship to search out the Wreckers' headquarters, which are known to be somewhere in the Antarctic. Jim and Rex Tempest, the two airmen of the expedition, are captured by the Wreckers and left stranded on the ice with a smashed plane!

The Return!

"GOLLY!" chortled Rex. "Look! A spare prop! We've got two pairs of skis, and if they're strapped together they'll be strong enough to carry the weight of the machine. We can fit the new prop. bus over, unship the wings and fold them back against the fuselage, and then we can taxi home."

Without hesitation Jim admitted that the scheme was a winner. After which they became furiously busy.

When at last, after many hours of backbreaking labour, the task was finished and they paused to contemplate their handiwork, the two first of all gasped in open-mouthed astonishment, then burst into laughter.

The wings of the biplane lay back along its body. Its undercarriage and skis suggested that a daddy longlegs had taken to wearing big boots. And the whole weird assembly was held together by a precarious tangle of oddments, like a Christmas parcel that has had a bad time in the sorting-room.

Yet the thing worked!

As soon as Jim and Rex had recovered sufficiently they started up the engine and scrambled into their cockpits. For several seconds their mount merely bellowed and quivered indignantly; then, with a final lurch and a snort, began a cumbersome, waddling, undignified advance.

It was slow progress and arduous work, involving Rex in countless trips with an improvised spade of wood, to beat down a clear path, or clear away drift from around the skis.

But despite these delays the two were well satisfied, for they were making three times the speed that would have been possible on foot. Moreover, they blest the happy chance of a south-easterly blizzard that had swept the plateau some days previously and smoothed its surface as by a great plane.

The end of the seventh hour found them within sight of the sea; at the end of the eighth hour they were on the rim of the Great Ice Barrier overlooking their anchorage.

Innumerable floes, due to some vast ice fall from the

cliff, now dotted the waters of the bay, and for that reason both the Pursuit and Q47 were lying half a mile out instead of close in shore.

Jim switched off his engine, and began to sigh with relief; then stiffened suddenly, and listened intently.

He glanced inquiringly at Rex, who nodded confirmation.

Although coming from a considerable distance, they could hear the familiar, unmistakable note of their own radial engine.

The tall man and his squat colleague were returning before their time—returning in a machine that would appear friendly, and could therefore destroy the submarine without ever a shot being fired in defence.

Jim's mind was racing.
"We must bolt for it, Rex!" he snapped, suddenly galvanised into action. "Grab a can of oil and bring it along!"

Commander Sherwell himself was on deck in time to see two approaching figures leaping like mountain goats from floe to floe, and it was he who helped them up the slippery hull.

"Got just two minutes to submerge, sir!" gasped Jim. The commander asked no questions. He merely gave orders.

When the amphibian arrived over the bay the only trace of a submarine that could be seen was a wide patch of floating oil some two hundred yards from the shore.

They bombed that vigorously, and derived much satisfaction from the process.

So did Jim and Rex, listening at the hydrophones as the submarine lay snugly at the bottom, well out of range.

"Lucky you thought of dumping some of their oil in the sea as we hopped along," grinned Rex. "Otherwise those poor chaps wouldn't have had any target at all."

The New Plane!

DURING the next few days Jim and Rex worked hard at repairing the damaged plane.

"Now that," exclaimed Jim Tempest, stepping back suddenly and nearly tripping over an inquisitive penguin—"that is a pretty snappy bit of work!"

His young brother Rex joined him, and stood, hands on hips, contemplating the neat-looking aeroplane.

"Not so bad," he agreed, "particularly since she was almost a complete write-off only three days ago. When shall we test her?"

Jim called out to the mechanic who was peering into the engine and making careful adjustments to the ignition gear.

"Hi, Bill. Will you have her ready for a test this afternoon?"

"Better say this evenin', sir," returned the mechanic, lifting a grimy face for a moment. "Then there won't be no occasion for no disappointment nor delay, nohow. No!"

"Right. Hallo, sir! The job's nearly done. As soon as the engine's been run up we can give her a try-out."

