

"MICK O' THE MOUNTED!" Amazing NEW Picture-story Starts Within.

The GEM

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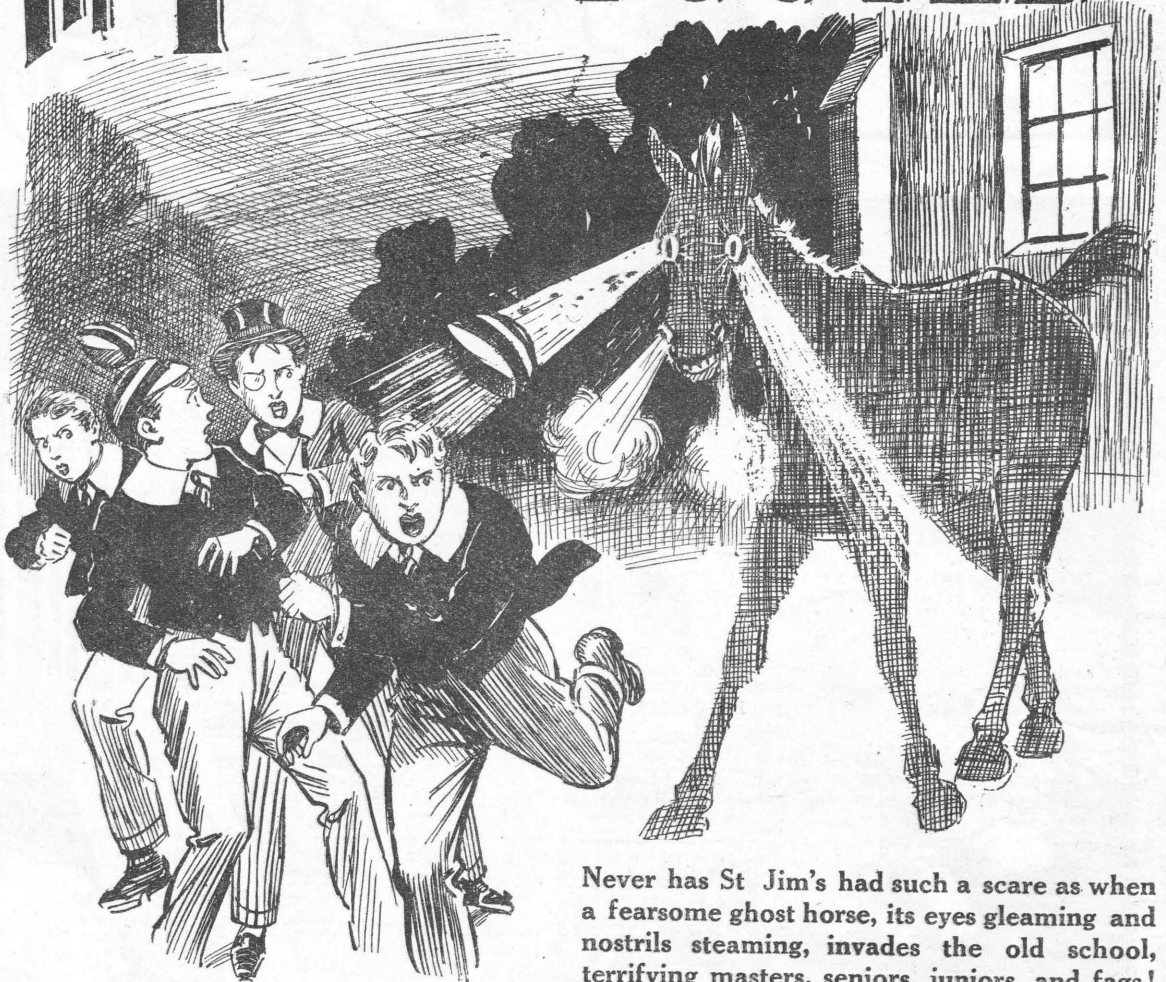
Week Ending October 7th, 1933.



A Startling Incident from "THE FOUR-FOOTED PHANTOM!"

WHAT IS THE MYSTERY OF THE PHANTOM HORSE OF ST. JIM'S?—

The FOUR-FOOTED



Never has St Jim's had such a scare as when a fearsome ghost horse, its eyes gleaming and nostrils steaming, invades the old school, terrifying masters, seniors, juniors, and fags!

CHAPTER 1.

The Return of Tom Merry & Co.!

"WYLCOMBE!"

"Eh?"

"Wylcombe Station, deah boys!"

"Rylcombe at last!" said Tom Merry, as the train ran towards the little station half-hidden in green trees. "There it is!"

The juniors of St. Jim's, returning from their holiday on the Riviera, looked out of the carriage windows with keen interest.

They had not been away from St. Jim's and their usual surroundings so very long, but the change of scene had been complete, and they felt as if they had been away from the old familiar landscape for years.

Tom Merry & Co. had spent a very happy holiday at the Riviera, at Nice, and Monte Carlo, with Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom Merry's old governess.

But they were not sorry to be returning to the old familiar school, and the old familiar faces.

There were seven of them in the railway carriage, as the train rolled towards the little country station of Rylcombe.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther—Manners' chums in the Shell—sat at the windows on one side, looking out at the station, which was in sight along the line. Figgins, Kerr, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,338.

and Wynn, the chums of the New House, were crowded at the other windows, occupying that side of the carriage. Jack Blake was busily engaged in eating caramels, the last of a packet brought from Nice, and he was too busy to look out. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the swell of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, had caught sight of Rylcombe Church spire in the distance, and he was now trying to get a look out of the window.

Figgins & Co. were in the way—perhaps more in the way than they need have been—but the New House chums were never tired of ragging the swell of the School House.

"Wylcombe at last," said Arthur Augustus, polishing his eyeglass, and jamming it into his eye. "Do you know, deah boys, I'm wathah glad to be back."

"Same here," said Tom Merry.

"We have spent a most pleasant holiday, and we owe the heartiest thanks to Miss Pwiscillah Fawcett, Tom Mewwy's respected governess—"

"Hear, hear!"

"Figgins' uncle, the worthy majah, was also vevy kind, and I think we weally owe a vote of thanks to Figgins' uncle!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Figgins' cousin was wathah a wesponsibility to me," went on D'Arcy thoughtfully; "but upon the whole, I am glad I was able to look aftah him."

"Rats!"

PHANTOM!

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"If you say wats to me, Figgy, I shall have no wesource but to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Hush, naughty!" said Blake. "Have a caramel."

"Weally, Blake—"
"Do you want to arrive at St. Jim's with a black eye?" demanded Tom Merry. "I'm surprised at you, Gussy."

"Figgins has been wude—"
"Keep the peace! We're nearly at the station. There will be a crowd on the platform. You don't want to arrive fighting," said Tom Merry severely. "Really, I must repeat that I am surprised at you, Gussy."

"On second thoughts, I will not thwash Figgins."
"Go hon!" said Figgins.

"Pway allow me to appwoach the window, deah boys: I want to look out. Ow! Kerr, you uttah ass, you have twodden on my toe!"

"Dear me!" said Kerr.
"Ow! Keep your gweat foot off my toe, you ass!"

"Keep your toe from under my foot," said Kerr.
"Weally, Kerr—"

"We're slackening," said Figgins.
"I'm jolly glad," said Fatty Wynn, rubbing his plump hands. "I'm getting awfully hungry. It's a curious thing, but a change of air always improves my appetite, and I always feel very hungry getting home, too."

"Pway let me— Oh!"
"What's the matter now?"

"You have thwust your elbow into my wibs, Figgins."
"Blessed if I know what your ribs are doing at the end of my elbow," said Figgins. "Why don't you look after your ribs?"

"You uttah ass!"
The train slowed down into the station.

On the platform was a group of St. Jim's juniors, and they waved their hats and caps, and gave a yell at the sight of Tom Merry leaning from the window.

Kangaroo, Clifton Dane, Digby, Reilly, George Gore, and Herries, together with his bulldog Towser, and several other fellows, were gathered there to welcome Tom Merry & Co. home.

"Here they are!" roared Digby.
"Bravo!"

"Welcome, little strangers!"
"Have you broken the bank at Monte Carlo?"
"Hurrah!"

Tom Merry threw open the carriage door and jumped out. He was immediately surrounded, and fellows were shaking his hands and thumping him on the back. There was no doubt that Tom Merry was very popular with the fellows at St. Jim's.

His popularity had its awkward side. By the time he escaped from the demonstrations of welcome, he was gasping for breath, and aching in most of his bones.

"Oh, you duffers!" was his grateful response.
But the juniors only laughed.

"Faith, and it's sunburnt ye're looking," said Reilly.
"And have ye broken the bank at Monte Carlo?"
Tom Merry laughed.

"Not exactly."
"Skimpole says—"

"Hewwies, I am vewy glad to see you, and I appweciate your comin' to the station in this way. But I must insist upon your keepin' that feahful beast away from my legs. I wegard you as an ass! That howwid dog has no wespect for a fellow's twousahs!"

"Oh, Towser's all right! He's naturally a little excited," said Herries.

"Yaas, but pway keep him at a wespectable distance."
"Aren't you going to shake hands with Towser?" demanded Herries indignantly.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"I've taught him to put up his hand and shake," said

Herries warmly. "Don't be unkind, you know. Shake hands with him."

Arthur Augustus breathed hard. He didn't want to be discourteous, but he didn't like the idea of shaking hands with Towser, whose teeth were an ever threatening danger to his immaculate "bags."

"Shake hands with him," said Tom Merry. "Gussy, I must say that your manners haven't improved by going abroad."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy! I—I have no objection to shakin' hands with Towsah," said Arthur Augustus, eyeing the bulldog dubiously through his monocle. "I—I— Here, Towsah!"

"Gr-r-r-r!" said Towser.
"Just take his paw and shake it," said Herries. "Don't be afraid!"

"I twust you do not imagine I am afraid of a bulldog, Hewwies."

"Well, take his paw, then, and don't be all the afternoon about it!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy approached the bulldog in a gingerly manner.

The crowd of juniors stood round grinning, as well as the porter, and several passengers who had alighted from the train.

"Towsah, old boy!"
D'Arcy stooped and gave his gloved hand to Towser, who, instead of putting up his paw, growled ferociously, and so startled the swell of St. Jim's, that he jumped back in great alarm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Weally, deah boys—"

"Don't be afraid, Gussy!"
"I'm not afraid, you ass!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

D'Arcy advanced again, and this time Towser, at a word from his master, put up a muddy paw, which Arthur Augustus took in his hand. The elegant junior of St. Jim's shook hands solemnly with the bulldog.

"Seize him!" called out Kangaroo suddenly.
"Gr-r-r-r!"

Towser's jaws opened, and D'Arcy sprang back and dodged behind Herries.

"Keep that howwid beast off, Hewwies—"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I insist—"

"He's all right," said Herries. "Come on, Towser, old boy! Towser's a jolly good-tempered dog."
"Bai Jove! Look at that!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy held out his hand. The lavender kid glove was stained and muddy from contact with Towser's muddy paw. Herries looked at it.

"Well?" he said.
"My glove's wuined!" howled D'Arcy.
"Oh, never mind—"

"But I do mind, I—"
But the juniors were marching off the platform in a laughing crowd, and Arthur Augustus swallowed his indignation and followed them, carefully wiping his soiled glove with his handkerchief and reducing the fine fabric to a hopelessly muddy condition.

CHAPTER 2.

Skimpole Asks For It!

MANNERS!" Skimpole of the Shell bawled the name through the keyhole of Tom Merry's study at St. Jim's. It was the third time Skimpole had returned to the attack; but Manners was not to be drawn. The amateur photographer of St. Jim's was busy cutting a roll of films he

Turn to the centre pages, chums, for the start of our Super New Picture-Story Serial

"MICK O' THE MOUNTED!"

had recently developed and which Monty Lowther had sent from Nice.

"Manners!"

"Go away!"

"The fellows are gone to meet Tom Merry."

"Pooh!"

"Weren't you going with them?"

"Never mind!"

"I want to speak to you, Manners," said Skimpole through the keyhole. "It's a most important matter. You see— Ooooch!"

A stream of black ink, evidently ejected from a squirt, spurting suddenly through the keyhole of the study door.

It caught Skimpole fairly in the face.

He rolled back and sat down violently, spluttering and spluttering.

"Oh! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners within the study. "Clear out!"

"Ooch!"

Skimpole staggered up. Ink was running down his face and trailing down his waistcoat.

"Dear me!" murmured the genius of the Shell. "I—I had better go and wash myself. I cannot help regarding this as extremely rude of Manners."

And the scientific genius of St. Jim's hurried off to a bath-room, where he spent the next ten minutes in washing the ink from his face. When he emerged from the bath-room, newly washed and scoured, he met Mellish of the Fourth.

"Stop a minute, Mellish!" exclaimed Skimpole.

"Oh, go and eat coke! Tom Merry is coming home this afternoon, hang him!" said the cad of the Fourth. "Don't see why he couldn't stay away another week or two!"

"It's that very matter I was going to speak about, Mellish," said Skimpole, walking beside the cad of the Fourth Form. "I'm glad Merry is coming back—"

"Well, I'm not!"

"But—"

"I hate him and all that crew!" said Mellish. "Lot of rotters, I call 'em! Don't talk to me about Tom Merry!"

"But as he is coming home with so much money—"

Mellish pricked up his ears.

"Eh? What's that?"

"Haven't you heard?"

"No. What is it? Where has Tom Merry got any money from?" demanded Mellish. "I suppose you mean he's had a tip."

"Oh, no; it's a larger sum of money—some thousands of pounds!"

"Eh?"

"Probably ten thousand pounds," said Skimpole. "I am sorry I cannot state the exact amount, but it cannot be less than some thousands of pounds."

"Do you mean that he's come into a fortune? You ass! If he has come into any money he won't be allowed to bring it to the school in his blessed trousers pockets," said Mellish, with a sniff. "He won't be able to touch it till he is of age."

"I don't mean that—"

"Then what the dickens do you mean?"

"You see, he has won an enormous sum at Monte Carlo."

Mellish jumped.

"What! Tom Merry has?"

"Yes, certainly!"

"Are you sure?" asked the cad of the Fourth, with wide-open eyes.

"Yes. You see, as I invented the system he has won it with, he cannot do less than hand me a goodly share," said Skimpole. "What do you think?"

"Well, he ought," said Mellish slowly. "I don't suppose he's won as much as you say, though."

"Well, if it were only hundreds, that is a lot!"

"By George, it is!" said Mellish covetously. "And money like that would be in his own pockets, too; he could do as he liked with it. Fancy a Shell fellow having a hundred pounds or more!"

"I am sure it is a thousand or more!"

"But how do you know?" said Mellish, still incredulous.

"Did Tom Merry say so?"

"Of course, I have not seen him yet. But I had a letter from him in Nice. I had sent him my system by registered post—an infallible system, whereby anybody could easily break the bank of Monte Carlo, provided with a capital of five hundred francs," said Skimpole. "He replied that he had received it, and— By the way, here is Gibbons. Gibbons, I have some news. Tom Merry is coming home rich."

"Rats!" said Gibbons.

"It is true. He has broken the bank at Monte Carlo."

"Gammon!"

"I had a letter from him in Nice——"

"H'm! Got the letter?"

"Certainly!"

Skimpole groped in his pocket and brought forth an envelope with a foreign stamp and the Nice postmark on it. "This is the envelope," he said. "I do not seem to have the letter. I have probably lost it. I generally lose my letters, somehow. A mighty brain cannot bring itself down to attend to trifles."

Mellish looked at the envelope. It had certainly come from Nice, and was addressed to Skimpole in Tom Merry's handwriting.

Mellish's doubts vanished. Skimpole was a peculiar youth, but he was not a liar, though he frequently made ludicrous mistakes. And he had certainly had a letter from Tom Merry; the envelope witnessed that. And Tom Merry would never lie.

"By George!" said Mellish eagerly. "If this is true—and I suppose it is——"

"Quite true, Mellish, I assure you."

"We ought to give Tom Merry a bit of a welcome home," said Mellish thoughtfully. "After all, he's a jolly decent chap. I always said so."

Skimpole blinked through his spectacles at the cad of the Fourth in considerable surprise.

"Dear me! You were saying——"

"Never mind what I was saying," said Mellish hurriedly. "I always liked Tom Merry. He's the most popular fellow in the school; and so he ought to be, too. Something ought to be done to mark his return—something to show all St. Jim's that the fellows regard it as a red-letter day."

"That is what I was thinking," said Skimpole. "I was considering a large party to meet him at the station, but the other fellows did not tell me exactly when they were going, and they went without my seeing them. It was unfortunate. Then I tried to speak to Manners, to arrange some reception here, but Manners was almost rude about it."

"We can get up a reception without Manners," said Mellish. "We can manage it on our own. Let's call the fellows together and explain to them. Some of the Fifth and Sixth might like to have a hand in it."

"Good egg!" said Gibbons. "Of course, Tom Merry will stand something pretty decent to all of us if he's really come home rich."

"Oh, I don't think we ought to look on it in that light!" said Mellish loftily. "I want to welcome Tom Merry home because I like him, and he's such an awfully decent chap. That's my idea."

"Ahem!"

"If you want a thick ear, Gibbons——"

"I—I was only coughing," said Gibbons. "Let's tell the fellows, and get up a big party to meet him at the gates. He'll be here soon."

"Right-ho! Buzz off!"

And the juniors hurried off to carry out the plan. Skimpole made his way to the Shell passage, and passed the news on to several fellows there. He arrived at the end study and knocked at the door.

"Glyn!"

"Buzz off!" came the Liverpool lad's voice from within.

Clink, clink! Bernard Glyn was evidently engaged upon an invention of some sort. Skimpole could hear him at work. He knocked at the door again.

"Bernard Glyn!"

"Go away!"

"We're arranging a reception for Tom Merry——"

"Well, go and recep!" howled Glyn. "Don't come here bothering me! Get away!"

"We're getting up a party to meet him at the gates——"

"Run away and play!"

"Won't you come?"

"I'm busy!"

"But under the circumstances——"

"If I come out to you I'll boot you all along the passage!" roared Glyn.

"Dear me!" murmured Skimpole. "He is as rude as Manners. Both of them are certainly very unpleasant this afternoon. However, I suppose that, from a sense of duty, I must persist. Glyn certainly ought to be in the party."

He rapped at the door again with his bony knuckles.

"Glyn! I say, Glyn!"

The door was swung open, and Glyn rushed into the passage, with a snort of rage. He collided with Skimpole and sent him staggering.

"Oh!" gasped the Determinist of St. Jim's.

Glyn did not waste his breath in words. He seized Skimpole by the collar and jerked him up, and then he applied his boot to Skimpole's person in a way that was, to use the poet's words, frequent and painful and free.

"Oh!" roared Skimpole. "Ow! Pray cease this brutal conduct! Ow!"

Skimpole collapsed on the linoleum, and Glyn returned to

his study, still snorting. The Determinist of St. Jim's sat up and rubbed his aching bones, and blinked after Bernard Glyn with a bewildered expression.

"How very rough!" he murmured. "As a Determinist I cannot blame him for being rough, as it is certainly the outcome of his heredity and environment. Glyn, if I did not regard you as purely the slave of circumstances, and the victim of the combined influence of heredity and environment, I should call you a beast! Ow!"

Glyn went into his study and slammed the door.

Skimpole picked himself up and limped slowly away. According to Skimpole's Determinist theories, Glyn wasn't to blame for having lost his temper, but Skimpole was feeling decidedly uncomfortable, all the same. And, strange to say, it did not relieve his aching bones to reflect that Glyn's violence was simply due to the combined influence of heredity and environment.

CHAPTER 3.
The Conquering Hero!