The last remarks were addressed to Captain Bruce, who had just strolled up.

"Good," grunted the sailor. "She's a likeable looking craft."

The brothers nodded, and fidgeted impatiently as they remembered that some hours must still elapse before they could take the air with her.

Long in span, narrow in chord, rakishly staggered, and streamlined like a racer, the big biplane was all that the most exacting pilot could demand. Moreover, her sturdy undercarriage of oleo cylinders and springs was equipped with exceptionally strong skis for landing on rough snow or ice, and both her cockpits were enclosed in unsplinterable glass to form a cabin that gave complete protection against all Antarctic rigours.

Along grooves in the engine cowling on either side two machine-guns fired forward, synchronised with the engine so that the bullets passed between the propeller blades.

Captain Bruce's appraising eye was caught and held by the dull polish of these grooves.

"And you'll need 'em, too!" he muttered, speaking his thoughts aloud.

Jim glanced at him inquiringly.

"Trouble brewing, sir?" he ventured.

"Brewed!" was the brief reply. "And a nasty, messy brew at that!"

The sailor nodded towards his brigantine Pursuit, riding at anchor some five hundred yards out from the edge of the Great Ice Barrier on which they stood.

"Got a wireless message just before I came ashore," he went on. "Those confounded 'World Wreckers'—as the fellows now style themselves—have delivered another ultimatum to the British Government. They threaten to devastate the whole of Southern Australia by hurricanes, tornadoes, and what not, unless the indemnity is paid before the end of the month—that is, in thirteen days' time. And the indemnity, mind you, runs into hundreds of millions of pounds!"

"Well, anyway," said Jim briskly, "we got the better of the first round with the blighters!"

As he spoke he drummed his fingers against the taut fabric of the biplane's wings.

"They certainly collared our bus, and made us look complete asses the other day," he went on. "But now that we've repaired their own kite we've gained a jolly sight more than we lost. When the weather turns bad this totally enclosed affair is going to be far more serviceable than the open type amphibian we brought with us."

Before Captain Bruce could speak again the three were hailed by a dry, precise voice, while a tall, lean figure hoisted itself above the rim of the Great Ice Barrier, and strode towards them. This was Commander Sherwell of Q 47, the submarine co-operating with Pursuit in search for the Antarctic den of the World Wreckers.

He greeted the captain with a friendly nod, then turned to Jim and Rex.

"I want you two to have a look at the plans Dixon has prepared for catapulting your craft from Q 47's deck. We're going to carry out a few hydroplane tests in ten minutes' time, so you may as well come along and have a joyride as well."

No second invitation was needed. Both Jim and Rex enjoyed submarine work only a little less than they did flying. They raced the commander to the shore, and scrambled with him into one of the submarine's collapsible canvas boats.

A sharp pull brought them to the huge steel shape, wallowing in the eternal swell of the Ross Sea. She was like some monster's carcass, except midships, where the oval conning tower stood, carrying at the top three tubes, each of some six inches in diameter.

One of these tubes provided ventilation when running awash in heavy sea, and, when diving, acted as a sound conductor to measure the distance and direction of other craft. The two remaining tubes were periscopes, one for the use of the helmsman, the other for the commander.

Without waiting on deck all three tumbled down the steel ladder of the conning tower, and, above their heads, the sliding panels closed silently in their rubber-shod grooves.

A few orders from Commander Sherwell, a purr of machinery, and a hiss of air escaping through the vents of the flooding tanks, then all sense of movement changed to a vertical rising and falling as the big submarine "pumped" rhythmically with the heaving of the surface.

At three knots and a depth of twenty feet, Q 47 nosed her way ahead through the turgid darkness of the Antarctic waters.

A small, bearded man was sitting at the table in the ward-room, poring over a number of blue prints and making calculations with a slide rule and a book of logarithmic tables.

This was Dixon, the engineer responsible for the design of the catapult with which Jim and Rex hoped to be successfully launched from the submarine's tiny deck.

He rose to greet them, but no word left his lips.