FATTY WYNN halted as the party from the railway station reached the tuckshop in the village street. Figgins jerked him by the sleeve.

"Come on!" he said.

"Hold on, Figgy! We—we haven't seen Mother Murphy for some time, and—"

"Well, we couldn't expect to see her while we were on the Riviera and she was in Rylcombe."

"Yes; but it would be only friendly to look in and ask her how she is—"

"Come on!"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"Take his other arm, Kerr."

"Right-ho!"

And Fatty Wynn was marched on, with a very injured expression on his plump face.

"It's rottenly neglectful of us," he said, "and there were fresh jam tarts in the window!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm hungry, too. I always get hungry in this weather. I have a sort of keeness of appetite come over me at this time of the year."

"And at every other blessed time, too," said Kerr. "Do dry up! You make me feel hungry when you start."

"There'll be a decent feed at St. Jim's!" said Kangaroo consolingly. "I've told Mrs. Mimble to trot out the best she has."

"Good!" said Fatty Wynn. "You're a decent chap, Kangaroo. I believe in drawing the bonds of Empire closer—hands across the sea, and so on. I do really."

Kangaroo laughed. The juniors marched on cheerily towards the school, and in the lane they suddenly encountered four youths in Grammar School caps. Tom Merry recognised them at once.

They were Frank Monk, Carboy, Lane, and Gordon Gay, the shining lights of Rylcombe Grammar School—at least, of the junior portion of it.

The Four Grammarians halted at the sight of the numerous party of Saints.

"Hallo! So you're back!" said Monk.

"Here we are, as large as life, and twice as natural," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "I suppose you Grammar School chaps are still vegetating in the same old spot?"

"Yes; and we're ready to give you some more lickings now that you're back," said Monk.

"Wats!"

"Hallo! Is that Gussy—still alive?" said Carboy.

"Didn't you pass through Paris as you went to Nice?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then how have you got back?"

"Eh?"

"I should have thought it wasn't safe for you."

"Weally, deah boy, I fail to compwehend—"

"I've been told that the officials of the Jardin des Plantes are always on the look-out for new specimens for their monkey-house," explained Monk, "and I'm really surprised at your being allowed to leave Paris."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Grammarians.

Arthur Augustus coloured with wrath.

"Weally, Monk—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wefuse to allow this wude wemark to pass unchastised," said Arthur Augustus, letting his eyeglass drop to the end of its cord, and pushing back his cuffs. "Pway put up your hands, you wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am sowwy to delay you a few minutes, deah boys, while I give Fwank Monk a feahful thwashin'."

"No time," said Kangaroo.

"Weally, Kangawoo—"

"We'll bump them instead," said the Cornstalk cheerily.

"Collar them!"

"Hurrah!"

"Line up!" shouted Gordon Gay.

The Grammarians lined up, but the rush of the Saints fairly whirled them over. They were collared and bumped in a twinkling.

Then the party of Saints marched on, laughing, leaving the four Grammarians sitting in the road and blinking at each other.

"Oh!" gasped Monk.

"Oh!" said Carboy and Lane.

Gordon Gay chuckled.



"I want to speak to you, Manners," said Skimpole through the keyhole. "It's most important. You see—oooooooooh!" A stream of black ink suddenly spurted through the keyhole and caught Skimpole fairly in the face. "Oh! Ooooooh!" he spluttered.

"What are you cackling at, you image?" demanded his three comrades, staring at him wrathfully.

"You!" said Gay cheerfully. "Myself, too! We look a set of duffers!"

"Oh, do we?" said Monk, with a growl.

"Yes. We ought to have given them a wide berth, as the odds were against us. Never mind; we'll make them sit up yet, now that Tom Merry's back again. I've got an idea."

Meanwhile, the Saints marched on, quite satisfied with the bumping they had bestowed upon the heroes of the Grammar School.

They came in sight of the gates of St. Jim's.

"My hat! The whole school seems to have turned out."

"Bai Jove!"

Kangaroo gave a low whistle.

"I thought there would be a lot," he remarked, "but blessed if I understand this."

The gateway of St. Jim's was crowded. Behind the crowd there could be seen glimpses of a larger crowd back in the quad.

All St. Jim's seemed to have turned out.

There was a shout from the crowd in the gateway as the juniors were sighted in the road, and a mouth-organ struck up a tune.

"See the Conquering Hero Comes!" exclaimed Blake. "That's Kerruish tooting. I'd know his toot anywhere. What does he mean by playing that?"

"Bai Jove! They apparently vegerad us as conquewin' hewoes," said Arthur Augustus. "Upon the whole, pewwaps they are wight."

The juniors marched on, considerably puzzled. There was a ringing cheer from the crowd at the gates.

"Hurrah!"

"Hurrah for Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry stared at the crowd.

That his friends should be glad of his return to St. Jim's was natural enough. That his acquaintances should be pleased was also natural. But that half the school should turn out to welcome him was a surprise.

Yet here they were, in crowds.

And, strangest of all, there were Fifth-Formers in the throng, and the Fourth-Former who was making the most noise was Mellish, the one fellow at St. Jim's whom Tom Merry could never get on with.

It was amazing.

What could it mean?

"See the Conquering Hero Comes!" bawled Mellish.

"Hurrah!"

Toot-toot-toot! went, Kerruish's mouth-organ.

"Hip-hip-hurrah!"

"Off your rockers?" asked Tom Merry, as he came up to the gates.

"Hurrah!"

"What's the wov?"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Bai Jove! I vegerad this as wathah wemarkable!"

"Blessed if I understand it, either!" said Kangaroo, looking puzzled.

"Howevah, it was a wippin' weception!"

"I'm so glad you're back," said Skimpole, catching Tom

Merry by the buttonhole. "Of course, you found my system—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You remember I sent it to Nice——"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, then, you——"

"Shoulder high!" exclaimed Mellish. "Come on!"

"Hurrah!"

A rush of juniors surrounded Tom Merry. Mellish and Hancock seized him and up he went. French and Pratt of the New House lent a hand. New House and School House were united in doing honour to the hero of the Shell.

"Here, let go!" roared Tom Merry.

"Shoulder high!"

And Tom Merry, struggling, was borne shoulder high through the gates. His chums followed, laughing, and greatly puzzled. If these honours were being paid to Tom Merry, a great traveller there was no reason why his chums should not share them; yet Tom Merry was evidently the centre of attraction.

It was a puzzle to them.

Tom Merry was not enjoying it, either. He disliked and distrusted Mellish, the cad of the Fourth, and he could not help suspecting that there was some trickery in the matter.

"Look here, Mellish, let me down!" he exclaimed sharply.

"Rot!" said Mellish.

"What are you playing the giddy ox like this for?"

"Because you're a conquering hero, and we're glad to have you back!" said Mellish. "I hope you're not thinking of any little disagreement in the past on an occasion like this. Why not let bygones be bygones?"

Tom Merry's heart smote him.

Mellish was evidently in earnest, and so were the others, and Tom Merry, who seldom was suspicious, felt that he had been too suspicious this time.

Mellish, apparently, had been thinking over his conduct during Tom Merry's absence, and had resolved to be a more friendly fellow, and this was his way of showing it—so it appeared to Tom Merry.

"Of course, I'm willing to let bygones be bygones," he said. "That's all right. But do let me get down, there's a good chap!"

"Stuff! We're honouring you!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Tom Merry!"

"Here's the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo!"

"Eh?" exclaimed Tom Merry, in surprise. "What's that about the bank at Monte Carlo?"

"Oh, we know all about it," said Mellish, laughing. "Skimpole told us all about your making the bank bust."

"I suppose he was dreaming," said Tom. "Do you think I'm a gambler? Of course, I never played at Monte Carlo—I shouldn't have been allowed to."

Mellish jumped, and relaxed his hold, and Tom Merry jerked himself free and slid to the ground.

The cad of the Fourth stared at him blankly.

"You—you didn't play at Monte Carlo?" he stammered.

"Certainly not!"

"You didn't break the bank?"

"Of course not!"

"You—you haven't won a thousand pounds?"

"Of course I haven't, you ass!"

"Oh!"

Tom Merry's eyes gleamed. He understood the cause of that imposing reception now, and why his old enemy had been so affable.

"Did you think I had broken the bank, you duffers?" he exclaimed. "What on earth put that silly idea into your empty numskulls?"

"Skimpole told us!" roared a dozen voices.

"Where's Skimpole?"

"Make him explain!"

"Really, you know, Merry——"

"Here he is!"

"Really, you know," said Skimpole, "I hope you will contribute at least five hundred pounds towards the expenses of my new book, and——"

"You utter ass!"

"Eh?"

"Did you tell these chaps that I had broken the bank at Monte Carlo?" roared Tom Merry, taking the Determinist of St. Jim's by the shoulder and shaking him.

Skimpole gasped.

"Certainly!"

"Then why did you, you dummy?"

"You told me so!"

"I—I told you so?" gasped Tom Merry, taken quite aback.

"Yes."

"When—how?"

"In your letter from Nice."

"He's trying to keep it dark," muttered Mellish. "He doesn't want to share out!"

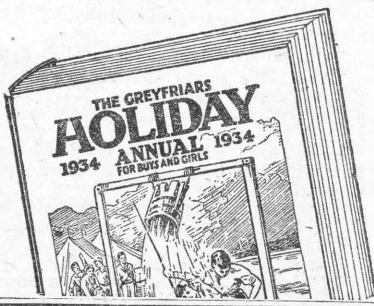


"I say—where's my HOLIDAY ANNUAL?"

"Some cad has 'borrowed' it. But I'll get it back. I'd sooner lose a good meal than lose my HOLIDAY ANNUAL—and that's saying a lot for me.

"You can read all about me—and the other Greyfriars fellows—in the HOLIDAY ANNUAL, by the way. I'd get a copy if I were you." Why not take Billy Bunter's advice? Not only can you read all about him—the fattest and funniest schoolboy in creation—but there are also heaps of fascinating stories about the famous schoolboy pals of Greyfriars, St. Jim's and Rookwood Schools.

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"Hold your tongue, you cad!" said Tom Merry fiercely. "Now, then, Skimpole, explain! I certainly never told you anything of the sort. You're dreaming."

"Yes, in your letter from Nice, you know. You remember that I invented a system of winning at roulette, and sent it to you at Nice by registered post?"

"Well?"

"You replied that you had received it."

"Yes, I received it."

"I asked you to put it to use, and in your reply you said that you had put it to the only use it was fit for."

Tom Merry grinned.

"Exactly!"

"Very well, if you tried it on the bank at Monte Carlo it naturally follows that you must have broken the bank, as the system was infallible."

"You utter ass!"

"Really, Tom Merry—"

"I told you I had put it to the only use it was fit for," said Tom Merry. "That meant that I used it for pipelights, as matches are expensive in Nice."

"Oh!"

"We tore it up between us and made spills of it, and they lasted Major Figgins quite a long time," said Tom Merry. "I really tried to read it first, but I couldn't understand a word of it."

"Oh!"

"As for breaking the bank at Monte Carlo, I expect the bank would have broken me if I had tried it—which I didn't do!"

"Oh!"

"We've been jolly well swindled!" growled Kerruish.

"We thought—"

"Oh, it's rotten!" said Mellish.

"Conquering hero, indeed! Poof!"

"Bah!"

"Rats!"

"Yah!"

And the reception melted away.

CHAPTER 4. No Entrance!

TOM MERRY & CO. looked at one another. All but Tom Merry were laughing heartily. The junior captain of St. Jim's himself looked a little red and angry.

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus. "No wonder Mellish was so awfully chummy when he thought you had won a thousand pounds! I wegard him as a wank wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Biake. "I never saw a conquering hero stripped of his laurels so suddenly before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Do stop cackling!" growled Tom Merry. "Let's get in! I'm ready for a feed."

"Good!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "Look here, we've got the stuff for the feed in our study, and we'll have it ready for you in ten minutes at the outside. Where would you prefer to have it?"

"Well, there's a good many of us, and it would be a crowd in one of the studies," said Tom Merry. "Suppose we meet in the Hobby Club room?"

"Good—in ten minutes!"

"Right-ho!"

"Come on, Dane, and help me to get the stuff. You can lend a hand, Dig, and you, too, Gore, if you like."

"Certainly!"

And the four juniors went along to the end study in the Shell passage. As they passed the door of Tom Merry's study it opened, and Manners came out.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Manners. "I'm ready to go down to the station, if you fellows are."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo.

Manners stared at him.

"What's the joke, you ass?"

"Nothing—only we've been to the station, and returned, and Tom Merry's come home, and he's getting a much-needed wash in the Shell dorm at this moment."

"By Jove!" Manners looked at his watch. "How the time passes when you're at work, doesn't it? I didn't know! Never mind. I've done with the pictures. Most of them have come out beautifully, and Lowther will be pleased."

Manners went off to the Shell dormitory to see his chums, and the others hurried to the end study. The door was still fast.

Kangaroo hammered on it with his fist.

"Glyn! Bernard Glyn!"

"Hallo!"

"Open the door."

"Can't!"

"Look here—"

"Poof!"

Kangaroo breathed hard through his nose.

He had laid in a supply of really good things that day, with the assistance of Clifton Dane, to stand Tom Merry & Co. a big feed on their return. Those good things were in a box in the end study. But Bernard Glyn was still busy upon his invention, and the box of good things might have been in the moon for any chance Kangaroo and Dane had of getting at it. From his previous experience, Kangaroo knew how little chance there was of getting Glyn to open the door when he was busy.

And the sound of clinking metal from within the study showed that Glyn certainly was busy.

Kangaroo tried the door again. It did not budge an inch. The key, belonging to that lock was in Kangaroo's pocket, but the door was even faster than if it had been locked. The Cornstalk rapped on it again.

"Glyn!"

There was no reply.

"Look here, Glyn, we want to come in!"

"You can't!"

"There's a lot of grub there! We want it!"

"Stuff!"

"Open the door!"

"Can't be did! I've screwed it," said Glyn coolly. "The screws will take some time to get out. You can run away and play!"

"We want the tommy!" roared Kangaroo, exasperated.

"Will the box pass through the keyhole?"

"Ass!"

"Then you can't have it. I'll throw it out of the window, if you like."

"Don't you dare!" yelled the Cornstalk. "You'll smash the gingerbeer bottles and muck up the whole lot!"

"Well, buzz off! You can't have the box!"

"We must have it."

"Stuff!"

Kangaroo kicked the door. It did not even shake. Bernard Glyn had certainly taken effective steps to prevent any further interruptions. The door was screwed, and it would have taken Glyn himself some time to get it open from inside. From outside it was an impossibility.

The juniors looked at one another in great exasperation.

A considerable amount of pocket-money had been expended upon laying in those provisions, and now Tom Merry & Co. had arrived, hungry for the feed. And the good things were so near and yet so far.

"My hat!" said Digby. "We shall have to get the door open somehow!"

Kangaroo shook his head hopelessly.

"Can't be done—we've tried that before."

"What about the window?"

"He will have fastened that, of course—we got in at the window before when the duffer had locked us out," said Clifton Dane.

"Then we're done!"

"Looks like it!"

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Gore. "We shall have to get the door open. I say, Glyn, if you don't open the door we'll smash the blessed thing in!"

There was a chuckle from inside the study.

"Do you hear?" bawled Gore, hammering on the door with his fist.

"You can smash it in if you like!" called back Glyn. "I don't quite see how you'll do it; but you can try."

"Look here—"

"Oh, run away and play!"

"Let's get a form and bash in the lock," said Gore.

"The lock wouldn't bash in."

"We can try."

The four juniors ran along the passage. There was a form under the window at the end. The form was of solid oak, and very heavy, and it was clamped to the floor to prevent its being moved by mischievous juniors.

"We can pull it up," said Gore.

"Now, then, all together!"

The juniors lay hold of the form and pulled. They pulled and pulled till they were red and gasping, and the form gave a little. Juniors who found the time hang heavy upon their hands had amused themselves with picking some of the screws out of the iron clamps, and that made the work easier.

"It's coming!" gasped Kangaroo.

"Pull away!"

"Put your beef into it!"

"Hallo! What on earth are you up to?" exclaimed Herries, coming along the passage. Herries had put Towser away, and he was ready for the feed now.

"Lend a hand!" panted Kangaroo.

"But—"

"Oh, don't jaw! Lend a hand!"

"Oh, all right!"

Herries grasped the form and dragged with the rest. The additional strength did it. The clamps creaked and came loose, and the form left its place—so suddenly that the five juniors sprawled on the floor, with the oaken form across their legs.

"Oh, oh, oh!"

"My hat!"

"Yaroooh!"

Kangaroo sat up, gasping.

"Well, it's come up," he said. "It's all right!"

"And we've come down!" groaned Digby, rubbing his shins. "And it's all wrong!"

"Never mind. Buck up!"

The juniors seized the loosened form and bore it along the passage to the door of the end study.

"Now, then!" exclaimed Kangaroo.

"Go it!"

"Get the form round and bang the lock with the end!"

"You duffers!" exclaimed Gore. "It's too long to go round!"

"Phew!"

It was a fact! The form was too long to be turned round in the passage, and it was impossible to bang the end on to the lock for the simple reason that it could not be got endwise to the door.

"Lot of trouble for nothing!" growled Digby. "This is what comes of adopting a silly chump's suggestions!"

"Look here, Digby—"

"Rats! What are we going to do?"

"Bang it sideways!" said Kangaroo desperately. "We can give the door a pretty good clump with it."

"Oh, all right! Buck up, then!"

The end of the heavy form was swung round sideways upon the door. It certainly did give the door a good clump—it made the door and the whole study shake.

There was a sound of a crash from within, and a yell from the amateur inventor.

"You asses!"

Kangaroo chuckled.

"Well, we've startled him, and made him bust something, that's one comfort!"

"Go it again!"

Bang!

There was a sound of rapid footsteps in the passage. Knox of the Sixth came along, with a gleam in his eye and a cane in his hand.

Of all the School House prefects, Knox was the worst-tempered—and his look showed that the terrific din in the Shell passage had not improved his temper.

The juniors were too busy to hear him coming. They swung the heavy oaken form round again.

"Another bang!" said Kangaroo. "We— Oh, oh! Ooooh!"

"Oh, oh, oh! Yah!"

"Yaroooh!"

Knox had reached them, and he was getting to work with the cane quickly, and without even a word of warning. The juniors dropped the form in a hurry, and there was a wild roar from Knox as the end of it clumped upon his toe.

"Ow! Ow!"

He danced on one leg, clasping the other in anguish.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Kangaroo. "Serve you jolly well right! Ha, ha, ha!"

Knox gave a growl, and grasped his cane again. He slashed recklessly among the juniors, and there was a wild stampede down the passage.

Knox followed furiously, lashing out with the cane till the last of the fugitives dodged away and escaped. Savage and sore, the juniors gathered again at a safe distance, but the attack on the end study was finished for good. Inside the end study the inventor of St. Jim's went cheerfully on with his work.

CHAPTER 5.

No Feed!

FATTY WYNN was the first down. The fat Fourth-Former came into the Hobby Club room and looked about him. The room was a rather large one, and the juniors were allowed to use it for the meetings of the Merry Hobby Club, which was too numerous to hold its meetings in a study. It was just the place for a feed, for there was a large table and room for plenty of chairs—and the said chairs could easily be borrowed up and down the passage.

Fatty Wynn came in with a cheery smile upon his plump face, expecting to see others there and the table laid for the feed.

He started a little as he found that the room was un-

occupied, and that there was nothing—not even a cloth—on the table.

"My hat!" said Fatty Wynn.

He looked out of the doorway, but there was no one in the passage. Where was the feed—and where were the feeders?

Fatty Wynn crossed over to the window and stood looking out disconsolately into the quadrangle. The feed was late, and Fatty Wynn was early.