The Mine!

NOISE like a clap of thunder in a cavern rent the air, and at the same instant, without a flicker, the lights failed.

Down dropped the bows. Men, furniture, fittings, were flung helplessly against the bulkheads as the craft plunged. Shouts and cries rang through the impenetrable darkness.

With a jolt then, the dive ended and silence reigned, to be broken a second later by the commander's cool, incisive tones as he assumed command.

Within five minutes new electric bulbs had replaced those that were broken. In the fresh glare men looked at one another and grinned, taking stock of burns, cuts, and bruises, and joking cheerfully that there were no broken bones to report.

When, however, the material damage came to be examined, although the joking did not cease, it no longer rang true, while Commander Sherwell's face grew grave as he went the rounds of his ship.

Water was trickling through the glands of the periscope shaft and along the shafting through the stuffing boxes. Also the manometers showed that one of the main ballast tanks was holed as well as the fore and aft trimming tanks.

Almost a dead weight, Q 47 crouched upon the ocean ooze.

Moments of effort and tense watchfulness followed as every expedient was tried.

The remaining ballast tank was blown, and double-action pumps drove out the water ballast. Screaming, the motors raced, and the twin-screws tugged and pushed ahead and astern. The sole response was a quivering of the huge hull as the thrust races took the strain.

Back in the ward-room, Commander Sherwell faced his officers.

"It was, of course, a mine that we struck," he began. "How that mine came to be along our course need not concern us for the moment. Our problem is to get back to the surface."

He paused, and smiled grimly.

"Unfortunately," he continued, "there are one or two obstacles in the way of solving that problem. The hull has been so badly holed that there is only just sufficient buoyancy to lift us under the most favourable conditions, and conditions are far from favourable. On the contrary, we are heavily embedded in the stickiest ooze in the Seven Seas.

"A jerk, however, would undoubtedly yank us free of the ooze, and, once clear, our buoyancy would raise us. We must therefore obtain that jerk somehow, and the only way is to collect Pursuit and use her derricks. She lies about six miles from here, or eight miles along the coast.

"I want four volunteer divers—two to fix the cradles round the hull and send buoys to the surface, and two to rise on semi-inflation, and either float with the ebb back towards Pursuit, or else try to get ashore. Both enterprises, I must point out, not without danger. But, then, our present situation is also risky."

"We'll go!" exclaimed Jim, almost before the commander had finished speaking.

"To Pursuit," put in Rex.

"And use the machine to guide her with," finished his brother.

The commander nodded, and turned to give instructions to the divers who were going to fix the cradles.

Neither Jim nor Rex talked much as they were being helped into their dresses.

These were of armoured rubber and canvas, the helmets being of copper, with large scuttles at the sides and front. No life-lines or air-tubes were attached, since they were

self-contained, air being supplied from a reservoir strapped to the small of the back, whence it passed into the helmet through a flexible metal tube.

The helmets were screwed on, the leaden weights adjusted; then the two brothers were left alone in a sub-compartment, one of whose water-tight doors communicated with the outside.

Blindly they felt their way to the opening, and a moment later were sinking up to their knees in clinging mud that sucked malignantly.

Involuntarily Rex yelled aloud from the horror of the sensation, then, with a warm, tingling thrill of relief, remembered his buoyancy reservoir.

Swiftly he flicked open a stopcock, and as the air flooded into his suit he felt himself plucked from the ooze as by a giant's finger and thumb.

His hands, coated with tallow as some protection against the bitter cold, slid upwards against the curved hull of the submarine.

Finding his electric lamp as he rose, he pressed the switch, and five hundred candle-power plunged stabbing into the surrounding murk. The beam, however, penetrated less than three yards, owing to the countless millions of diatoms that clouded the water.

Dimly it shone on a dull black hull half buried in silt until, with the highly compressed air bulging out his suit, the glimpse vanished, and he shot upwards like a cork.