"All alone, deah boy?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in. Fatty Wynn looked round. The swell of St. Jim's had washed his face and changed his clothes, and looked very fresh.

"Yes!" growled Wynn.

"I thought there was to be a feed here."

"So did I!"

D'Arcy looked at his watch—his famous gold ticker.

"Bai Jove! As the feed's late I wathah think I will go and weawwange my tie. I wathah huwwied ovah my dwessin', you know!"

Fatty Wynn grunted, and D'Arcy left the club-room. A minute later Kerr entered.

"Not yet!" he exclaimed.

"No," grunted Fatty.

Figgins came in with Blake. They stared at the empty table, and then at Kerr, and the fat Fourth-Former.

"Hallo, we're early!" said Figgins.

"You're not."

"Then the feed's late!" Blake exclaimed.

"That's it."

"Hallo! Here's Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry came in with Manners and Lowther. The three chums of the Shell were looking very cheerful, and feeling very hungry.

The juniors who had already arrived stared at the Terrible Three, and the Terrible Three stared at them.

"Where's the feed?" asked Tom Merry.

"Is that a conundrum?"

"No. Where is it?"

"Haven't the faintest idea," said Blake.

"It's rotten," said Fatty Wynn. "I suppose this is the School House way of doing things. Here we are, famished, and—"

"Oh, I'm not famished!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "I can stand it a little longer without anything serious happening."

"Well, I can't," said Fatty Wynn. "I've got a specially keen appetite to-day—a real hunger I wouldn't take five pounds for. I want some grub."

"We're not all here yet," said Figgins. "There's Gussy still to come."

"He's been. He's gone to rearrange his tie—"

"Hallo! Here he is!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came into the club-room. "Does my tie sit bettah now, Wynn, deah boy?" he asked.

"Hang it all—"

"Weally, Wynn—"

"The ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! I—"

"The frabjous duffer—"

"Wynn, I wish it to be distinctly undahstood that I uttahly decline to be alluded to as a fwabjous duffah. I—"

"Eh? Who's talking to you?"

"Weally—"

"Do you think you're the only frabjous duffer at St. Jim's?" demanded Fatty Wynn. "I was speaking of Kangaroo."

"Oh, in that case—"

"The feed's a quarter of an hour late," said Fatty Wynn. "I'm jolly well not going to stay any longer! If this is School House hospitality, I've had enough of it!"

"Oh, rats!" said Blake, quick to stand up for the honour of his House. "After all, it's an honour to a New House waster to be asked into the School House at all."

"Oh, rot!" said Figgins.

"Piffle!" said Kerr.

"Look here, you New House chumps—"

"School House dummy!"

"Bai Jove! I—"

"I'm not going to wait any longer!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn desperately. "I'm going down to the tuckshop, and you can tell Kangaroo from me to go and eat coke!"

"Bosh!"

"You're coming, Figgy?"

"Well, yes. Tell Kangaroo—"

"We've had enough of the rotten School House!" said Fatty Wynn indignantly.

Blake closed the door, and put his back against it.

"You're jolly well not going after your rotten remarks about the School House," he said. "You're jolly well going to stay here and wait for the feed."

"What!"



"Another bang!" said Kangaroo. "We—oh, oh!" "Yaroooh!" Knox suddenly came upon the juniors, and he got to work quickly with his cane. The form was dropped in a hurry, and there was a wild roar from the prefect as it clumped on his toes. "Ow! Ow!"

"Deaf?" said Blake pleasantly. "I'll repeat it all, if you like. You're jolly well going to stay here and wait for the feed!"

"Then we jolly well won't!" exclaimed Figgins. "Get away from that door!"

"Rats!"

"Yank him away!"

"Buck up, School House!" sang out Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! Buck up, deah boys!"

"What-ho!"

"Yes, rather!"

The School House fellows rushed to back up Blake. They crowded round the door, and the way was barred to the New House trio.

Figgins & Co. were in a hopeless minority. But they were getting wrathful. They did not mean to give in.

"Stand aside!" roared Figgins.

"Rats!"

"Will you let us pass?"

"Never!" said Blake cheerfully. "Never, old son!"

"Charge!" shouted Figgins. "Go it, New House!"

And Figgins & Co. charged. Just as they charged the door opened suddenly from without, and Blake gave a roar as it caught him a crack on the back of the head. Kangaroo looked in, and stared in astonishment at the scene of confusion that met his eyes.

CHAPTER 6.

Gussy's the Man!

"GO it, New House!"

"Buck up, School House!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Pile in!"

"My only hat!" exclaimed Kangaroo. "What on earth's the matter? Do you fellows usually behave like this when you're invited out?"

"Or have you picked up these manners in France?" asked Digby.

The dusty mass of juniors separated. They stood looking at one another wrathfully, with the exception of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, who was groping about the floor for his eyeglass. The cord had snapped in the struggle, and the monocle had momentarily disappeared.

"You see—" said Tom Merry.

"It—it was a House row to fill up time," explained Figgins. "It's all right, if the feed's ready now."

"Oh, yes!" said Fatty Wynn, his good humour restored at once. "You're jolly late, Noble; but we don't mind, if the feed's ready."

"But it isn't," said Kangaroo ruefully.

"Eh—not ready?"

"No, I'm sorry—"

"Then I'm jolly well going!" said Fatty Wynn. "I don't want to be rude, Kangaroo, but I must say I'm surprised at you. Here we are, just fresh from a long journey, and in a state of famishment."

"Well, that's a good word, anyhow," said Monty Lowther.

"In a state of famishment," went on Fatty Wynn. "You ask us to a feed, keep us waiting a quarter of an hour, and then say it isn't ready. That sort of thing may do for the School House, but it's not good enough for us. Come on, you chaps!"

"Hold on! We've got a ripping feed ready," exclaimed Kangaroo, "but we can't get at it. We've been trying to, and we came to ask you fellows if you had any suggestions."

"That's it!" said Herries.

"Oh, that alters the case!" said Fatty Wynn. "You say you've got a good feed?"

"Yes. Cold fowl, salmon, ham and eggs—"

"Oh, good!"

"Cake and tarts, and jellies and buns—"

"Ripping!"
 "Pineapple and oranges."
 "Splendid!"
 "That's not all; but we can't get at it."
 "Where is it, then?"
 "In my study," said Kangaroo. "And Glyn is busy on a rotten invention, and he's screwed up the door on the inside."
 "My only hat!"
 "The question is—how to get it open? We've been chased off the Shell passage by Knox the prefect. We've looked at the window, but it's closed, and I know it's fastened. We can't get into the study, and the feed's there."

"Oh dear!" said Fatty Wynn.
 Some of the juniors laughed. But internal sinkings warned them that they were very hungry, and that the postponement of the feed was a serious matter.
 "Anybody think of a dodge?" asked Clifton Dane.
 There was a general puckering of brows.
 "Bai Jove, I've got it!"

And Arthur Augustus rose to his feet. All glances were turned at once upon the swell of St. Jim's.
 "You've got it?" asked Tom Merry.
 "Yaas, wathah!"
 "Well, go ahead!"
 "Eh?"

"What's the scheme?"
 "The—the scheme?"
 "Yes; the dodge for getting into the end study," said Tom Merry. "If you've got it, what is it?"
 "Weally, Tom Mewwy, I fail to compwehend."
 "Ass! You said you'd got it."
 "I was alludin' to my monocle," said D'Arcy, with dignity, holding up the recovered eyeglass. "It had wolloed undah the table, but I found it."
 The juniors glared at him.
 "You unspeakable ass!"
 "I wufuse to be chawactewised as an unspeakable ass. I—"

"What's to be done?" said Kangaroo. "Of course, we could stand another feed, but—but not to put too fine a point on it, we've blued all our cash on the grub that's stacked up in the box in the end study."
 "Bai Jove!"

"And I don't suppose you fellows have come back from a holiday with your pockets full of tin?" Manners remarked.
 Tom Merry shook his head.

"We're mostly stony," he said, with a laugh, "and what money we have left is French money. We came straight on, and haven't been able to change it back into English money. Otherwise we'd lend you something with pleasure."
 "Yaas, wathah!"

"Why, this is awful!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I'd forgotten about the French money. Mrs. Taggles wouldn't take it at the tuckshop. Is it possible that we shall have to wait for school tea before we get anything?"
 "Gweat Scott!"

"It's simply awful!"
 "Weally, you know, I'm not a gweedy chap, but I am wathah peckish, and I should wegard such a contingency as wathah dweadful."
 "Rats!" said Figgins. "We've got to get into the end study and collar the grub. Can't we bust the door in somehow?"

"We've tried it, and Knox, the prefect, has his eye on the passage now. We can't get in at the window."
 "Bai Jove! I've got it!"

"Oh, shut up about that rotten eyeglass!" roared Fatty Wynn, exasperated. "We know you've got it, and that's enough."
 "Weally, Wynn—"

"Dry up!"
 "I wufuse to dwy up. I—"

"Oh, ring off, Gussy!" said Digby. "We know all about the eyeglass."
 "I wasn't speakin' about the eyeglass this time, deah boy. I mean that I've got an ideah," said the swell of St. Jim's.

"Oh!"

"You see, it takes a fellow with a bwain to think out these things," said D'Arcy. "I should pwobably have solved the pwoblem much soonah if I hadn't been searchin' for my eyeglass. We can't get in at the door—"

"We know that!"
 "And we can't get in at the window—"

"We know that, too."
 "Pway be patient. There is a third way—"

"Through the keyhole, I suppose?" said Blake sarcastically. "As the slimmest one of the party, I suggest that Gussy tries it himself."
 "Hear, hear!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Weally, Blake, I wegard you as an ass. I was certainly not thinkin' of the keyhole. I was alludin' to the chimney."

"The chimney!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The chimney," repeated Tom Merry thoughtfully. "I never thought of that."

"It takes a chap with a bwain—"

"But how are we to get down the chimney?" said Tom Merry. "And what a state we shall be in when we've done it."

"I twust you will not shwink fwom makin' a sacrifice for the common cause."

"It would have to be a jolly uncommon cause to make me go down a chimney," said Monty Lowther. "And if there's a fire in the grate—"

"That's all right," said Kangaroo; "there'll be no fire in the grate."

"Off-side!" said Clifton Dane.
 "What do you mean?"

"Glyn has lighted one to heat his blessed solder or something," said Dane.

"That knocks it on the head then," said Blake.
 "Not at all, deah boys," said D'Arcy serenely. "What's the mattach with pouwin' a pail of watah down the chimney first, to extinguish the fiah?"

"Phew!"

"You see, we needn't go wight up to the woof to get at the chimney," went on the swell of St. Jim's, warming to his subject. "That might atwact attention. Besides, Tom Mewwy would have such a long way to come down."

"Eh?"

"I suppose Tom Mewwy will do the twick. You see, we can get into the chimney in the woom ova the end study—you know what a gweat wide chimney it is. That part of the House is vewy old, and the new Shell passage was built on to it, you wemembah. In olden times the chimney sweepahs used to go up and down the chimney to clean it, and it stands to weason that there's plenty of woom."

"Something in that."

"Of course there is, or I should not be makin' the remark, deah boy. There'll be heaps of woom in the chimney. Tom Mewwy can get into it, and go down—"

"Ahem!"

"First of all we'll swamp it with watah," said D'Arcy.

"The woom above is only used as an extwa box-woom now, and we can get into it. There's a tap at the end of the passage, and a wov of fiah-buckets—they are not meant for extinguishin' that kind of fiah, but they will do."

"Good!"

"Jolly good!"

"Gussy, you're a genius!"

"It wequiah a fellow of bwains and judgment to think these things out, deah boys!" said D'Arcy modestly. "I am always willin' to help a lame dog ova a stile, and—"

"But there's one important point Gussy's overlooked," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Pway, what is that, Tom Mewwy?"

"The chap who thinks out an idea like this ought to be the chap to carry it out," said Tom Merry. "Gussy's the man."

"Weally—"

"Good!"

"Hear, hear!"

CHAPTER 7.

An Attack From Above!

THE enthusiasm was great. Arthur Augustus was acclaimed by all as the only individual who could possibly carry out the idea with complete success. The swell of St. Jim's was greatly flattered—but he hesitated.

"You're awfully good, deah boys!" he said slowly. "But weally—"

"Gussy's the man!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Yaas, I admit that I should pwobably cawwy out the weeze bettah than any of you chaps, but I am thinkin' of my clothes!"

"Gussy! Surely you're not thinking of refusing to make a sacrifice for the common cause!" exclaimed Tom Merry, in a shocked tone.

Arthur Augustus coloured. He was rather taken aback at having his own words quoted against him in this way.

"Come on," said Kangaroo; "as it's settled that Gussy is the man—"

"Weally Kangawoo—"

"The sooner the quicker," said Clifton Dane. "I must say that it's really sporty of Gussy to play up to the occasion in this way. I call a cheer for Gussy!"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Oh, vewy well!" exclaimed the swell of St. Jim's in a

resigned tone. "I suppose as the bwainiest chap here I weally ought to undahtake it!"

"That's right!"

"Of course you ought!"

"Come on!"

And the juniors crowded out of the study. The prospect of getting hold of the feed at last made even Fatty Wynn keen and eager. The juniors crowded into the Shell passage.

"We'll make one last appeal to Glyn," said D'Arcy, going towards the door of the end study.

"No good!" said Kangaroo. "Come on!"

Arthur Augustus turned his eyeglass upon the Cornstalk junior

"Weally, Kangawoo, as the leadah of this partay—"

"The what?"

"The leadah! If I am not leadah I shall certainly wefuse to go down the chimney!"

"Oh, you're leader!" said Kangaroo hastily. "Of course! But—"

"Then my ordahs will have to be obeyed!" D'Arcy tapped at the door of the end study. "Glyn, deah boy—Bernard Glyn!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"We have returned to St. Jim's fwom abwoad!"

"I can guess that, ass, when I hear you speak!"

"I wefuse to be called an ass! Open this door at once, and I will give you a feahful thwashin', you wude-ass!"

"Oh, buzz off!"

Rap, rap, rap!

"Hallo, here comes Knox!"

"Ahem! I—I think we had bettah, pewwaps, wetiah, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus rather hurriedly. "Come on!"

And they retired—at a run. Knox came up too late, and he said things after the retreating juniors. The latter did not stop till they were in the room above Glyn.

D'Arcy looked into the deep, old-fashioned chimney, and he screwed his head round to look up into it.

"It will be quite easy," he remarked. "Of course, I shall have to change into some old clothes first—"

"Oh, rats!" said Fatty Wynn. "Go as you are!"

"I will go and change while you chaps are extinguishin' the fiah!" said D'Arcy, unheeding. "Pway do not spare the watah!"

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry. "Come and get the buckets!"

At the end of the passage there were four red buckets hanging in a row beside the water-tap. They were intended for extinguishing a fire—but not, of course, a study fire. But they could be used just as easily for that purpose.

To fill the buckets and to carry them full of water to the box-room occupied but a few minutes. Tom Merry looked into the chimney. At the back of it a steady column of smoke was rising from the grate in the study below. To push the bucket up into the wide chimney and tilt it over was easy.

"You first, Tom Merry!"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Right you are!"

He pushed his bucket into the chimney, and the water went swooping over into the shaft. There was a sound of falling soot and a fearful spluttering from below, and the curious, penetrating smell of water thrown on hot coals.

"Yaroo! Atishoo! Yow-wooh!"

The yell that Bernard Glyn gave could be heard above.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. "That's moved him! Go ahead, Kangy."

Kangaroo added his bucket of water, and then two more bucketfuls followed. The hissing and spluttering from below was terrific.

There was the roar of an angry voice up the chimney.

"You—you asses—you villains!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've put my fire out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Everything's smothered with blacks!" roared Bernard Glyn.

"Ha, ha, ha! Open the study door, then!"

"I won't!"

And Glyn retired, growling, from the grate. The smoke rolled up the chimney more thickly than ever for some minutes, and then it slackened and cleared away. It was evident that the fire in the end study was quite out.

Arthur Augustus came into the box-room. He was dressed in his very oldest clothes—which weren't very old, either.

"I'm weady, deah boys!"

"Good! The fire's out!"

"Vewy well! You are quite sure, Tom Mewwy, that you would not pfefer to go?"

"Quite sure, thanks!"

(Continued on next page.)



Do you know a good joke? If so, send it to "THE GEM JESTER," 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4 (Comp.). Fine footballs are awarded every week for the two best jokes received, and a half-a-crown is paid for every other joke that appears in this column.

NO FOOLING THE FLY.

Rastus: "What am dat fly dat keeps buzzing round ma neck, Sambo?"

Sambo: "Dat's a hoss fly. It attacks hosses and asses."

Rastus: "But Ah'm not a hoss, nor an ass."

Sambo: "Ah'm not saying yo' is; but yo' can't fool dem fies nohow!"

A football has been awarded to R. Grindley, 3, Lilac Avenue, Widnes, Lancashire.

WELL NAMED.

Bill: "Why do you call your dog Hiker?"

Jack: "Because he goes for tramps!"

A football has been awarded to P. Williams, 19, South Grove, C-on-M., Manchester.

THE EDITOR REGRETS.

Author: "You find fault with the end of my story. What's wrong with it?"

Editor: "It's too far from the beginning!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Wainwright, 34, Silverlands Road, Silverhill, St. Leonards-on-Sea.

CANDID.

Artist: "I'm so proud of my paintings that I think I'll hold an exhibition."

Critic: "Then mind you don't get rheumatism sitting on the cold pavement!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Tuttle, 2, Kenwood Road, Edmonton, London, N.9.

A LIGHT MATTER.

Son: "What do people have candles on their birthday cakes for, dad?"

Father: "Oh, just to make light of their age!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to D. Garrett, Market Place, Kingsclere, Hants.

NO NEED.

Employer (engaging new clerk): "I hope you are not one of those men who watch the clock?"

Applicant: "Oh, no, sir; I have a wrist-watch!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Forster, 5, Shakespeare Road, Seacombe, Wallasey.

NOT USED TO STAIRS.

Tram Inspector: "Are you aware that none of the passengers upstairs has a ticket?"

Conductor (new to job): "Oh, lor, sir! That's what comes of living in a bungalow!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to W. Keekie, 43, Brampton Road, Bexleyheath, Kent.

FINIS.

The aviation instructor was giving a lecture on parachute jumping.

"And if the parachute doesn't open," he concluded, "well, that's what's known as jumping to a conclusion!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Savitt, 33, Great St. Andrew Street, Holborn, London, W.C.2.

GOT WHAT HE ASKED FOR.

Two motorists met in a lane too narrow for them to pass. "I never turn back for a fool!" shouted one rudely.

"That's all right," retorted the other, reversing. "I will!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Miall, 6, Cliveden View, Furze Platt, Mordenhead.

"I would willingly change clothes with you for the purpose!"

"Don't trouble!"

"No twouble at all! I——"

"My dear Gussy, you're just the chap—the right man at the right moment! Go ahead, and good luck to you!"

"If you would care to go, Blake——"

"I wouldn't, thanks!"

"Or you, Kerr——"

"I really think this is one of the things a School House chap could do better!" said Kerr, with a shake of his head.

"Or you, Kangawoo——"

"Thanks, no!"

"Vewy well—I'm weady!"

And Arthur Augustus D'Arcy approached the chimney in an extremely gingerly way.

"Pway give me a bunk up, Blake!"

"Certainly!"

Arthur Augustus put his head into the box-room chimney. Blake loyally bunked him up, putting a great deal of force into the bunk, and there was a smothered exclamation from within the chimney.

"Ow! You ass!"

"Hallo! What's the matter?"

"You—ow!—you—you've buzzed my head into the soot, you ass!"

"Sorry! Get on!"