Jim's copper dome broke surface within a few yards of him, and the two immediately set about ridding themselves of their leaden weights. Quite helpless then, but alive and afloat, the two bobbed and rolled about, catching fleeting peeps of spray and sky through the scuttles of their helmets, and wondering lugubriously where they would come to a stop.

The question was answered sooner than they expected. A strong northerly wind drifted them inshore, and less than an hour after leaving the submarine they grounded, like dying porpoises, at the foot of the Great Ice Barrier.

With one final effort they dragged themselves clear of the surface and unscrewed each other's helmets before collapsing into painful gasps and shivers.

Not long, however, did they rest. As soon as it was possible to move they staggered off in the direction of Pursuit, leaving the copper headgear conspicuously on a cairn of snow to serve as a bearing for the submarine.

During four interminable hours they plodded and crawled, and slid and fell, buoyed up the whole time by thoughts of the welcome and food that awaited them at the journey's end.

It was, therefore, with a sense of personal grievance as well as shock that at last they looked down from an ice ridge upon the brigantine.

Three aeroplanes instead of one were resting on the snow. Two of the machines were gigantic troop carriers. The ship herself was swarming with strange men.

"Gosh!" gasped Jim. "The Wreckers have got the ship!"

"And the grub!" Rex added feelingly.

The Seals!

A LONG silence followed as they absorbed this unwelcome sight; then Jim rolled slowly over on to his back and lay puffing mournfully at the sky. He felt that he was up against a tough proposition, and that he could tackle it better after he had got his wind.

Rex eyed him with cold disapproval. He was hungry, and he thought that this was no suitable moment to choose for making astronomical observations.

"Rather a sticky wicket," mused Jim between his grunts and gasps. "Somehow we've got to grab the bipe and do a scoot in it. The question—how? There are two quite efficient-looking lads guarding the kites. Well, we could tackle them all right if we could only get near them. But that's just what we can't do. They'd spot us a mile off against this snow, and then they'd raise a ballyhoo, and we'd have the whole gang buzzing about our ears."

"Puffing and blowing like that," observed Rex, quite uninterested in this soliloquy, "you look exactly like a whacking great fat seal. Honestly, Jim, you ought to go into training and—"

He broke off abruptly with a choking yelp as a pad of snow, unerringly thrown, filled his mouth.

"Young fella," exclaimed Jim, grinning at his splutters, "by way of a change you have for once spoken words of wisdom. In this diving rig-out I do look like a seal, or a walrus—or—any sort of a floppy creature so long as it isn't human. And, what's more, me lad, you look equally foul!"

"Well, what about it?" Rex demanded hotly, as soon as

he could make himself intelligible. "And what about grub? We can't lie out here sun-bathing for ever!"

"There's no need to, if only you pull your Balaclava helmet over your face."

"Why should I?"

"To hide it, of course!"

"Look here!" Rex was now thoroughly indignant. "Whether my face has caused the frost, or not, doesn't matter. Leave it alone and concentrate on thinking out some dodge for collaring the bipe."

"That's just what I have done—thanks to your remarks about fat seals! Listen!"

Two minutes later Rex himself was lying on his back as breathless and as helpless as his brother had been five minutes before. His collapse, however, had a rather different cause, for he was laughing till the tears chased one another down his cheeks.

"Oh gosh! Oh gee! Oh golly!" he chortled. "Oh crikey! Oh—Ow!"

A snappy short-arm jab had caught him just under the ribs.

"Stop cackling, you jackass!" hissed Jim. "You're supposed to be a seal—not a hyena!"

Almost purple from the effort, Rex bottled up his mirth. Without further talk, the two made their simple preparations for one of the most remarkable journeys ever undertaken in the Antarctic.

Having cut eye-holes in their woollen Balaclavas, they pulled these right down to the shoulders, thus completely encasing face and head. Then, with a muffled "Forward" from Jim, they began their ludicrous advance across the half-mile that separated them from the guards.

To imitate the progression of a seal over some soft and smooth surface is both difficult and uncomfortable; to do so over uneven and jagged ice is too painful for calm description. That, at any rate, was Rex's opinion long before they had covered a hundred yards.

Spreading out their feet to resemble a seal's flat, fluked tail, holding their elbows close to their sides, and using their forearms like flippers, they lurched ahead by series of arched convulsions similar to the undulating back movements of a caterpillar.

"Oooo!" lamented Rex, landing heavily on his chin. "Ow—oooo—ow! You do look a prize lunatic, Jim! Eeeee! That chunk of ice nearly tore my ear off! Ouch! I do wish you could see yourself! Ork! Crikey—"

Meanwhile, the guards, having caught sight of the two intruders, were observing them with a good deal of astonishment, and conferring together as though each was anxious to know that there was nothing wrong with him.

"They've spotted us!" gasped Jim, flopping with such vigour that he almost turned a somersault. "We'd better bark a bit—No, you goop! Not like that. Bark like a seal. Don't make a row like a terrier rattling!"

Obediently Rex altered his original shrill outburst to a sort of racking yap which he fondly imagined was a brilliant imitation of the Weddell seal's call.

"Whasser marrer?" Jim hissed disgustedly. "Croup, or whooping-cough?"

"It's no worse than your bellowing!" retorted Rex. "And, anyway, what can a chap do with a fearful fowl like this flopping about just in front of his nose?"

The "fearful fowl" was an inquisitive and friendly penguin which had obviously taken a great fancy to Rex, and which was scuttering sideways in front of him, doing its best to gaze into his wrathful eyes.

"Buzz off! Vamoose! Skedaddle!" urged the exasperated boy, trying to frighten the bird by ferocious growls and vigorous blowing. "Golly, Jim, can't we stop while I give this pest a thumping good zonk?"

"Seals bite, they don't zonk!" was the discouraging reply.

"Why don't you bite him?"

"Huh! I should like to see you bite a beast with a beak like a two-inch nail!"

To this Jim made no reply. There was, he thought, a good deal to be said for Rex's point of view.

Plastered with snow, they reeled and rolled, plunged and reared their way onwards, continually uttering harsh cries of distress, most of which were completely genuine.

Motionless, the guards watched, wondering, no doubt, what new Antarctic species they had had the good fortune to encounter. Once the taller of the two lifted his rifle and took aim, but his companion restrained him, while the horrified Jim and Rex made the air hideous with their seal-like ululations.

"My hat!" breathed Jim, as the rifle was lowered. "That was a narrow shave!"

"Must be a nasty sort of blighter," added Rex indignantly. "Oughtn't to be allowed out with firearms! T'other fellow seems a decent sort of cove, though. I shall be sorry to bif him when the time comes."

Apparently the short guard was anxious to make the better acquaintance of these strange animals, for he was snapping his fingers and making encouraging chirping noises,

"Patience, friend, patience," murmured Jim, executing an impressive squirm down the side of an ice hummock. "We shall be introduced soon enough. I fancy, though, that you ought to come half-way to meet us. Hi, Rex!"

"Hallo!"
 "Don't think we'd better go any closer. We'll dig in at the next drift!"

"Right-ho!"
 It was at this prearranged point in their plan that Jim best showed his old campaigner's foresight and shrewdness.

On reaching the next drift, instead of floundering through it, they burrowed their way down below the surface and lay motionless, completely covered except for their well-masked faces. Alternately and at frequent intervals one of them heaved frantically and uttered a short, sharp howl.

The effect upon the enemy was precisely what Jim had calculated.

Already rendered intensely curious, the two men were thrown into a state of active excitement by this fresh mystery. Why, they asked themselves, should these two gambolling nightmares suddenly take root in a drift, and lie there yowling at one another? Clearly the matter demanded investigation.

They exchanged a few words, then began cautiously creeping towards their quarry.

Jim and Rex watched them come, dug firm footholds for themselves, chuckled, and continued their punctuated caterwauling.

Separately, and making wide detours, the guards stole forward.