"Hold on a minute, you dummy!"

"Oh, all right; if you're going to be all the afternoon about it!" said Blake resignedly. "Don't forget that we've all had a long journey, and are simply famishing!"

"Yes, rather!" said Fatty Wynn. "I think Gussy ought to bunk up! I'm feeling pretty empty—as if I should be ill if I don't have something to eat pretty soon!"

"Same here!" said Monty Lowther.

And there was a chorus:

"Buck up, Gussy!"

"Give him another shove, Blake!"

"What-ho!"

Jack Blake shoved, and D'Arcy's legs disappeared up the chimney. There was a showering of soot, and a sound of gasping and clambering.

"Getting on all right, Gussy?"

"Gwooooh!"

"There's plenty of room, isn't there?"

"Gwooooh!"

"Blessed if I understand him—he's talking Esperanto or Finnish! Buck up, Gussy; we're all hungry!"

"Gwo-oooh!"

The sounds in the chimney ceased. Either D'Arcy was gone, or he was stopping to take breath—such breath as he could get in the confines of the chimney. There seemed to be more soot than anything else there. It was a long time since the chimney had been swept.

The chums in the box-room waited patiently. Jack Blake put his head under the chimney and looked anxiously upward.

"I say, Gussy— Oh—ow—ooch!"

A shower of soot descended, and Blake's face and head were smothered. He withdrew them quickly, and turned a countenance like that of a nigger minstrel upon his comrades. There was a yell of laughter in the room.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You dummies!" roared Blake. "What are you gurgling at? I'm smothered!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've got blessed soot in my eyes, in my nose, in my mouth, and in my ears, too! My hair's thick with it! Oh!"

"Well, you do look funny!" said Tom Merry, wiping away his tears. "Never mind——"

"Never mind, you ass! Why——"

"I mean, it's all right——"

"It's all right, is it?" roared Blake, rushing at Tom Merry. "If it's all right, then you can have some of it, you Shell duffer!"

"Ow! Keep off! Yah!"

Blake embraced Tom Merry, and waltzed him round the box-room, rubbing his face quite affectionately upon that of the hero of the Shell.

Tom Merry roared and struggled in vain.

In less than a minute he was as black as Blake, and his collar and tie and waistcoat were in a shocking state.

Blake released him at last.

"There!" he gasped. "Is that all right?"

"You dangerous ass! You——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling duffers——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Swish! came a fresh shower of soot down the chimney, smothering the grate, and filling the room with a choking

odour. Digby, who was near the grate, jumped back, spotted all over with soot.

"My hat! Gussy's making short work of it," said Herries.

"Hallo, I can hear him yelling!"

"I say, deah boys!"

"Hallo!"

"Pway come closah to the chimney. I can't seweam!"

"No fear!"

"Weally, you know——"

"You can scream," said Kangaroo. "We've had enough of your blessed soot. Why don't you get on with the washing and leave the cackle till afterwards?"

"I wefuse to allow my wemarks to be alluded to as cackle."

"What have you got to say, ass?"

"I decline to be called an ass!"

"Poof!"

"I want you fellows to be weady to back me up, that's all," said D'Arcy, his voice sounding strangely muffled from the chimney. "It has occurred to me that Glyn may possibly show fight, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha! I think it's extremely likely!" chuckled Clifton Dane.

"Vewy well. In that case it may be impos for me to fight Glyn with one hand, and unscREW the doah with the othah."

"Yes. I can quite see you doing it."

"So you had bettah be weady to back me up, you know." "If you think we're coming up the chimney, you duffer, you——"

"Then it's useless my goin'," said Gussy. "I may as well weturn. Glyn is almost certain to cut up wusty."

"Oh, get on!"

"I wefuse to get on!"

"It's all right, Gussy!" bawled Blake. "We're about as sooty as we can be already, and we'll come and back you up if you yell—Tom Merry and myself."

"Oh, vewy well! In that case, I will pwocceed, deah boy."

"For goodness' sake bunk up!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. "I'm feeling awfully faint. What an ass I was not to have some grub at the station!"

"Well, you always were an ass, you know!" said Digby consolingly.

Swoosh! came the soot again, and then it ceased. D'Arcy was out of the box-room chimney and in the wider shaft that descended to the grate in the study below.

The chimney was broad, but very dark, as well as sooty. As it was an old-fashioned chimney, which once upon a time had been cleaned in the old-fashioned way, by little fellows going up inside, D'Arcy expected to find some support for a climber—and he found it.

There were iron clamps in the brickwork, at intervals apart, and, by groping for them, he found them. He found soot, too, in huge quantities, and whenever he touched a clamp or a brick, he dislodged it in clouds.

D'Arcy was gasping for breath now, almost suffocated by the fumes of the soot. Now that he was in Glyn's chimney he was sending showers of it down into Glyn's grate, and, occupied as the inventor was, he could hardly fail to notice it.

A shower of soot that smothered half the study drew Glyn's attention towards the grate, and he came over towards it. It occurred to him at once that this was why the fire had been extinguished from above—to make it possible for an attack to be made by means of the chimney.

"Stop, there!" shouted Glyn. "Who's that?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Gussy, you ass! Stop where you are!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort!"

"I'll jolly well light a fire under you if you don't go back!" roared Glyn.

"Gweat Scott!"

"Are you going?"

"No, bai Jove—I'm comin'!"

And Arthur Augustus manfully let go his hold, and slid fairly down the chimney—and alighted in the grate in the midst of a terrific shower of soot. He bumped there, and sat up, so astounding a figure that Glyn stared in amazement at the sight of him.

CHAPTER 8.

Something Like Soot!

"BAI Jove!"

Arthur Augustus gasped out that ejaculation as he sat blinking at Glyn. His face and head, his clothes and hands, were smothered, and as black as the ace of spades.

He groped for his monocle, and crammed it into his eye; but it was thick with soot, and he could not see through it. He let it drop upon its cord again.

(Continued on page 14.)

ANOTHER PAGE OF NEWS AND VIEWS FROM—



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

HALLO, chums! What do you think of the GEM's latest new feature—our picture-story serial? It's another winner for our paper, isn't it? You are going to revel in the further thrilling adventures of our new chum, Mick Ray. You wait until you see next Wednesday's set of pictures! Mick and Larry Hawkins get in among the gang of bandits—then the fireworks start—and the thrills! Tell all your pals about this grand new feature so that they too can start with Mick on his thrilling adventures.

For next Wednesday there is another masterpiece from the pen of popular Martin Clifford. It is a full-of-fun yarn of rival japers of St. Jim's, a theme in which our author always excels. So you can be sure you are in for a first-class treat when you read—

“FOOLED BY FIGGINS!”

Tom Merry & Co. “start the ball rolling” between the rival japers. Poor old Figgins & Co. get japed right up to the hilt, and they are the laugh of the school. But Figgins is out for revenge. Does he get it? I'll say he does! Tom Merry and his chums are properly dished, diddled, and done. How Figgins “works his wheeze” on his rivals will keep you in fits of laughter.

Next on the ripping programme for next week comes another powerful instalment of our thrilling serial—

“ST. FRANK'S VERSUS FOO CHOW!”

The boys of St. Frank's have at last

escaped from Foo Chow, and they are back on board the Wanderer, but there is grim danger close at hand—a danger that Nelson Lee soon realises—for the guns of Foo Chow's yacht, the Dragon, are trained on the Wanderer, with the gunners ready to blow Lord Dorrimore's yacht out of the water! What happens you will see when you read the next nerve-tugging chapters of this popular serial.

To complete this number there will, of course, be another batch of readers' prize-winning jokes, for which the Jester awards more footballs and more half-crowns; and lastly there will be another chat from yours truly.

WHAT READERS THINK.

“I write this letter in highest praise of the GEM,” says L. Roberts, of Great Yarmouth. “It is the foremost of any book in the land! I have not missed a copy since I started to read it.”

“I want you to congratulate Mr. Clifford on his latest story for me,” says E. N. Dicker, of Tufnell Park, N.19. “I have been a reader of the GEM and ‘The Magnet’ for the last four years. The way Mr. Clifford thinks out Gussy's accent is amazing.”

“I simply had to write a letter to say what a good combination the GEM and ‘The Nelson Lee Library’ make,” says Lloyd Storr-Best, of Brighton. “I prefer school stories to any other kind.”

“Thanks, Mr. Editor, for giving me the tip about ‘The Holiday Annual’ and ‘The Popular Book of Boys' Stories,’” says “Loyal Gemite,” of Everton. “I asked my parents to get me both these books for my birthday, and since then

I have spent many happy hours reading them, with many more pleasant hours to come. I particularly liked the fine story of Tom Merry & Co., called ‘Spooled!’” These two wonder annuals can be obtained from all newsagents. “The Holiday Annual”—containing many magnificent school stories and exciting adventure yarns, as well as a host of other fine features—is now only five shillings. “The Popular Book of Boys' Stories,” which is a grand collection of thrilling yarns of adventure on land, at sea, and in the air, is priced at two shillings and sixpence; but this year's issue has been increased to 192 pages.—Ed.

EGGS AND BACON!

D'you like eggs and bacon? So do I! And this is the story of another fellow who liked 'em, too. The chap was lying in bed in Devon and he just wouldn't eat. He was fed on nothing but liquids, and he got weaker and weaker, and the doctors gave him up. They did their best to make him eat, but somehow he just couldn't. Near by to him there lived a fellow who liked eggs and bacon, and one day when he was cooking some the smell was wafted into the room of the sick one. The patient sniffed once, he sniffed again and then he opened his lungs and took a really good noseful of that smell. He sat up and began to take a new interest in things. He rang the bell and when his nurse came he said: “Eggs and bacon for me, please!” And when she had recovered sufficiently from the shock, the nurse got them for him, and now he is as right as rain! Three cheers for eggs and bacon!

THE HUMAN INSECT.

What creatures do you think are most like human beings in their habits of life? You might try a hundred times and never guess—ants! The ant is very human indeed. He has his vices. One of his worst vices is drinking—he will do anything to obtain the sweet juices from certain beetles. Some of them even go in for slavery! They capture other insects and make them work for them. Ants employ domestic servants, they carry on agriculture, and they go to war against each other. The wonderful thing about them is that they are born with complete knowledge. If it were not for the fact that physical limitations prevent them from developing further, they would become serious rivals of the human race.

THE EDITOR.

George Tremoulet, Tremoulet's Mansions, Railway Street, Durban, Natal, South Africa, wants correspondents interested in films and footer; age 17 to 18.

A. Winston, P.O. Box 2498, Cape Town, South Africa, wants correspondents in the British Empire and the States.

Tom Leaver, 50, King's Hall Road, Beckenham, Kent, wants a correspondent interested in breeding and keeping rabbits, cavies, pigeons, etc.

Miss Joan Lawrence, 31, Gammage Street, Dudley, Worcester, wants girl correspondents in Victoria, Australia; age 15 to 16.

Miss Margaret Fereday, 15, Churchfield Street, Dudley, Worcester, wants girl correspondents in Victoria, Australia; age 15 to 16.

Bert Le Cocq, Huret House, Alderney, Channel Islands, would like to hear from readers keen on the Companion Papers and interested in postcard exchange.

W. C. Leitch, 87, Mansfield Place, Torry, Aberdeen, wants to hear from collectors of the old issues of “The Nelson Lee.”

Miss Dorothy Y. Shirley, 22, Woodlands Farm Road, Erding ton, Birmingham, wants girl correspondents in Japan, China, and France; age 11 to 14.

Harry Craber, 26, Newman Street, Newtown, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents in the Empire. Is keen on stamps, also on views of London.

Douglas H. Luntley, 12, Cardigan Terrace, Kirkstall Road, Leeds 4, wants correspondents.

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PEN PALS

A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging topics of interest to each other. If you want a pen pal post your notice to The GEM LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

T. E. Fitzgerald, Gosport Road, Wynberg, Cape Province, South Africa, wants correspondents in England, Canada, and Australia; ages 11 to 13.

R. Gray, 62, Leagrave Road, Luton, Beds, wants to get in touch with readers who are collectors of the last series of “The Nelson Lee Library.”

J. M. Lyons, 7, Leigham Court Road, Streatham, London, S.W. 16, wants correspondents near London, age 13 to 16, interested in amateur theatricals, swimming, and writing.

Stanley F. Thompson, 5, Queen's Drive, Sedgley Park, Prestwich, Manchester, wants a correspondent, age 14 to 15, near Manchester, interested in model boats, sailing, power, and buildings.

Miss Florrie Paddick, 60, Drummond Road, Bournemouth, wants girl correspondents.

Israel Herr, P.O. Box 3116, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wants correspondents interested in cigarette cards and old numbers of “The Nelson Lee.”

G. de Lange, 30, Mall Street, Kroonstad, South Africa, wants correspondents overseas.

The Four-Footed Phantom!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Bai Jove!"

"Wh-wh-what!" gasped Glyn.

D'Arcy staggered to his feet.

"Do I look vewy dirty, deah boy?"

"Dirty!" said Glyn, with an almost hysterical chuckle. "My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can see nothin' to laugh at."

"Ha, ha, ha! Look in the glass, then!"

Arthur Augustus looked in the glass, and started back at the terrible reflection.

"Bai Jove! It's howwid!"

"Nice state to come into a chap's study!" growled Glyn. "You'd better go back the way you've come!"

"Wats!"

"Look here—"

"I'm goin' to have that doah open."

"Nothin' of the sort."

"I ordah you to open that doah, Glyn!"

"Go hon!"

"Othahwise, I shall have no wesource but to administah a feahful thwashin'!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You wufuse?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Vewy well! Pway put up your fists."

And Arthur Augustus advanced upon the Liverpool lad.

Bernard Glyn retreated. He wasn't afraid of D'Arcy's fists, but he didn't want to come in contact with a walking heap of soot. He backed away round the table.

"Keep off, you horrid sweep!" he exclaimed. "You're not fit to come near a human being!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"Keep off!"

D'Arcy followed him round the table. He knocked into Glyn's invention, and there was a clink and a clank. D'Arcy stared at the invention in astonishment. It was a framework of iron and steel, with an electric motor fastened inside, and in general shape it bore a resemblance to the skeleton of a gigantic horse. It filled up half the study, and it was difficult to pass between it and the table.

"Bai Jove! What is that wotten contivance?" exclaimed D'Arcy.

"Mind your own business."

"Is that your invention?"

"Don't ask questions."

"Vewy well—open the doah; deah boy, and you can keep on makin' these wotten contivances as long as you like."

"Rats!"

"Then I shall give you a feahful thwashin', and I twust it will be a lesson to you."

D'Arcy rushed at the inventor of St. Jim's.

Bernard Glyn dodged round the table again.

"Keep off!" he exclaimed. "Keep off, you filthy sweep! Don't come near me!"

"Open the doah, then."

"I can't!" roared Glyn. "It's screwed!"

"UnscREW it, then."

"It would take too long."

"I am willin' to wait."

"Rats!"

D'Arcy rushed at the St. Jim's inventor. Again the Liverpool lad dodged, but D'Arcy did not slacken the pursuit this time. He dashed on recklessly, and caught his leg in an outlying part of the wonderful invention, and rolled over on the floor. There was a terrific clinking and



Mick Ray shook hands with his headmaster before leaving Abbey College. "I am sorry your father has died and you must leave," said the Head. "The best of luck!"



Mick arrived home and, meeting the family solicitor, learned that he was penniless. Left now with no parents, Mick determined to go abroad.



Mick joined up, and then began his six months' training. He proved himself an expert horseman by breaking in an untamed bronco, his comrades cheering him.



Eventually Mick was sent to Fort Lacqu, in the Rockies, where he made pats with Larry Hawkins. Larry, a crack shot, gave Mick a clever exhibition of his shooting.

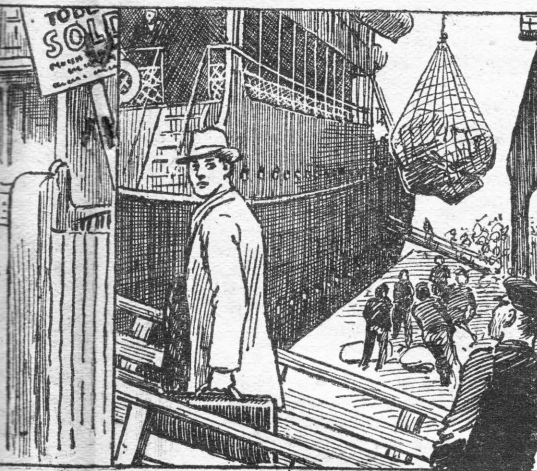


Fighting furiously, Mick and the Indian rolled down the slope, nearly finishing up in the river. With a terrific blow Mick half-stunned the Indian, and then Larry arrived.



With their prisoner, Mick and Larry rode back to Fort Lacqu. Sergeant Rudd recognised the Indian as belonging to a gang of outlaws led by "Killer" Gaston.

THE MOUNTIED!



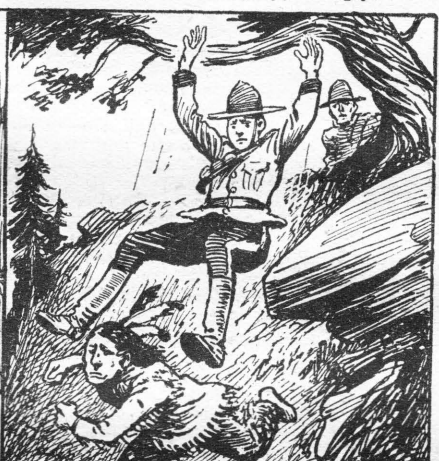
He decided to join the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and, with all his possessions in a suitcase, journeyed to Liverpool, where he boarded a liner bound for Canada.



At last Mick arrived in Regina, and went to the Mounted Police recruiting office. "I want to join the Mounted," he told the sergeant, who eyed the boy approvingly.



"Let's see what I can do!" laughed Mick, but just as he drew his revolver he saw a knife come hissing towards Larry. Mick took aim at the weapon and deflected it.



Behind the boulder was an Indian, who now bolted down a steep slope. Grabbing an overhanging branch, Mick hurled himself through the air and landed on top of him.



Before they could question the Indian a miner rode furiously into the fort. He was almost exhausted. "Send men—Le Rosse—Killer Gaston on warpath!" he panted.



An hour later Mick and Larry rode out from Fort Lacqu, bound for the mining town of Le Rosse, a hundred miles distant, with orders to capture Gaston and his outlaws!

clanking as the wonderful invention rolled after him.

Bernard Glyn gave a wild yell.

"Oh, you ass! You've mucked it up!"

"Ow! I'm hurt!"

"Serve you jolly well right!"

"Ow!"

"You've mucked it up!" howled Glyn, dragging at the wonderful invention.

"You silly ass—"

"I wefuse to be called an ass!"

"Oh, you duffer! It's all mixed up now! It will take me hours to get it straight again! Oh, you ass!"

"Weally, Glyn—"

"You irabjous duffer!"

D'Arcy staggered to his feet. The wonderful invention was a complicated mass of rods and levers and springs, and wires of all sorts now, without form and void. D'Arcy could not help grinning a little through the soot as he looked at it.

"Bai Jove, it does look wathahr woekay!" he remarked. "Howevah, the trouble is about the doah. Are you goin' to open it?"

"No!" roared Glyn.

"Vewy well! Put up your fists!"

"Keep off—oh!"

Glyn was dragging at his mixed-up invention. D'Arcy seized him and dragged at him. The inventor of the Shell turned upon the sooty Fourth-Former wrathfully.

"Well, come on, if you will have it!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah! I'm goin' to— Ow!"

"There, you ass!"

"Ow!"

Reckless of the soot now, Bernard Glyn closed with the swell of St. Jim's, and D'Arcy rolled over on the floor, with the Liverpool lad sprawling over him. The bump on the floor knocked all the breath out of D'Arcy, and it knocked off a great deal of his soot, most of which bestowed itself upon Glyn.

"Help!" yelled D'Arcy.

"Now then, you ass!"

"Wescue!"

There was a sound of smothering and sliding and sneezing in the chimney, and a form shot down and rolled out on to the hearthrug.

It was Jack Blake, but he was scarcely recognisable. He was almost as black as Arthur Augustus.

"Oh!" he gasped.

"Wescue, deah boy!"

Jack Blake had a grasp upon Glyn in two seconds. He dragged at him, and Glyn held on to D'Arcy manfully.

"Come on, Tom Mewwy—wescue!"

"Right you are!"

Tom Merry slid down the chimney. He came into the study in the midst of clouds of soot, looking like a Central African as to complexion. He seized upon Bernard Glyn, and then the Liverpool lad, in the grasp of three pairs of hands, had to give in.

The study was in a shocking state by this time. Soot was everywhere.

"Now, then!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"We've got him!"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Unfasten that door, you ass!"

"Yah!"

"Where's the screwdriver?"

"Find out!"

"Pull that contraption to pieces, Blake, and see if there's a screwdriver among it—"

"Hold on!" roared Glyn. "Let my invention alone! I'll find the screwdriver."

"Follow the thrilling adventures of Mick and Larry in their fight against 'Killer' Gaston's gang. See next week's GEM."

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"Look sharp, then! Good! Now open the door."

"I'll see you hanged first!"

"You'll see us jump on the contraption if you don't."

"Look here—"

"All together!" said Tom Merry, in a business-like tone.

"Stop!" gasped Glyn. "I'll—I'll unscrew the door!"

"Then buck up!"

Bernard Glyn unscrewed the door. It was not a brief task, for he had driven in five or six big screws their full length, and the wood was hard. He sweated over the screwdriver.

Tom Merry called up the chimney:

"Lowther!"

"Hallo!"

"It's all right now; the door's being opened."

"Good!"

And the juniors in the box-room descended to the Shell passage, and waited outside the door of the end study—quietly enough, in case Knox should be on the warpath. Bernard Glyn unscrewed screw after screw.

"Here's the box," said Blake, dragging it out. "Better not open it here, there's too much soot about. I'm jolly hungry, though."

"There you are!" snorted Glyn.

The last screw was out. Tom Merry opened the door. The juniors rushed in. Kangaroo and Clifton Dane simply gasped at the sight of the study. It was reeking with soot from one end to the other.

"M-m-my hat!" gasped Kangaroo. "The blessed place will never be clean again!"

"What a state!" ejaculated Clifton Dane. "Look at the carpet—and the curtains! Phew!"

"Yaas, wathah! It's a bit dusty!"

"You've got yourselves to thank for it!" snorted Glyn. "I didn't want you to come down the chimney."

"It's your fault—"

"Rats! It's yours!"

"Look here—"

"You duffers!"

"We jolly well haven't had all this blessed trouble for nothing!" exclaimed Figgins. "As everything else is so sooty, I think a little more wouldn't hurt that bounder—"

"It would soot him," said Monty Lowther, who never let slip a chance of making a pun, good, bad, or indifferent.

"Oh, don't; your jokes are worse than the soot!" said Manners.

"Collar that bounder!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Glyn. "I—"

"Yaas, wathah; collah the wascal! It would be wottenly unfair for him to be less sooty than we are, when he has caused all the trouble. Collah him!"

"Look here, I— Oh!"

Bernard Glyn was collared. The juniors were excited, and it certainly wasn't fair that Glyn should be less sooty than D'Arcy or Tom Merry. Even Fatty Wynn was willing to delay the feed a few more minutes for the sake of giving the inventor of St. Jim's a much-needed lesson.

Glyn was rolled on the sooty carpet, struggling helplessly, till his face and hands and clothes had collected up nearly all the soot that there was. Then, leaving him gasping in a state of awful blackness, the juniors crowded out of the end study, taking the famous box with them—leaving Glyn alone with his invention and the soot. Enthusiastic as the amateur inventor was, he was certainly thinking more about the soot than about the invention at that moment.

"I wathah think we had bettah get a wash," D'Arcy remarked in the passage. "You fellows can begin the feed—I shall be some little time before I join you, I think."

"Same here," said Tom Merry ruefully.

"And here," said Blake.

"Right-ho!" said Kangaroo. "Come as quickly as you can. There's heaps, and there will be plenty left, and it would be cruelty to an animal to keep Fatty Wynn waiting any longer!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

And the three sooty juniors went off to bath and change, while Kangaroo & Co. carried the box to the club-room, where it was opened, and the long-delayed feast commenced at last. A beaming smile overspread Fatty Wynn's plump countenance as he sat down at the table. The good things that were handed out of the box and spread upon the table seemed innumerable; and Cornstalk & Co. were certainly doing the thing well this time.

"My hat!" said Fatty Wynn. "This is worth waiting for."

But he did not wait any longer. He began at once, and did not speak again—his jaws were busy, but not with conversation. At every moment his fat face became shinier and happier.

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CHAPTER 9.

A Raid by Rivals!

"HIST!"

"Eh?"

"Quiet!"

"Who's making a row?"

"I didn't say anybody was, Monkey. Only don't, that's all!"

"Look here, Gordon Gay—"

"Stuff! I'm looking ahead!"

"I'm not going—"

"Certainly not—you're coming!"

Frank Monk breathed hard through his nose—harder as he heard Carboy and Lane indulge in a subdued chuckle.

The four Grammarians were in dangerous quarters, and caution was necessary, or it is extremely probable that Frank Monk would have let out his left there and then, and that Gordon Gay would have sat down in the passage.

It was dusk in the quadrangle at St. Jim's—deep dusk. The buildings were disappearing in the falling veil of night, and windows were beginning to gleam. But the passages were not all lighted up yet, and the four Grammarians were stealing along in the dusk, with their eyes keenly open for foes.

They had entered the precincts of St. Jim's, and gained an entrance into the School House without attracting attention. It was Gordon Gay's idea, and Frank Monk had regarded it as rather risky; but he did not care to hang back. Gordon Gay was determined to avenge the defeat of the afternoon, and if the idea worked out well, it certainly would be one up against St. Jim's.

The idea was to get into the School House in the evening, when all the fellows would be in the dining-room or else having tea in their studies, and fasten Tom Merry up in his room, and placard the Shell passage with notices to the effect that St. Jim's had been "done" by Rylcombe Grammar School. Lane and Carboy had a number of cards, ready written, bearing the legend "Down with St. Jim's!" all ready to pin up, and Gordon Gay had a mallet and several wooden wedges. It was risky; but it was a good jape if it came off, and Gordon Gay, with his usual coolness, was ready to run any risks.

Frank Monk had always been the acknowledged leader of the juniors in Rylcombe Grammar School, but since the coming of Gordon Gay his position had been more than shaky. There was nothing "forward" about Gay, but he was, as a matter of fact, a born leader, and the Grammar School juniors unconsciously realised it. And Gay, without an effort on his own part, was gradually gliding into the position of the leader of the Grammar Lower School.

Whereat Frank Monk sometimes chafed considerably—though he was always loyally ready to back up Gay in keeping the Grammar School's end up against St. Jim's.

"Hist!" repeated Gordon Gay.

"Rats!"

"Shut up, Monkey!" whispered Carboy. "I can hear somebody coming."

Monk sniffed; but a footstep was audible, and he had to admit it. The four Grammarians dodged into an alcove in the passage, and lay low in the dusk.

The footsteps were coming along from the stairs, and three forms loomed up in the gloom. Frank Monk peeped out, and recognised Tom Merry, Blake, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The three juniors had a newly washed and brushed appearance, and D'Arcy's collar was of almost unnatural whiteness.

"Bai Jove, we've been wathah long!" the swell of St. Jim's remarked, his voice quite audible to the Grammarians crouching in the alcove.

"Well, there was such a blessed lot of soot to get off!" said Blake. "I thought it would never come out of my hair!"

"Yaas, wathah! I feel dirty still. I shall have a hot bath before goin' to bed to-night, to make sure that I am weally quite clean."

"My dear Gussy, you look as clean as a new pin," said Tom Merry. "I'm fearfully hungry! Jolly nice way we've spent our first afternoon home!"

"Bai Jove, yaas!"

Gordon Gay compressed his lips. The three juniors were coming straight on, and if they passed that open alcove the chances were ten to one that they would observe the Grammarians, in spite of the dusk in the passage.

Gay made a sign to his comrades.

As soon as the Saints came abreast of the alcove, the only thing was to rush on them, seize and bump them, and fly.

But the next moment the Grammar raider drew a deep breath of relief.

The three St. Jim's fellows had stopped.

They stopped at a door only a couple of yards from the alcove, and Tom Merry pulled it open, and a flood of light fell out into the passage, mingled with a scent of viands and a buzz of cheery voices and clinking of knives and forks and glasses.

The three juniors were greeted with cheery exclamations:

"Come in, Tom Merry!"

"What a time you've been, Blake!"

"Never mind; there's plenty left!"

"Have you been curling Gussy's hair?"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

The closing door cut off the rest of D'Arcy's remonstrance. The passage was in darkness again. The four Grammarians looked at one another.

"There's a feed on!" murmured Frank Monk.

"Yes, rather, and a big feed, too, as they're not in a study," said Lane.

"That's so."

Gordon Gay chuckled.

"All the better. We shall have a regular bag this time—a dozen or more of them, I fancy. Come on!" He stepped out of the alcove. "You keep watch at the end of the passage, Carboy."

"Right you are!"

Carboy went down to the end of the passage, towards the stairs, to keep watch for an enemy. Frank Monk, Lane, and Gordon Gay approached the door of the club-room.

Silently Gay knelt and placed a wedge in position under the door. Once that was driven in, the door, which was made to open outwards on the corridor, would be hermetically fastened.

"Go it!" muttered Monk.

Bang!

The mallet descended upon the wood, and the wedge was driven in. Bang, bang, bang! Another and another wedge were quickly added.

There were loud exclamations from within the club-room. Half the feasters were on their feet now.

"What's that?"

"Bai Jove!"

"Open the door!"

Three or four fellows pushed at the door from within. It did not budge. Gordon Gay tapped on the panels with his mallet.

"Caught!"

"What— Who's that?"

"Ha, ha, ha! This is where we grin!" sang out Frank Monk. "Caught! This is one for the Grammar School! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Gwammah cads!"

Gordon Gay chuckled softly, and tapped on the door again.

"Hallo, duffers!"

"You wottahs!"

"Who's top school now?"

"St. Jim's!" shouted Tom Merry. "Wait till we get hold of you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwammah wottah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Long and loud laughed the Grammarians. There was a loud voice along the corridor from the direction of the stairs. "If you youngsters don't make less row, I shall come up there!"

"Phew!" muttered Monk. "Kildare!"

The Grammar School juniors knew the voice well. It belonged to Kildare of the Sixth Form, the captain of St. Jim's.

Kildare evidently imagined that the hammering in the passage and the loud laughter proceeded from the exuberant juniors of St. Jim's, and was quite unaware of the fact that the enemy were within the gates.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop that row!"

"Cheese it!" muttered Lane. "We don't want to be caught here."

Hammer, hammer, hammer, came on the door from within the club-room. The excited juniors had left the feed—all except Fatty Wynn. Fatty Wynn had been at the table a good time, and he had performed miracles there; but he was not prepared to quit it yet, and nothing short of an earthquake would have removed him.

"My hat!" said Gordon Gay. "They're making a row!"

Carboy came running along the passage.

"Look out! Kildare's coming!"

"Phew!"

The terrific din was growing instead of ceasing. Kildare, breathing wrath, was coming up the stairs two at a time.

"Cornered!" muttered Lane.

Gordon Gay shook his head.

"We can't get downstairs!" exclaimed Carboy. "And we'd better get along. Kildare will be here in two ticks."

"Come on, then!"

"Which way?"

"We can dodge into the next passage."

"The Shell passage," said Frank Monk, who had often visited St. Jim's, and knew the lay of the land very well.

"All right; come on!"

The four Grammarians scuttled away.

Kildare came up just as they vanished round the nearest corner.

The captain of St. Jim's was looking wrathful. There had been a great deal of noise in the School House that afternoon, and he was getting exasperated. He had come up with a cane in his hand, prepared to wreak summary punishment upon the disturbers of the peace.

He stopped outside the door of the club-room, upon which Tom Merry & Co. were hammering from within.

"Yah! Grammar cads!"

"Down with the Grammar School!"

"We'll pulverise you!"

"Open this door!"

Kildare grinned.

The wedges under the door, and the inscriptions on the door and the walls, told him at a glance that there had been a Grammarian raid.

He laughed heartily.

"Hallo, you kids—"

"Yah! Cad!"

"Rotter!"

"Hold on, that's Kildare's voice."

"Bai Jove!"

"I say, Kildare, old chap, open this door, will you? We've been bunged in here by a set of Grammar School rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Sixth-Former kicked away the wedges from the door, and it was pushed open. The red and excited juniors crowded out into the passage. They looked very sheepish as they beheld Kildare's laughing face.

"So the Grammarians have been here?" said Kildare.

"Yaas, wathah! Look here, deah boys!"

The juniors smiled sickly smiles as they read the notices upon all sides: "Down with St. Jim's!"

"The cheek!" snorted Blake. "Which way did they go, Kildare?"

"They must have gone up the passage," said Kildare.

"They certainly didn't pass me."

"Great Scott! Then they're still in the House!" exclaimed Digby eagerly.

"Bai Jove!"

"Well, don't make too much row, that's all," said Kildare, turning away. "There's been enough disturbance this afternoon—enough even to celebrate your home-coming." And the captain of St. Jim's went downstairs.

"The bounders are still in the house!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Some of you get on that staircase to stop them that way. Figgins & Co. can do that. Blake and Herries and Digby can watch this passage. Gussy and Dane and Kangaroo can cut round to the end of the Shell passage. The rest of us can go this way and chase them. If every earth's stopped we shall have the blessed foxes."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry's directions were immediately followed.

The juniors separated to guard the various ways of escape, it being agreed that they were all to collect again at the sound of Tom Merry's whistle, which he would give them when he had run down the fugitives.

The Terrible Three, with Gore and Reilly, rushed in pursuit of the Grammar School juniors.

Meanwhile, Gordon Gay & Co. were finding themselves in difficulties.

The alarm had been given now, and even Gay was beginning to wonder whether they would get out of the hands of the Saints. Frank Monk, as the one who knew the place best, took the lead in the flight. The Grammarians doubled round to the staircase by the Fourth Form passage, and found figures looming up in the dusk there. The staircase was already watched. They dodged into the Shell corridor and found three figures just arriving, panting, at the end. They turned to go back the way they had come, but footsteps were already close in pursuit.

They stopped, panting, at the corner.

"My hat!" gasped Monk. "Where now?"

"There's only one way," said Gordon Gay. "Up the passage."

"That leads only into a box-room."

"Can't be helped. No good staying here to be caught."

And Gordon Gay ran on. The others followed, though without much hope; it was merely a postponement of the inevitable.

"We may get a chance to hide!" panted Gordon Gay.

"They'll hunt us out."

"Well, anyway, we can dodge into a study and lock

ourselves in, and make terms. They may give us a truce rather than have a study wrecked."

"By George, that's an idea!"

"Here's the end."

The juniors halted at the box-room, which closed the end of the passage. It was one of the many old rooms in the School House that were used as box-rooms. The door of it closed up the end of the passage; the Grammarians had come to the end of a blind alley. In the dusky corridor behind sounded loud footsteps.

Gordon Gay tried the box-room door. It was locked, and the key was gone. The junior uttered an exclamation.

"It won't open!"

"They're close behind!" muttered Carboy.

"Get into this study!"

Gay turned to the door of the end study, and opened it. There was no light under the door, which seemed to indicate that the room was unoccupied. Certainly Bernard Glyn could not have been still at work on his invention in the dark. Of the stirring scenes that had taken part in the study that afternoon the Grammarians had no idea; but a still more startling scene was about to be enacted.

Gay flung open the door, and the chums rushed in.

The next moment they staggered back with a yell of affright.

In the darkness of the study a strange figure loomed up, and a pair of bright-green eyes stared at the intruders.

"Ow!" gasped Carboy. "Help!"

CHAPTER 10.

"It!"

"O H!"
 "Ah!"
 "W-h-h-h-hat?"
 "Oh!"

The Grammar School juniors started back in terror and consternation as a fearful figure loomed up in the dusk of the end study.

What it was they could not guess.

They only caught a glimpse of a gigantic form, a pair of glittering eyes that seemed to be advancing upon them. Then there was a snort, and a steaming breath was hot upon their faces.

For a moment they staggered, aghast; then, with gasps of terror, they fled from the study. Little cared they for the pursuers now. They would have run any risk to get away from that nameless horror.

They tore out into the passage wildly and rushed away and collided fairly with Tom Merry & Co. a dozen yards from the door.

There was a yell of triumph from the St. Jim's juniors.

"Here they are!"

"Grammar School cads!"

"We've got them!"

To Tom Merry's surprise, the Grammarians offered absolutely no resistance. They were collared and whirled over without striking a blow. They were so overcome by the strange and terrible sight in the end study that they had not a blow left in them.

Tom Merry's whistle rang out sharply. It was the signal to the waiting juniors. There was immediately the sound of hurrying footsteps.

"Got them!"

"This way!"

"Hold 'em tight!"

"Leggo!" gasped Monk. "Have you seen it?"

"Eh?"

"Have you seen it?"

"Seen what?" asked Manners, who was sitting on Monk's chest, and holding his ears by way of additional security.

"What are you babbling about?"

"It! The—the fearful thing—"

"Oh, you're dottv!"

"It's—it's in the end study!" gasped Gordon Gay—even his nerve shaken, for once. "We—we saw it!"

"You saw what?" demanded Tom Merry. "Are you off your rockers?"

"The horrid thing—"

"I suppose it's Glyn he's talking about," said Lowther. "Perhaps Glyn hasn't got the soot off yet—and in that case, he's enough to startle anybody."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's—it's not Glyn. It's—it's a phantom of some sort—"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"With flaming eyes—"

"My hat! This chap must have been reading cheap American fiction and it's got on his brain!" said Tom Merry. "I suppose Binks has been lending him some of his New York gore books."

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"Nothing of the sort! I—I—"

"Bai Jove! You've got them!"

"Yes, rather!"

"The cheeky wastahs!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass upon the captured Grammarians. "We'll give them down with St. Jim's, the wottahs!"

"I—I say—"

"You needn't say anything!" chuckled Figgins. "You're like a giddy bird, you know—to be, to do, and to suffer. You've been, and done, and now you're going to suffer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a sound in the end study. It was the sound of heavy, tramping feet. The juniors all looked along the dusky passage.

"What on earth's that?" asked Tom Merry. "Glyn's tootsies wouldn't make a row like that."

The Grammarians struggled violently.

"Let's get out!" yelled Lane. "It's coming!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"There it is!" shrieked Carboy.

"Bai Jove! Gweat Scott!"

"Oh!"

Forth from the doorway of the end study came heavy, tramping feet. A strange and weird form loomed up in the dusky corridor. Two flaming eyes looked at the juniors, and from red nostrils came steaming breath.

Tom Merry & Co. were petrified for a moment.

Then with one accord they bolted.

The Grammarians were, of course, released, and they bolted with the St. Jim's juniors, and the whole crowd poured in wild confusion down the stairs.

"What's the row?"

"What's the matter?"

Voices called questions from all sides, but the startled and terrified juniors did not reply. They rushed right on and did not stop till they were well out in the open air of the quadrangle.