Though each was carrying his rifle at the ready, it was clear that they had no immediate intention of shooting. Nor, indeed, was there any reason why they should do so. They already knew that the two queer seals were comparatively small and peculiarly clumsy. Also they were distinctly funny. Why not, therefore, get behind them and drive them down to the ship, so as to provide a bit of sport for the other fellows?

Thus argued the unsuspecting pair, bawling cheerfully to one another as they came.

"Jolly sound scheme," grunted Rex to himself; "but I think you chaps will get all the sport you want without going down to the ship for it!"

He and Jim now crouched silently, fearing that their voices might be recognised as human, but the hunters saw nothing strange in this. They were used to seeing wild animals struck dumb with fear at the approach of man.

Having got to the landward of their victims they charged down, shouting fiercely and brandishing their rifles like clubs.

The two brothers let out simultaneous hoots of derision, and waited.

Surprised that the game did not break cover, the enemy

paused before shuffling forward, cautiously at first, but steadily gaining confidence.

Not so much as a muscle stirred in the drift.

"Get along out of it!" roared one, aiming a mighty kick at Jim's head.

"Are ye aslape?" squealed the other, prodding Rex with a savage butt.

Two whirling fighting devils erupted from the snow. Two yelps of agonised terror changed swiftly to two gurgles as two windpipes were scientifically seized and squeezed.

Two minutes later the two "seals" stood up on their hind legs, and two bundles were lying in their little sarcophagus of snow: Into the mouth of each bundle a Balaclava helmet had been tightly rammed, while wrists and ankles were neatly tied together in bundles of four by a couple of bootlaces.

"I hope," said Jim severely, "that this will be a lesson to you both. It is against regulations for guards to leave their watch in order to study zoology."

"Ugh!" croaked one.

"Gug!" clucked the other.

"Let's get a move on," suggested Rex, "before these chaps get really chatty."

Having hauled their prisoners to the summit of a small ice hill, where they would inevitably be found by the first search-party from the ship, Jim and Rex collected the rifles and spare gear that they had brought, and hastened off towards the machines.

Any sort of concealment was now impossible, and they could only trust to luck that if they were seen they would be mistaken for guards.

The cabin biplane, which they had repaired and had not yet tested, was standing some distance away from the two immense troop-carriers.

They were devoutly thankful to notice this, although each would have given all he possessed at the moment to have had a close look at the monsters, and to find out what had really happened to the Pursuit and her crew.

To have made any such attempt would, however, not only have meant risking their own liberty, but also the life of every man in Q 47.

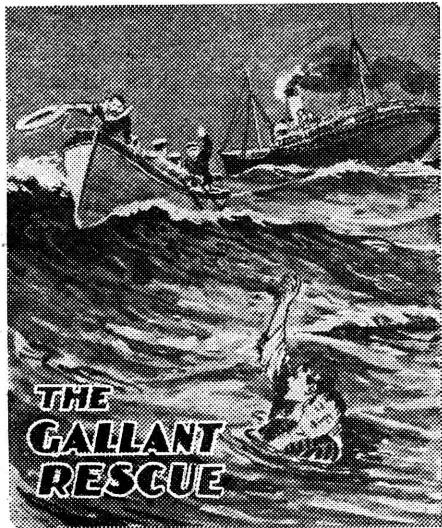
"Swing her, Rex, while I use the booster!" sang out Jim, as he climbed into the pilot's cabin and settled down at the controls. "She's already hot, I see. They must have been running her up. She ought to go after a couple of swings."

Actually, one swing proved sufficient, and Rex vanished from Jim's sight as he ducked underneath the bottom plane to reach his cabin abaft the wings.

Experienced as he was Jim had never flown a machine of similar design, where the pilot's cockpit was not only totally enclosed but almost completely isolated from the gunner's or navigator's cabin.

(Continued on next page.)

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This peculiarity was due to the exceptional size and arrangement of the fuel tanks, which had obviously been built to give an enormous radius of action. It might be possible for anyone in the rear cabin to squeeze past the tanks to the pilot's cockpit, but he and Rex had already arranged that they would communicate by passing notes out the end of a stick.