They halted, breathless.

The Grammarians did not lose their presence of mind, startled as they were. They were free now, and they seized their chance.

"Come on!" muttered Gordon Gay.

The four Grammar School juniors dashed off across the quadrangle. Taggles, the school porter, was just closing the gates. The four fugitives dashed past him, causing the porter to drop his bunch of keys with a loud clang of amazement.

"Drat 'em!" murmured Taggles.

And he closed the gates.

In the road the four Grammarians ran on without a pause, and they did not stop till they were a considerable distance from St. Jim's and all danger of pursuit was over.

Then Gordon Gay slackened down, and the others followed his example.

"Done them that time, at all events!" gasped Gay.

"Yes, rather! But—"

"What could it have been—that awful thing in Glyn's study?"

"Glyn!" exclaimed Frank Monk, a light breaking on him. "Of course, I had forgotten it was Glyn's study! It's another of his dodges."

"It's what?" said Gordon Gay.

"Glyn's a giddy inventor; he's always making some rotten contraption or other," said Monk. "He made a mechanical figure in imitation of Skimpole once—I saw it. That was before you came to the Grammar School. Of course, you're only a new boy—"

"Oh, cheese that!" said Gordon Gay unceremoniously.

"Well, this is another of Glyn's contraptions. I'll answer for that," said Monk, breaking into a laugh. "We've been scared for nothing."

"The St. Jim's chaps were jolly well scared, too!" said Carboy.

"They were—rather!" said Gay. "Quite as much as we were. I suppose it's as Monk says—and it was jolly lucky for us! We're well out of that."

And Monk, Lane, and Carboy agreed that they were.

CHAPTER 11.

The Dreadful Apparition!

TRAMP, tramp, tramp!

The heavy tread sounded on the wide stairs.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Tom Merry & Co. fled helter-skelter down the stairs and across the Hall. A crowd of other fellows ran with them.

The alarm was general now.

Fellows of all Forms came out of their studies, loudly

inquiring what the matter was, or staring with startled eyes towards the staircase.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

As a huge head appeared round the bend of the staircase the spectators gave a wild yell of affright and swarmed out into the quadrangle. The steady tramp came on. The yells of the terrified boys and the heavy tramp on the stairs brought Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth Form, out of his study. The little, short-sighted gentleman blinked through his glasses at the staircase.

"Dear me! Who is making that noise?" he exclaimed. "I insist— Oh!"

Mr. Lathom's eyes almost started from his head as he beheld a gigantic figure looming on the stairs and descending with steady feet, one hoof after another placed with perfect steadiness and certainty on step below step.

For one moment Mr. Lathom gazed blankly at the awe-

"my dear Lathom, you are excited! Calm yourself, I pray!"

"Where is the key?"

"I really do not know. I—"

"Then help me put the table against the door, and the desk—quick! The awful thing may come bursting in at any moment!"

"What thing?"

"Hark! Cannot you hear it?"

Mr. Railton began to believe that the Fourth Form master was not intoxicated, but insane. He started, however, as a strange sound came to his ears from without.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

It was the heavy tramp on the stairs, far too heavy for a human being, and sounding with strange mechanical regularity.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Railton. "What is it?"



Arthur Augustus fairly slid down the chimney and alighted in the grate in the midst of a shower of soot. He looked as black as the ace of spades, and Glyn stared in amazement at the sight of him. "Bai Jove!" gasped Gussy. "Do I look dirty, deah boy?"

some apparition, and then he fled, with a wild shriek. He threw open the door of Mr. Railton's study and dashed in and slammed the door behind him.

Mr. Railton was sitting at his table, writing. He jumped up as the Fourth Form master slammed the door and groped for the key. There was none in the lock.

"Where is the key?" cried Mr. Lathom, in a shrill, sharp voice. "The key—the key!"

"What?"

"The key—the key!"

"Mr. Lathom!"

"Where is the key?" cried the Fourth Form master, setting his foot against the door. "Oh, quick! Where is the key?"

"What is the matter?"

"It is outside."

"What is outside?" exclaimed the master of the School House, springing towards the excited little gentleman.

"What can you mean?"

"It—it—it is outside!"

"What—what?"

"The horrible beast!"

"My dear Lathom," said Mr. Railton, looking scrutinisingly at the Fourth Form master, under the very natural impression that the little gentleman had been drinking—

"It's the—the apparition!"

"I must see—"

Mr. Lathom gave a terrified shriek as the Housemaster laid his hand upon the door. He caught Mr. Railton by the sleeve and pulled him back.

"You are not going out—"

"I am!"

"But—but it is there!"

"I do not know what you mean, but I shall certainly see what is the matter," said the Housemaster quietly. "Pray let me go to the door!"

"There is danger—fearful danger—"

"If there is danger my place is there, as my boys are there," said the Housemaster.

"Yes—yes; but the awful beast—"

"Come—come, let me pass!"

The athletic Housemaster lifted the little gentleman out of the way as if he had been a child, and threw the study door open. He strode out into the passage. Then, in spite of his powerful nerves, the Housemaster started back with a cry of alarm and dismay.

The apparition had just reached the bottom of the stairs. It tramped on towards the open door leading into the quadrangle, a terrified crowd of juniors fleeing before it.

"Good heavens!" cried Mr. Railton.

"Come in!" shrieked Mr. Lathom. "Quick—before you are devoured!"

But the Housemaster did not budge. The thing moved with great rapidity, and it seemed to pass like a flash before the Housemaster's eyes, and it vanished out into the darkness of the quadrangle.

"What was it?"

It was a thing in the shape of a horse, but surely no horse of flesh and blood ever had so fiercely flaming a pair of eyes, or ejected steam so thickly from such red nostrils!

It strode along swiftly, planted one foot firmly after another, and its long, glossy tail lashed and waved behind it.

"Good heavens!" repeated the Housemaster.

He rushed after the apparition. He stared blankly out into the dusky quadrangle. From the darkness came the terrified exclamations of the scattering juniors. Mr. Railton turned as Kildare joined him. The captain of St. Jim's was pale and startled.

"W-w-what is it, sir?" gasped Kildare.

It was evident that Kildare had seen it, too. Mr. Railton shook his head.

"I do not know, Kildare. I—I cannot imagine."

"How could a horse get into the School House, and upstairs, too?"

"I do not understand."

Three juniors came downstairs—Glyn and Dane and Kangaroo. Mr. Railton glanced at them. The three juniors were looking preternaturally grave and solemn. They dodged quickly out into the quadrangle without appearing to see the Housemaster.

"I cannot understand this!" Mr. Railton exclaimed. "I must see into it. The—the animal must have escaped from the circus, I should say. An ordinary horse certainly

would not have been able to descend a staircase in safety, I should think."

Kildare gave a gasp of relief.

"Ah, of course, sir! Tomsonio's Circus is over at Wayland again, and this may be one of their animals, which has found its way back here."

"It is possible. We must look for it, and ascertain what it is. It may do great damage in the quadrangle. It might even attack some of the boys. Call up some of the prefects, Kildare, and join me here."

"Certainly, sir!"

And the hunt for the phantom horse commenced.

CHAPTER 12.

Towser Gets the Worst of It!

FROM MERRY & Co. were in the quadrangle. It was seldom that they were so thrown off their balance, but this time it could not be denied that they were startled out of their wits.

"My only hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "What a ripping evening for our first day home—I don't think!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I—I can't understand it," said Blake. "What is it?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"Look!" yelled Figgins.

"Oh, great Scott!"

"Look!"

"There it is!"

The phantom horse loomed up in the illuminated doorway of the School House. It came out with a swift and steady tramp. Down the great, broad, stone steps and into the quadrangle the mysterious thing went on. And the juniors scattered away into the darkness. Tom Merry ran as hard as any.

There was something too horribly uncanny about the apparition for even the hero of the Shell to want to see it at closer quarters.

"B-b-b-bai Jove!" gasped D'Arcy. "Wun like anythin', deah boys!"

"Run for your lives!"

And they ran.

There was hardly a star in the sky as yet, and the quadrangle was intensely dark, under the shadows of the big elms especially. But in the gloom could faintly be seen the huge, looming figure, and clearly through the darkness glistened the flaming, greenish eyes, and glowed the white, steaming breath from the nostrils.

"M-my hat!" gasped Figgins. "I—I wish we'd stayed a bit longer at Monte Carlo! It's after us! Run!"

"It's gaining!"

"Dodge among the trees!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp! Snort!

The juniors dodged, and the Thing tramped on steadily. It did not turn from its path in pursuit of them, and they slackened pace and took courage again. It was marching directly across the quadrangle towards the gates.

Jack Blake caught Herries by the arm.

"Herries—Herries, old man—"

"Eh? Oh, what?"

"Towser!"

"Eh?"

"Get Towser!"

"Jolly good idea!" exclaimed Herries. "Why didn't I think of Towser before?"

"Yaas, wathah! Buck up, Hewwies, deah boy!"

"I'll have Towser here in a jiffy!" And Herries rushed off towards the kennels.

A few minutes later the sound of growls was heard.

It was Towser's voice in the quadrangle.

Gr-r-r-r!

"Here's Towser! Come on!"

"Look out! Here comes that awful beast!"

The green eyes flamed through the darkness. The thing was bearing down upon the juniors. Towser growled and showed his teeth. He did not seem to be in the least afraid of the apparition.

He strained at the chain, and Herries had all his work cut out to hold him in. Towser wanted to get to close quarters.

"I can't hold Towser in! Towser! Towsy!"

Gr-r-r-r!

With a wrench, the bulldog tore the chain from his master's hand, and it clinked along the ground as Towser shot off towards his prey.

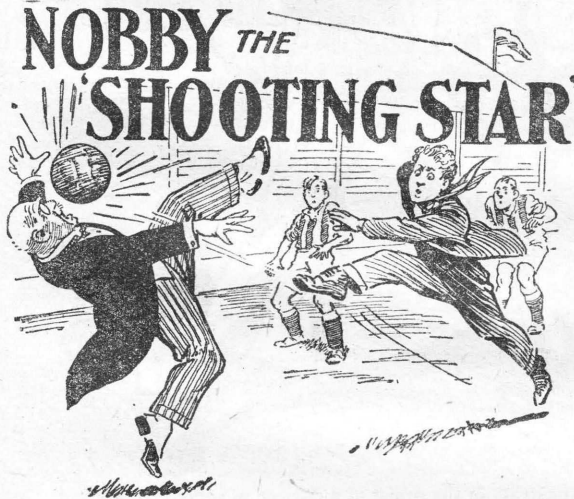
"He's off!"

"Look! Look!"

Straight towards the Thing dashed Towser, with eyes gleaming and jaws opened. Towser meant business!

"Bai Jove! Look!"

Right at the fearsome beast the bulldog leapt,



"The boy without a name!" That's what they called red-headed Nobby. He worked for his rascally guardian Don Carlos, and the don had it in for the plucky youngster, but Nobby was not the sort to stay down! Read in this enthralling yarn how he joined up with Ferrers Locke, the famous detective, and with his aid smashed his enemies and battled his way to fame as Nobby, the "Shooting Star"!

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"Towser's got him!"

"Oh, look!"

The bulldog was at the throat of the Thing—and then he fell heavily to the ground. Somehow the sharp fangs had failed to penetrate the flesh of the Thing, and it strode straight on, as if totally unconscious of the attack of the bulldog.

Towser rolled on the ground, dazed. He was not accustomed to having his terrible teeth made so little of. But he recovered himself quickly, and dashed undaunted to the attack once more.

He hurled himself upon the Thing's hindquarters, his teeth gnashing; but again he failed to get a bite.

He rolled off the body of the Thing as he might have rolled off a wall, and bumped down upon the ground with a heavy bump.

Herries whistled.

"Towser! Towser!"

Towser picked himself up. He blinked at the tramping figure, and then, with a low whine of terror, scuttled away into the darkness, and did not stop till he was safe in the deepest corner of his kennel, where Herries found him, curled up and palpitating.

The juniors stared at one another.

Towser evidently did not know what to make of the Thing, and had had enough of the contest. What was it? What did it mean?

"Towser's afraid of it!" muttered Figgins in awe. "What on earth—"

"He couldn't get a bite, deah boy!"

"What on earth is it made of?"

"Bai Jove! I've got it! It's Glyn's beastly invention!"

"What!"

"I wemembah seein' the frawework of it in his study when I came down the chimney. It isn't a weal horse at all—it's a wotten contwaption!"

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"I believe Gussy's right!"

"Yaas, wathah! It wequiah a fellow of bwains and judgment to guess these things, you know, and undah the circs—"

Tom Merry burst into a laugh.

"So this is Glyn's latest stunt! The rascal!"

"The spoofing bounder!"

"It's a machine!"

"A blessed mechanical horse!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a gleaming of lanterns, and Mr. Railton and half a dozen prefects came rushing in, pokers or sticks in their hands, in search of the apparition.

"Have you seen it, boys?" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir. It—"

"Where is it?"

"Near the gates, sir. It—"

"Thank you, Blake. You juniors had better get in out of danger."

"Yes, sir; but—"

Mr. Railton did not stop to listen. He rushed on with Kildare, Darrell, Rushden, and the rest of the prefects, in hot pursuit of the monster.

Blake gave a whistle.

"Well, they're on the track!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Let's look for Glyn!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "The bounder can make the Thing stop its pranks, I suppose. He ought to have the biggest bumping in his life for this. My hat! What an awful row there will be when the truth comes out!"

"Bai Jove! Wathah!"

And the chums of St. Jim's started looking for the cheerful inventor.

CHAPTER 13.

A Bumping for Three!

"HA, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Three Shell fellows had thrown themselves upon the shadowed grass under the elms in the quadrangle, and were kicking up their heels and gasping with laughter.

They were, of course, Cornstalk & Co.—Kangaroo, Bernard Glyn, and Clifton Dane. The three young rascals were enjoying the fun hugely.

They could see the flaming eyes of the mechanical horse as it stalked about the quad; they still heard the growling of Towser; they still heard the startled and terrified exclamations of the boys from all quarters.

And they yelled with laughter till their ribs were aching and the tears were streaming down their cheeks.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, this is too good!" gasped Kangaroo. "It's too funny!"

"It's too, rich!" sobbed Clifton Dane. "Did you notice Lathom bolting into Railton's study?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did you see Figgins running as if for a wager?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hark, they're still yelling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! How we'll chip 'em to-morrow!" chuckled Bernard Glyn.

"Somebody else will get chipped to-morrow, I expect, with a cane or a birch!" said Kangaroo, sitting up in the grass at last and gasping for breath. "Do you think you're allowed to play jokes of this sort, you howling duffer?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You've startled the whole blessed House out of its wits—Railton and the prefects are chasing your blessed machine over the quad with pokers and things."

Glyn and Dane yelled again.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it's too funny! Ho, ho, ho!"

"It's funny now!" said Kangaroo, wiping his eyes. "But when Railton finds that it's a giddy machine, and he wants to be introduced to the inventor, it won't seem so funny, I expect."

"I don't care," said Bernard Glyn. "The jape is worth a licking. Besides, I don't see why I should be licked."

"Well, I jolly well do!"

"Mr. Railton takes a great interest in my mechanical contrivances," argued the Liverpool lad. "He praised my Skimpole II very much. He was greatly interested."

"Yes; but this—"

"Well, this is the same sort of thing, only better."

"Only more ghastly and more trouble, you mean," said Kangaroo, chuckling. "When Railton and the prefects discover that they've been chasing all over the quad on the track of a giddy machine—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Still, it's good fun, and we'll take the gruel together," said the Cornstalk. "You'll get it hottest, Glyn, and serve you jolly well right. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I see I'm to blame in any way. I was simply exercising my genius for mechanics," said Glyn. "I've been encouraged to do it."

"Ha, ha, ha! Not in this way!"

"Well, you see, the thing's got out of hand. I was determined to have it finished the day Tom Merry came home, so as to show it to him and give him a welcome, and then I was interrupted by a lot of duffers coming into the study again and again—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I had to finish putting it together in a hurry, or not put it together at all," said Glyn. "It's not my fault, I must say. Besides, Gussy's biffing it did it some damage. Some blessed spring's broken, and that's why it won't stop."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here they are!" shouted a voice. "I'd know the Cornstalk's yell anywhere. Here the bounders are!"

"Collar them!"

"Pile on them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look out, you chaps!"

But it was too late. The ringing laughter had caught the ears of Tom Merry & Co., as they searched for the chums of

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the end study, and guided them to the spot. The juniors piled on Cornstalk & Co. before they had a chance to rise.

The struggling trio were pinned down under the weight of a sturdy junior each, and others stood ready to pile on them if needed.

"We've got them!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Now then, you bounders——"

"Lemme gerrup!" gasped Bernard Glyn. "What are you up to?"

"We've found you out, you spoofer!"

"This is a new edition of Skimpole II, isn't it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" gasped Glyn breathlessly. "We took you in with it! How you ran! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you ass——"

"Didn't they run!" roared Kangaroo. "Didn't they just! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Which is top study now?" demanded Clifton Dane, gasping out the words under the weight of Monty Lowther and Figgins. "Which is top study?"

"This is where we grin!" gasped Kangaroo. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, rather!"

"You see, Glyn, we've guessed your rotten wheeze——"

"Pway excuse me, Tom Mewwy, you are labouwin' undah a slight ewwor," said Arthur Augustus politely.

"Eh? What? What are you chattering about, Gussy?"

"You remarked that we had guessed the wheeze——"

"Well, so we have!"

"You are mistaken, deah boys. I guessed it," said D'Arcy calmly. "Of course, I'm not the sort of chap to put myself forward in any way, but I weally must-draw the general attraction to the fact that I guessed the wheeze."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Quite right, Gussy, so you did. Being such a funny merchant yourself, you naturally had a nose for anything of the sort——"

"I wefuse to be called a funnay merchant. I——"

"Well, funny ass, then!" conceded Tom Merry.

"I weward that as a still more oppwobwious expression. Weally——"

"Are you going to let us get up?" demanded Kangaroo.

"You are intewwuptin' me, Kangawoo——"

"Lemme gerrup!"

"We're jolly well going to bump you," said Tom Merry.

"Lay hold of the bounders, you chaps. They're not going to startle us for nothing."

"Righten you, you mean," gurgled Kangaroo. "Say it in English."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Startle us!" said Tom Merry severely. "Of course, as a matter of fact, we weren't really exactly startled—only a little surprised."

"You ought to get surprised somehow when you're going in for a foot race," said Clifton Dane, with a chuckle. "You'd win."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry turned pink.

"Nuff said," he exclaimed. "Bump them!"

"Here, hold on! Ow!"

Bump!

The three chums of the end study, helpless in the grasp of many hands, were bumped, and bumped again, and yet again. They yelled and struggled furiously.

"Now, then, are you sorry?" demanded Tom Merry.

"No!" roared Kangaroo.

"Bump them again!"

Bump, bump!

"Are you sorry?"

"No. Yes. Ow! Yes!"

"Are you awfully sorry?"

"No. Yes!"

"Good! Are you awfully, fearfully sorry?"

"No."

"Bump them!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry, Kangaroo?" asked Tom Merry cheerfully.

"Yes," gasped the Cornstalk.

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry, Dane?"

"Yes! Ow! Yes!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry, Glyn?"

"No!" gasped Glyn.

"Bump him!"

Bump, bump, bump!

"Ow, ow! Yow!"

"Are you awfully, fearfully sorry, Glyn?"

"Yow! Yah! Yes!"

"Good! Let 'em go!"

And Cornstalk & Co. were released; but they were too breathless and bumped to rise. They lay on the grass gasping.

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CHAPTER 14.

The Secret Out!

"THERE it is!"

"Look out—look out, sir!"

"I can see it, Kildare," said Mr. Railton quietly.

"It is evidently a horse, though of a gigantic size. There is no doubt that it must have escaped from the circus, I should think. Drive it towards the gate!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

The seniors threw up their hands to scare the horse towards the gate. In the hollow of the stone archway it might have been cornered and secured.

"Shoo!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Shoo!"

But the apparition refused to be "shooed." It tramped on round and round.

"Shoo! Shoo!"

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Snort!

Mr. Railton raised the stick he carried, and stepped closer to the horse, and struck it on the shoulders to drive it away. There was a clang.

The Housemaster jumped almost clear of the ground in his amazement.

The blow on the horse's shoulder had clanged back, as if he were striking metal instead of flesh and blood.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Railton. "It is not alive!"

"What, sir?"

"It—it is some contrivance! It is not alive!"

"Great Scott!"

The blow on the shoulder had changed the thing's direction once more. It tramped off towards the elm-trees. The seniors followed, utterly amazed, and keenly interested, too, now.

"It is a machine of some sort!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "A mechanical contrivance—a most wonderful one! I cannot understand it!"

Kildare uttered an exclamation.

"Glyn!"

"What do you mean, Kildare?"

"It is another dodge of that young rascal!" exclaimed the captain of St. Jim's, with conviction in his tones. "Don't you remember Skimpole II, sir?"

The Housemaster started.

"Bless my soul—yes!"

"This is a new dodge of his, and—— Hallo!"

A crowd of dark figures appeared among the trees. Tom Merry & Co. crowded in the way of the mechanical horse. Now that they knew it was a cunningly contrived machine, they were not afraid of it.

"Collar it!" shouted Tom Merry.

"Hold it!"

"Collar the monstah, deah boys!"

The juniors swarmed upon the mechanical horse, Cornstalk & Co. jumped up breathlessly and lent their aid. The horse tramped on steadily.

The knocks it had received seemed to have righted the mechanism once more, for it tramped on straight towards the open door of the School House. The light, streaming out into the quadrangle, showed the reverend figure of the Head standing in the doorway. The disturbance in the quadrangle had drawn out Dr. Holmes from his quiet study.

"Stop it!" gasped Tom Merry. "There's the Head!"

"My hat! It will walk into him!"

"That's all right!" panted Bernard Glyn. "It can't walk up the steps; it can only walk down!"

"Stop it!"

"Hang on to it!"

And the juniors hung on to it. But the motive power inside the mechanical horse was working at full force, and it tramped steadily on. The prefects rushed to throw their weight upon it, and the mechanism tramped on, with seven or eight fellows hanging on to its neck, its back, its ears, and its tail.

"It—it won't stop!" gasped Figgins.

"Bai Jove! Watháh not!"

"Hang on!"

Right on tramped the mechanical horse, straight into the radius of light from the open door of the School House. The Head looked out, and his face was transfixed with amazement and wonder, as well it might be.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

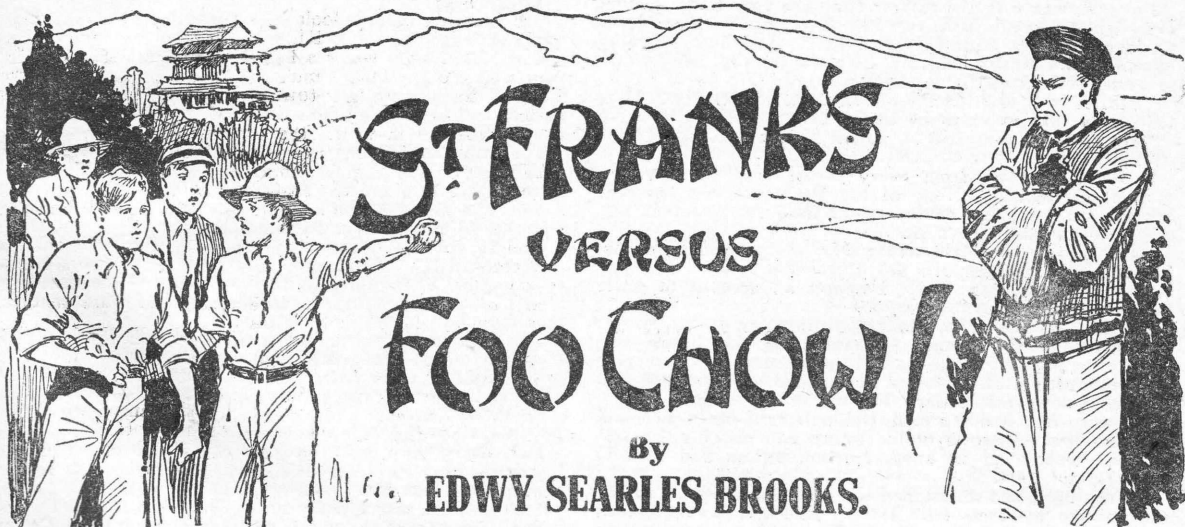
The lowest of the School House steps stopped the mechanical horse; it stood tramping aimlessly, and could go no farther. Its path was barred.

"Bless my soul!" repeated the Head. "What is that—what extraordinary thing?"

There was something like a smile on Mr. Railton's face as he advanced into the light. The horse tramped and snorted.

(Continued on page 23.)

THRILL FOLLOWS THRILL THROUGHOUT THESE GRIPPING CHAPTERS OF—



THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Dr. Foo Chow, a war lord of Inner China, kidnaps Yung Ching, of St. Frank's, his object being to compel the boy's father, Yung Li Chang, to surrender up the rich province over which he rules. A holiday party from St. Frank's come to the help of Ching and eventually rescue him after they have fallen into the hands of Foo Chow. War then breaks out between Foo Chow and Yung Li Chang, and the St. Frank's party escape. They are about to attempt to recapture the Wanderer, the steam-yacht which brought them to China.

The Seizure of the Wanderer!

OTHER stirring events had been taking place simultaneously.

At the height of the storm the main St. Frank's party rushed down upon the quay and stared across at the Wanderer. She could only dimly be seen out there in mid-river, looking like a ghost in the driving, pelting rain.

"Boats—boats!" shouted Dorrie. "Gad, Lee, there are enough boats here for an army! Come on, lads!"

"Pile in!"

"We'll do the trick all right!"

There was a feeling of supreme confidence. Nelson Lee, who knew the tremendous value of this storm, was anxious to press on without a second's delay. In ordinary calm weather, such a success as this would have been impossible; and as soon as the rain stopped the enemy would awaken to grim life.

It was indeed a question of now or never.

Amid all the excitement the absence of Browne and his three valiant companions was not even noticed. There was too much to be done.

Nelson Lee's quick brain was already planning ahead—looking into the immediate future. There was a fighting chance of winning the Wanderer. This was no hopeless mission, but a possible bid for success. And once the Wanderer had been gained, the forthcoming events would be full of promise.

For the yacht was well supplied with weapons.

There were rifles, revolvers, machine-guns! Lee was thinking mainly of the machine-guns. If only the dear old yacht could be recaptured, and every member of the party placed in safety on board, she could be converted into a fortress of her own.

There were the officers and crew! Once released, these would form a superb fighting force. No longer would it be necessary to ask these schoolboys to fight such desperate battles.

And with the machine-guns ranged all round the decks, hordes of Foo Chow's men could be kept at bay. The winning of the yacht was the one factor which would make for ultimate victory!

So Lee was in the very forefront of this desperate undertaking.

There were sampans and other boats moored near the shore. Nobody quite knew how they got the boats clear, how they fought against the current, and reached the Wanderer. But somehow the task was accomplished, and not one boat was swept down-stream on the current. Every boat reached its objective.

With the rain still hissing down, the boarding-party climbed up everything climbable—up the ladder, up ropes, up anything to gain the decks. A desperate encounter was expected then.

But no desperate encounter came.

It seemed as though the Wanderer was an empty ship. Not a soul was to be seen. The rain-lashed decks were quite free of humanity. Fellow after fellow came clawing up, to be helped over the rail by those who had got there first.

"We've done it, old man!" shouted Dorrie above the roll of the thunder. "We've bagged the old tub! Umlosi, you black rascal, why don't you cheer? Why don't you let out one of your celebrated war-whoops?"

Umlosi grunted.

"I am sick at heart, N'Kose," he rumbled. "For did I not expect much fighting and have I not been basely deceived? Why! Call thou this a battle? 'Tis but work for babies!"

"I'm satisfied, anyhow," grinned Dorrie. "Why, Lee, there's not a soul on board."

"Don't believe it, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee. "The Chinese guards are sheltering below, and they'll probably show fight as soon as we appear. We must be ready for anything."

"Cheering words, O Umtagati!" exclaimed Umlosi gladly. "Where are these yellow curs? Let me get at them!"

The African chief was familiar with every doorway on the Wanderer, and he made for the nearest, and found himself within the luxurious lounge of the promenade deck. With a great bellow he charged headlong into a dozen Chinamen who were sheltering there. The fact that they were armed with swords made no difference to Umlosi. Before they could even draw them he was in their midst.

The next few moments were rather thrilling.

As Lord Dorrimore was about to enter, something came hurtling past, something which would have knocked his lordship senseless if it had struck him. The object was a Chinaman. He went clear through the doorway and toppled over the rail into the river.

Another followed, and yet another.

And then Chinamen came screaming out in full flight, madly terrified by this black giant who treated them as though they were mere skittles. Umlosi had driven stark terror into their hearts. Grim fighters though they were, they were horror-stricken by the African chief. They seemed to regard him as some evil spirit in human form. The stories of Umlosi's strength had already spread, and one sight of him was now almost enough. When it comes to superstitions and the fear of evil spirits, the Chinese are practically without equal.

The Removites were dashing through the vessel with yells of sheer joy. To be on those decks again was a delirious pleasure. It almost seemed, indeed, as though they had completely escaped from Dr. Foo Chow's clutches. It was like a piece of Britain—like a section of home soil.

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There were fights in many quarters, but they did not last long.

For luck was with the raiders from the very first. Nelson Lee, fighting grimly with two Chinamen, chased them down an iron stairway after they had fled. And here he came upon Captain Burton and Mr. Stewart, the first officer, and several members of the engine-room staff.

"Praises be!" shouted the old skipper. "Mr. Lee! Does this mean that we're to be released?"

"We've taken the yacht!" panted Nelson Lee.

"Hurrah!"

A shout went up from every throat, and there was a general excitement. None of the Britishers was harmed, but all were wearing chains round their feet, so that any swift movements were impossible.

"The keys—the keys!" said Mr. Stewart desperately. "That sleeky Chinaman's got them—the fellow who just bunked! Quick, Mr. Lee! I've got an account to settle with that yellow cur! I've got—"

But Lee did not wait. He sped through an open doorway and overtook the fleeing Chinaman as the latter was scrambling madly up the ladder. The next few moments were interesting. Lee clawed at the man, and brought him slithering down the ladder. He fought like a tiger.

But with half a dozen cool, well-delivered blows Lee laid the man low. In spite of his biting and clawing, he was knocked out. And in another moment Lee had secured those fateful keys.

He ran back and unfastened the cruel manacles. Captain Burton and his men were free! And another batch, in another part of the yacht, were released in a similar manner.

And then commenced a systematic search. And every Chinaman was either knocked out or chased overboard. Many of the yellow men were so terrified that they leapt over the rail in their fright.

It had been one long succession of excitements, but the Wanderer was captured!

The casualties were surprisingly few. Reggie Pitt was suffering from a nasty sword-cut on the forearm—a wound which required careful bandaging. Fullwood was unconscious from the effects of a knock-out blow. Buster Boots and Johnny Onions were badly battered, but happy. Dick Hamilton had his knuckles bruised, and there was an ugly hack on his left shin. But the rest had come through practically unscathed—that is, the rest of the boys.

Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes and Phipps, however, were mere wrecks, torn and battered. But, after all, the majority of these hurts were superficial. The one great, glorious fact was that the yacht was once more in British hands. As though to help in the celebration of the victory, the skies were clearing, and patches of blue were showing.

"We've done it, sir!" panted Dick Hamilton happily.

"Yes, we've done it; but we've got to have a roll-call at once," said Nelson Lee. "I can see no sign of Browne. And Willy Handforth is missing, too. Perhaps there are others—"

"Oh, they're somewhere about, sir!" interrupted Reggie Pitt. "We all came aboard at once. What about the girls? The rain's stopping, and we'd better get them aboard as quickly as we possibly can. If we don't go now, it may be too late."

"The boy's right," said Dorrie anxiously. "Let's hold the roll-call afterwards. Good glory! We don't want to have this victory spoilt by a tragedy! If Mrs. Stokes and the girls aren't brought aboard it'll be a hollow sort of triumph!"

But Mrs. Stokes and the girls had their own ideas!

All Aboard!

IRENE MANNERS looked at Mrs. Stokes pleadingly.

"Oh, please, Mrs. Stokes!" she begged. "If you don't give us your permission at once, we'll go without it—and we don't want to do that. Can't we all make a rush together?"

"Yes," cried Mary Summers. "Let's go, girls!"

"Mary, I forbid you—" began the Housemaster's wife.

"Oh, cheese it, Aunt Joyce!" broke in Mary. "You can't expect us to stay here just looking on. They've all been gone for a tremendous time, and there isn't a soldier in sight. If we don't escape now we might be left stranded, and then we shall be in Foo Chow's hands, and there'll be nobody to help us."

Mrs. Beverley Stokes was very worried. She wanted to set out upon this adventure as much as her youthful charges, but she hesitated.

"Mr. Lee distinctly told us to remain here until he and my husband came for us," she said. "Oh, we'd better remain. Think how dreadful it will be if we are stopped by those soldiers, and there's nobody to help us—"

"We're not babies!" broke in Doris indignantly. "That's

the worst of being girls! Everybody thinks we're helpless! I vote we go now and make a rush for it!"

"Hear hear!"

"Please say that you agree, Aunt Joyce?" said Mary Summers eagerly.

And Mrs. Stokes was compelled to consent. She couldn't very well do anything else, since Irene & Co. were determined. They were all standing in the entrance of the palace, looking straight down that deserted driveway, with the drawbridge in view.

The rain was stopping now—in fact, it had almost ceased. And the sky was rapidly clearing. The Moor View girls were unable to stand the suspense any longer. They were the only members of the holiday party left behind, and they were dreadfully anxious to join the rest.

And so with swift feet they ran down the drive, and at last reached the drawbridge. But here they were set upon by a number of soldiers. With the ceasing of the rain these men had awakened to life once more, and were realising that they had failed in their duty.

The bulk of the prisoners had escaped, but they could at last prevent the departure of these girls!

Mrs. Stokes' worst fears were realised.

Instead of getting clear away, Irene & Co. were grappling with these fearsome Chinamen! To fight was almost impossible, since the yellow men were powerful and relentless. But, as it happened, the girls could not have chosen a better moment for their dash, foolhardy as it had seemed during the first few moments. For it was just at this period that the rescue party returned from Yang Fu!

With Browne at the wheel, the car came sweeping along the highway, and prepared to turn down the long slope which led to the quay. But Browne swerved at the last moment, his eyes gleaming.

"It appears, brothers, that we are needed," he said grimly.

He trod on the throttle, and the car roared over the bridge. The next moment it was almost in the midst of the struggling crowd. All except Handforth leapt out, and Browne was in possession of a revolver. His weapon had been found in the car, and the Fifth Form skipper did not hesitate to use it.

Crack, crack!

Twice he fired, aiming deliberately at the feet of the Chinese soldiers. Two men fell, howling and squirming, and it was a signal for the others to fall back. In reality, there were only a few of the guards here, but they would have been sufficient to recapture the girls unless this opportune help had come.

"Run for it!" shouted Browne urgently. "We'll stay behind and fight a rearguard action! Straight across, sisters, and then down the causeway—"

"Hurrah!" yelled Church. "Here comes another crowd!"

"My hat, yes!" yelled Willy.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes were leading a dozen grim men. They came on at the double, and the issue was settled. A shattering volley of revolver-shots were fired into the air, and the Chinese soldiers fled.

"We came out, fearing that we might be trapped, Barry!" exclaimed Mrs. Stokes, as her husband clasped her. "Oh, I thought it was all up for the minute!"

"We can't talk now, Joyce!" interrupted Mr. Stokes.

"We've got to make a dash for the yacht!"

"Has it been captured?" asked Irene breathlessly.

"Yes."

"And Ted's here, too!" exclaimed Willy, his eyes gleaming with happiness. "Look! We found him in Yang Fu! The poor old scout is nearly all in, but he's still alive!"

"Oh, Ted!" exclaimed Irene, running to the car and looking at him with tender solicitude. "Oh, how terrible! Foo Chow ought to be hanged for this!"

Edward Oswald Handforth, with his neck entirely bandaged by Willy's shirt, looked up with a twisted smile.

"Don't worry!" he muttered. "I'm going to slaughter Foo Chow later on!"

"He's been torturing you—"

"Never mind about that, old girl," said Handforth pluckily. "I hear that the Wanderer's been captured, and I want to get on board. All I need is a good bath and a sleep, and I shall be as right as a trivet again!"

There was no time for further talk. The car was taken right down to the quay, and Handforth was gently lifted out. He scoffed at the very idea, and insisted that he could walk, and, if necessary, fight. But his spirit was greater than his bodily strength, for when he attempted to walk he swayed dizzily.

Every minute was of vital importance now.

The sun was again shining, and there were indications of activity from many quarters. The Chinese were beginning to appear everywhere, alive to the fact now that these white captives had been intensely active during the recent downpour.

As a matter of fact, the boats containing the girls and the others only just managed to leave the quay in time.



Lord Dorrimore was about to enter the doorway when a Chinaman, yelling with fear, hurtled past him, over the deck rail, and into the river. In quick succession another followed, and yet another! Urmosi was evidently enjoying himself among the Chinamen in the Wanderer's lounge!

For it was soon swarming with the enemy. And many of them were firing their rifles at random, and bullets were falling in the river.

A stray shot grazed Lord Dorrimore's left ear, indeed, and his rage was stupendous.

The Wanderer was echoing with wild cheering, and the rail was lined with excited St. Frank's juniors.

"It's all right, you chaps!" sang out Reggie Pitt. "They're all coming! I can spot Browne and Willy! All the girls, too!"

"Yes, but what about Handy?" asked Fatty Little.

"Why, look!" gasped Pitt. "Handy!"

Within a few seconds everybody was freshly excited. And as the boats grew nearer, Handforth was indeed seen.

Handforth was almost overwhelmed by the juniors who came surging round him; but Nelson Lee ordered them back, and Edward Oswald was taken below and gently tended.

"Well, Dorrie, it's been a marvellous afternoon," said Nelson Lee. "We've got the old yacht again."

"We've put 'paid' to Mr. Cunning Foo Chow——"

"Not yet, Dorrie," interrupted Lee. "We should be foolish, indeed, to assume that we are out of the wood."

Ready for the Dash!

DICK HAMILTON, the popular captain of the Remove at St. Frank's, leaned over the Wanderer's rail and looked up at the rocky sides of the gorge. It was now evening.

"Not a Chink in sight," he said, with satisfaction. "Foo Chow's men seem to have given us up as a bad job."

"They're too busily occupied elsewhere, if you ask me," declared Tommy Watson. "There's a war on, don't forget, and Yung Li Chang's armies are sweeping across the country in their thousands."

"Begad! It's a frightfully different position now, dear boys," said Sir Montie Tregellis-West happily. "Here we are, all safely on the yacht, an' before long we shall be escaping from this beastly country altogether. I've had enough of China to last me all my life—I have, really!"

"Same here," agreed Watson, nodding.

"We're not clear of China yet, though—not by long chalks," Dick Hamilton reminded them. "Dr. Foo Chow isn't the kind of man to let us slip away without giving us a parting kiss. Only his kiss will probably take the form of a smashing attack. Thank goodness we're well prepared!"