While waiting for Rex to give him the "All Clear" from behind, he carefully went over the instruments on the dashboard, where, in addition to the usual fittings, there were a fore-and-aft inclinometer, a lateral inclinometer, and two compasses, one slow moving and one fast.

So absorbed was he in this scrutiny that he quite lost all sense of urgency, when the sound of shots and a faint shout, filtering through the cabin windows, jerked his attention back to realities.

Galloping over the snow towards the biplane there raced a string of men. The hunt was on.

Quietly throttling down, Jim shouted over his shoulder into the semi-darkness of the navigator's cabin:

"All O.K., Rex?"

A grunt and a sound of petrol-tins being rearranged told him that the boy was busy setting loose stores in order for the flight. Firmly he pushed open the throttle, and chuckled happily as the pursuers dropped behind and the snow sank smoothly away from beneath the skis.

Thundering defiantly, the biplane circled while he looked down at a scene of intense activity below.

Tiny black dots against the white floor were grouped purposefully about the silhouette of one of the troop-carriers. Clearly they were starting up her twin engines.

Jim was amused.

A carrier had as much chance of overtaking the biplane as a lorry would of tail-bumping a dirt-track cycle.

He turned to shout this comment back to Rex, but the intention was sponged from his mind as he glimpsed the face that was peering at him through a narrow gap in the aft partition.

For the face was adorned with a tangle of wiry red beard!

Rescue!

DURING a full second Jim gaped open-mouthed at the apparition, totally unable to grasp its significance. Then understanding came upon him with cold and crushing force.

Rex had been left behind.

Either this hairy horror had been in the after cabin all the time, and was, therefore, an unwilling passenger, or else he was one of the pursuers who had beaten Rex in the race for the hatch. That question, however, did not matter. The whole point was that Rex had been left behind.

Jim's hand flew to the throttle, hovered, but did not touch.

His first impulse, of course, had been to land and attempt rescue; but the briefest reflection told him that this course was nothing less than suicide. Single-handed he could do nothing to help Rex. Their only chance lay in Q47—and she was at the bottom of the sea.

How was he, alone, to raise that hulk? And what was Redbeard up to in the after cabin?

The second question was answered sooner than he expected. At that moment Redbeard, who had popped back into his cabin after their first encounter, reappeared at the partition opening, and this time his malignant eye was glaring along the barrel of an ugly squat revolver.

Jim laughed. The situation was unpleasant enough in all conscience; but he could not imagine how a revolver was going to help his aggressive passenger. The chap, he argued, would have more sense than to shoot the man at the controls, and thus inevitably kill himself.

Again he laughed as Redbeard made emphatic gestures ordering him to turn round and land.

But that laugh did not last long.

For many years past he had thought himself proof against all shock. That moment proved him wrong. His knees loosened, and his spine prickled.

Beneath his hands and feet the machine's controls suddenly "went dead."

Not long, however, did amazement last.

In a flash reason told him that between the dual controls with which the machine was equipped there must be some hidden declutching device which he and Rex had overlooked in their hurry.

Most clearly, then, Redbeard now held the whip hand. There was nothing to prevent his shooting Jim, since at any moment he could take charge of the machine himself. That he did not do so was no doubt due to the difficulty of making a successful landing from the after cabin.

The controls became alive again, and the face and the revolver reappeared. This time Jim did not laugh, nor did he hesitate; but obediently swung the machine round half a circle, and headed back along his course.

Yet beneath this apparent docility there lurked design, and he chuckled quietly as he obeyed.

It was a thing like a big steel pear, with a fan on the blunt end, that had given him the idea.

This pear was mounted on the leading edge of the bottom port plane, and it housed a dynamo rotated by the pressure of wind acting on the vanes. Its function was to provide current for the electrically heated suits commonly worn by flyers in frigid climates.

Had it not been for the menacing revolver Jim's chuckle would have become an open guffaw.

(What is the scheme which Jim has thought out for getting rid of Redbeard? Whatever you do don't miss next week's gripping instalment!)

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