He glanced round, and felt more confident. At various points of the decks there were machine-guns in readiness, with sailors in charge. Every man within sight was carrying

a revolver at his belt, and there were stacks of rifles in handy positions.

"I hear they're preparing a meal down in the saloon," said Reggie Pitt cheerfully, as he came along. "By Jove, I'm ready for it, too! How long is it since we've eaten?"

"No good asking me," said Dick, smiling. "I've lost count of the hours during all this excitement. I know it's evening, and I know that we shall soon be steaming up-river into safe country. Why worry about anything else?"

"That's one way of looking at things," agreed the junior skipper of the West House. "Isn't it simply glorious to be back on these dear old decks? Foo Chow and his marble palace can go to the dickens! It's like home, being aboard the Wanderer again."

Lord Dorrimore came along the deck, looking cheerful and happy.

"Grub!" he said briefly.

"Is dinner ready, sir?" asked Dick.

"I'm not sure whether it's dinner or tea, or what," replied his lordship. "Anyhow, it's a decent Christian meal, and not one of these Chinese horrors. You'd better go down an' grab while the grabbin's good."

He passed on, and came across Mr. Pelton, the third engineer, just as the latter was emerging from the oily depths of the engine-room.

"Skipper about anywhere, sir?" asked Mr. Pelton.

"Look here, my lad, what's wrong?" said Dorrie, with a keen look. "Out with it! We ought to have been steamin' up-river by this time, an' we're still anchored. What's the trouble?"

Pelton wiped his perspiring brow.

"Pretty bad, sir," he said. "The chief reckons we shan't be able to get a move on until early morning."

"Good gad!" said Dorrie. "In wonder's name, why not?"

"Those cursed Chinks, sir!" snapped the third engineer viciously. "We cleared them all off the yacht, but not before some of them had done a heap of damage in the engine-room. We didn't know anything about it until we made an examination. I've been told to come and report to the captain."

Dorrie led him along to the other side of the deck, where Nelson Lee was talking with Barry Stokes and Captain Burton. They were all looking rather tired, but eminently pleased.

"Ah, Pelton—good news?" asked the skipper in his bluff way. "I've noticed the steam. We'll be getting a move on at once, eh? Plenty of pressure?"

The third engineer looked at Dorrie rather helplessly.

"Leave it to me, old man," said his lordship. "The fact

is, skipper, we're up against a snag. These dirty Chinks have been makin' a mess of the engine-room. We can't shift for some hours—not until early mornin'."

"Is this an absolute fact, Mr. Pelton?" asked Nelson Lee sharply.

"Afraid so, sir."

Captain Burton growled deep down in his throat.

"This is ugly, gentlemen," he said, with deep concern. "Good heavens, that means we're helpless for six or seven hours!"

"The chief reckons eight hours, sir," said Pelton.

"You're quite right, captain, it's ugly," said Nelson Lee quietly. "A delay of any kind is bad enough, but—eight hours! Well, I hardly know what to say. Foo Chow's men will have a chance to blow us to bits. Hadn't we better go and see the chief at once, captain?"

"We're going now," replied Captain Burton grimly.

But Mr. Mackenzie, the chief engineer, was unable to give any cheering report. Smothered in grease, with the perspiration streaming down his oily cheeks, he faced the captain with a set jaw.

"They've caused more damage than I can explain," he declared. "I'd no idea of it until we were getting ready to start. I'm thinking it'll be dawn before we've got things shipshape, and it'll mean sweating work for all of us, without a minute's rest, too. But we'll do our best."

Later, Nelson Lee sat in Captain Burton's cabin, in company with Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Beverley Stokes.

"It only shows that we mustn't be too optimistic," said the schoolmaster-detective. "It's nearly nightfall, and, if I'm a judge of Foo Chow, he will make an attempt to revenge himself during the hours of darkness. We must be constantly on the alert."

"Well, there's surely no need to worry?" asked Barry Stokes. "We're all on board, including my wife and all the Moor View girls. At least, we're one intact party. And we've plenty of machine-guns and men."

"Why, if ten thousand of these heathens tried to board the yacht, we could keep them at bay!" declared Dorrie cheerfully. "What on earth's the matter, Lee? Personally, I'm not worryin' in the least. With these decks beneath my feet I feel as safe as houses."

Nelson Lee was looking positively pale.

"I'm thinking of something else," he said quietly.

Lord Dorrimore stared.

"Somethin' else?" he repeated. "Now, as man to man, what is exactly behind that cryptic remark? Out with it, old scout!"

But Lee shook his head.

"Not yet, Dorrie," he replied. "I want to think. Perhaps I am needlessly worried. Go and get something to eat—the gong went long ago. We'll have another chat later."

And Nelson Lee strolled out of the cabin and went on the promenade deck.

"I don't like that," said Mr. Stokes, rubbing his chin.

"Neither do I!" growled Dorrie. "Lee's a shrewd customer. Now, I wonder what he's got in his head?"

"It's no good asking me," said Barry Stokes, with a smile. "Personally, I thought we were in a pretty comfortable position, and the delay of a few hours won't make much difference. In any case, what could we do to-night? I don't see Lee's point at all."

Nelson Lee remained alone on deck, staring up that sinister gorge. The country just here was wild and rugged, with steep rocks rearing their heads on high. Lower down the river the country was fair, with cultivated lands spreading as far as the eye could see, with picturesque Chinese towns and villages nestling among the rice fields and woods. The city of Yang Fu was comparatively near by, too.

But here the scenery was shut off by the menacing rocks. It was Dr. Foo Chow's stronghold. In full sight was the rocky island on which he had built his great palace, and which could be only reached from the mainland by means of a drawbridge. Higher up the river, moored against a concrete quay, was a graceful-looking steam yacht. She was the Dragon—Dr. Foo Chow's private yacht. And Nelson Lee's gaze was fixed upon her.

"I wonder?" he muttered. "It surprises me why no move has been made. We have only to thank the general confusion for our present safety."

He turned away, still with that pale expression, still with a light of acute anxiety in his eyes. He decided to go back to Lord Dorrimore and Barry Stokes.

He entered the captain's cabin. Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes had now been joined by Captain Burton himself.

"I hear you're a bit worried, Mr. Lee," said the skipper.

"Not without reason," replied Lee quietly. "To tell you the truth, I am very reluctant to say what is in my mind. I have a horror of being classed as a pessimist. Perhaps my

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fears are groundless—perhaps this delay will not be so serious as I believe."

"Hang it, man, what are you getting at?" asked Dorrie.

"Simply this, Dorrie," replied Lee. "We are caught between two stools. We're either in the frying-pan or in the fire—one or the other."

"That's deucedly lucid!" growled his lordship tartly.

"This is the position," continued Lee. "If we decide to take everybody ashore we shall probably fall into the hands of Foo Chow's soldiers, with such results that I dare not even think of them. And if we remain on board—safe, as you all appear to think—we may be killed at any minute."

Everybody in that cabin recognised the gravity in Nelson Lee's tone, and they all looked at him with sudden concentration.

"I must confess, I don't follow," said Mr. Stokes quietly.

"Why should we even think of leaving the yacht, Mr. Lee?" "Because it might be more dangerous to remain on board."

"But in the name of eternity, why?" demanded Dorrie.

"Because the Dragon is lying within two dozen cable-lengths of us—because she is provided with heavy artillery!" replied Lee grimly. "That's why, Dorrie."

"Good glory!" gasped his lordship. "You—you don't mean—"

"Yes, I do!"

"Mr. Lee, you're right," said Captain Burton, setting his teeth and nodding. "By all the stars, you're right!"

"I cannot understand why we have escaped so far," went on Nelson Lee. "Perhaps Foo Chow is reluctant to destroy this yacht. He wants it for himself possibly; but I do not accept that as a good suggestion. To such a millionaire as Foo Chow it would be nothing. No, we can thank this present confusion for our salvation."

He paused, and looked at them intently.

"But how long will this confusion last?" he went on. "My one hope of escape was to take immediate advantage of the situation. But anything might happen between now and dawn. I tell you, gentlemen, I am positively frightened."

"Not for yourself," growled Dorrie. "You're thinkin' of the young people, eh?"

"By a merciful Providence, we've come through these adventures without any loss of life," continued Lee. "That sort of thing can't go on for ever, Dorrie. Until this afternoon, Foo Chow made a pretence of being our host; but we have definitely ended that farce now. He was an enemy before—but a suave, polite enemy. It pleased him to play with us in order to amuse himself; but will he play any longer? I'm afraid not. It will give him greater pleasure to blow us to eternity."

"This is a frightfully disturbin' business," growled Dorrie.

"If it was only disturbing, it wouldn't matter," returned Lee, with a faint smile. "One shell from that big gun on the Dragon's foredeck would shatter our plates to fragments. Two shells would sink us in less than a minute. And you can imagine what havoc that gunfire would cause at such close quarters? At this very moment, while we're sitting here, the first shell may come! Do you wonder that I am worried, with all these young people aboard, calmly making light-hearted plans for to-morrow?"

Everybody was silent.

"Gad, now I understand why you were so deucedly upset when you heard about that delay!" said Lord Dorrimore, after an appreciable spell. "You think of everythin', Lee! This infernal possibility never occurred to me."

"But it's more than a possibility, Dorrie—it's a probability," declared Nelson Lee. "I tell you, we're helpless! I don't know what to suggest or what to do! We can't take these boys and girls ashore, for that might mean something worse than death. And here we've got to wait, hour after hour, until those engines are repaired. Don't you see how different it would have been if we could have made an immediate move?"

"Yes, now you come to put it like that, there's no misunderstanding," said Mr. Stokes slowly. "Perhaps the damage in the engine-room was deliberately caused—I mean, with the deliberate purpose of keeping us here so that the Dragon could blow us to bits."

"In that case, why are we still whole?" asked Dorrie.

"Perhaps the gunners are not available," replied Lee. "Or—and this is far more probable—they have received no definite orders from Foo Chow. I think we can accept the latter theory as the reason for our present safety. Foo Chow is elsewhere—in Yang Fu, no doubt. But as soon as he learns of our predicament he will not delay a minute in giving precise orders."

Lord Dorrimore was rather aghast.

"The man's a devil! But, hang it, he surely wouldn't blow us to fragments in cold blood?" he asked. "I'll admit your theory is a likely one, Lee, but isn't it just a little too bloodthirsty?"

"Dorrie, you've been in China before—and you know

the Chinese," he said. "Isn't that question of yours rather unnecessary? Man alive! A massacre of that sort would please Foo Chow's heart more than anything! The Chinese can be jovial, kindly, and charitable—but they are also capable, when dealing with an enemy, of being utter fiends."

"I suppose you're right," admitted Dorrie grudgingly. "But why hasn't the brute acted? Why is he still holding his fire?"

"Because Yung Li Chang's invasion has taken him completely by surprise," said Lee. "He is spending all his time in getting his troops into order—in organising a defensive barrier against the enemy hordes. But when he learns of our position, he'll take swift action. He'll realise at once that it will be a mere sacrifice of life to storm the yacht. He knows that we have machine-guns and rifles. So he won't attempt to seize the Wanderer again. No, he'll utilise those heavy guns—and we can only wait!"

Lord Dorrmore's eyes suddenly blazed. "By glory!" he shouted. "Why should we wait? Why not take the bull by the horns, and seize this opportunity while it lasts?"

Dorrie's Daring Suggestion!

DORRIE was the centre of all eyes. "I don't quite follow," said Nelson Lee. "Why, man, isn't it obvious?" went on his lordship quickly. "I'm not usually good at ideas, but this one strikes me as bein' a corker. We daren't go ashore, an' by remainin' on board we're just waitin' for the Dragon's gunfire! In other words, there's no choice—we're between the devil an' the deep sea. Our only reason for bein' alive now is that Foo Chow's gunners haven't received any orders. Why not act ourselves, instead of waitin' for Foo Chow to act?"

"You mean, raid the Dragon?" asked Lee sharply. "Absolutely!"

"By James, Dorrie, it is certainly a daring suggestion!" said Lee. "Indeed, it is a brilliant plan! We can't possibly remove those guns, but we can render them useless!"

"That's exactly my idea," grinned his lordship gleefully. "Let's call for volunteers, an' get up a raidin' party of about twenty men. In Heaven's name, why wait here to be blown to smithereens when we can spike the guns, an' make them about as useful as scrap-iron?"

"It's the best possible plan, gentlemen," declared Captain Burton. "Even if we lose three or four men—and we must be prepared for such a disaster—it will be better than waiting here idle. And while we're about it, couldn't we grab the Dragon's pilot?"

Lee nodded. "A good suggestion, captain, but I doubt if the man would be of any use to us," he replied. "Indeed, it is more than likely that he would deliberately pile us on to the nearest rock. It will be quite sufficient if we disable the guns. And this plan must be kept quite secret. We don't want the boys or girls to even suspect what is in the wind. They are happy and comfortable now—deluded into the belief that we are secure. Let them go to sleep peacefully."

"That's my idea, too," said Lord Dorrmore approvingly. "Now, Lee, what about this raid? Don't leave me out of it, or you an' I will be enemies from now on. An' don't forget Umlosi. The old beggar's made a new spear for himself—a regular beauty, too. He's worth half a dozen ordinary men in a hand-to-hand scrap."

"He's worth a dozen," said Lee, with conviction. "These Chinamen are superstitious brutes, and Umlosi's fame has already been spread. The Chinamen are beginning to regard him as a sort of black demon, and they'll flee at the very sight of him."

Mr. Stokes suddenly uttered an ejaculation. "Talking about demons, why not play on the superstitions of these heathens still more?" he asked keenly. "This raid, I take it, is to be undertaken in total darkness—say, in about a couple of hours from now?"

"Sooner, if possible, but we must wait until the young people are quiet for the night," replied Lee. "And it will take at least an hour to get ready. Well, Barry?"

"Well, couldn't we wear nothing but bathing costumes, and swim to the Dragon?" asked Mr. Stokes. "The current is strong, but there are plenty of good swimmers among the crew. And in that way we could make a silent approach—without the Dragon's men guessing a thing until we were actually swarming aboard. A boat, on the other hand, would be a first-class target for rifle fire."

"Barry, old man, there must be somethin' about this cabin," said Lord Dorrmore, shaking his head. "We're all bristlin' with brainy notions!"

"But wait a minute—I haven't finished yet," said the young Housemaster. "If there's such a thing as grotesque paint on board, we might decorate ourselves with grotesque,

horrifying designs. Imagine the result! What will these Chinamen do when we swarm over the Dragon's rail? We shall look like a collection of river demons!"

"This suggestion may make all the difference between success and failure," said Nelson Lee, his eyes gleaming. "The Chinese believe that a river swarms with evil spirits—that the earth, too, has its own particular set of wicked demons. The effect upon their morale—when they see us emerging from the water—will be terrific. It is even possible that they will flee in utter terror without showing fight."

"That's bad," said his lordship. "We don't want to be dishied out of a scrap!"

"If it's all the same to you, Dorrie, the less scrapping the better," retorted Lee grimly. "I shall be very sorry for Umlosi if his intended victims bolt, but I am not quite so bloodthirsty as he is. If we can make this a bloodless victory, all the better. Our object is to destroy the effectiveness of those guns—not to kill Chinamen! We shall only adopt the latter course if our lives are threatened. But can this scheme be put into effect?"

"It can," said Dorrie. "You seem to forget that I've

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got a fully equipped chemical laboratory on this yacht, old man. I may mention that I had it installed especially for your benefit—knowin' your likin' for messin' about with 'stinks,' an' similar abominations. Go an' prepare your demon-fire as soon as you like. We've only got to let you loose in that lab for half an hour, an' Heaven knows what you'll produce!"

Nelson Lee smiled. "At any rate, I think I shall produce something effective," he said. "Captain Burton, will you call for volunteers? I'll get below and see about those 'demon' preparations."

"I'll have the men ready!" promised Captain Burton. Undoubtedly the whole plan was daring and promising. The danger was a positive one, for at any moment the Dragon might open fire. And at such close range as this a miss was absolutely impossible. Dr. Foo Chow would have no mercy on his late "guests." But no one thought of the danger as preparations were made for the night raid.

(Will the raiders succeed in rendering the Dragon's guns useless before the enemy fire on the Wanderer? Don't miss next week's thrill-packed chapters.)

THE FOUR-FOOTED PHANTOM!

(Continued from page 22.)

"It's a mechanical contrivance, sir," he said. "It has caused a great deal of fright and confusion."

"Dear me!"

"I fancy that Glyn, of the Shell, could tell me more about it, sir."

"Extraordinary! Glyn, come forward!"

The inventor of the Shell came forward, not very willingly. Dr. Holmes' face was very severe.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Head, noticing Glyn's dislevelled state. "How do you come to be in that untidy condition, Glyn?"

"I—I—I've been bumped, sir!" stammered Glyn.

"Oh! Glyn, are you responsible for that—that extraordinary creature?" demanded the Head, pointing to the mechanical horse, still pawing and snorting and steaming at the bottom of the School House steps.

"I—I made it, sir!"

"Extraordinary! It was very clever of you, Glyn, but—but you surely know that you have no right to cause such a disturbance in the school."

"It got out of control, sir," said Bernard Glyn. "I—I couldn't stop it! I finished putting it together in a hurry, because I—I wanted to celebrate Tom Merry's home-coming, sir, and so you see—"

The Head's face relaxed.

"Well, Glyn, if you really did not mean to cause such a disturbance—"

"I'm sorry, sir! I—I meant it for a lark, too!" said Glyn honestly. "I—I'm sorry there's been trouble, though, sir!"

The Head coughed.

"I—I commend your frankness, Glyn! I shall pardon you! I think, Mr. Railton, that Glyn can be forgiven?"

The Housemaster smiled.

"I think so, sir. It is a most extraordinary contrivance, and much credit is due to Glyn, for his patience and his inventiveness in making it. But he must not have it indoors again, of course."

"Certainly not!"

"I'll take it to the bike-shed, sir," said Bernard Glyn. And the Head went in, with Mr. Railton; and the two masters were smiling as they turned their backs upon the boys.

Glyn ran down the steps.

"Lend a hand here!" he exclaimed. "We'll get the blessed thing into the bike-shed, and then I can get at the machinery and stop it."

"Right you are!"

Tom Merry & Co. laid hold of the mechanical horse, and swung it right round. It snorted and tramped off in the direction they guided it. Figgins ran on ahead and opened the door of the bike-shed, and lighted a lantern.

"Here we are!"

The mechanical horse tramped into the shed. Tom Merry gave a shout:

"Look out! Stop it!"

But they could not stop it. Right on it went among the bicycle stands and cycles, and tramped against the solid wall beyond, which effectually stopped it. The cycles lay scattered on all sides.

"It's all right!" said Bernard Glyn cheerfully.

"Is it?" said Figgins wrathfully. "Look at my bike—tied in a knot round Gussy's!"

"Yaas, watahah!"

"Never mind! I can stop the horse now—"

"You'd better stop it," said Tom Merry, laughing, "and if you ever start it again, we'll start on you!"

"Bai Jove, watahah!"

And the juniors crowded out of the bicycle-shed, leaving Cornstalk & Co. to deal with the mechanical horse. Tom Merry chuckled as they took their way back to the School House.

"Well, I must say we've had an exciting day for our return to St. Jim's!" he exclaimed. "This beats Monte Carlo!"

And the juniors agreed that it did.

THE END.

(There's even more excitement for the chums of St. Jim's next week. The keen rivalry between New House and School House breaks out again, resulting in plenty of lively fun and humorous adventure. Watch out for "FOOLED BY FIGGINS!"—next week's ripping yarn.)

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