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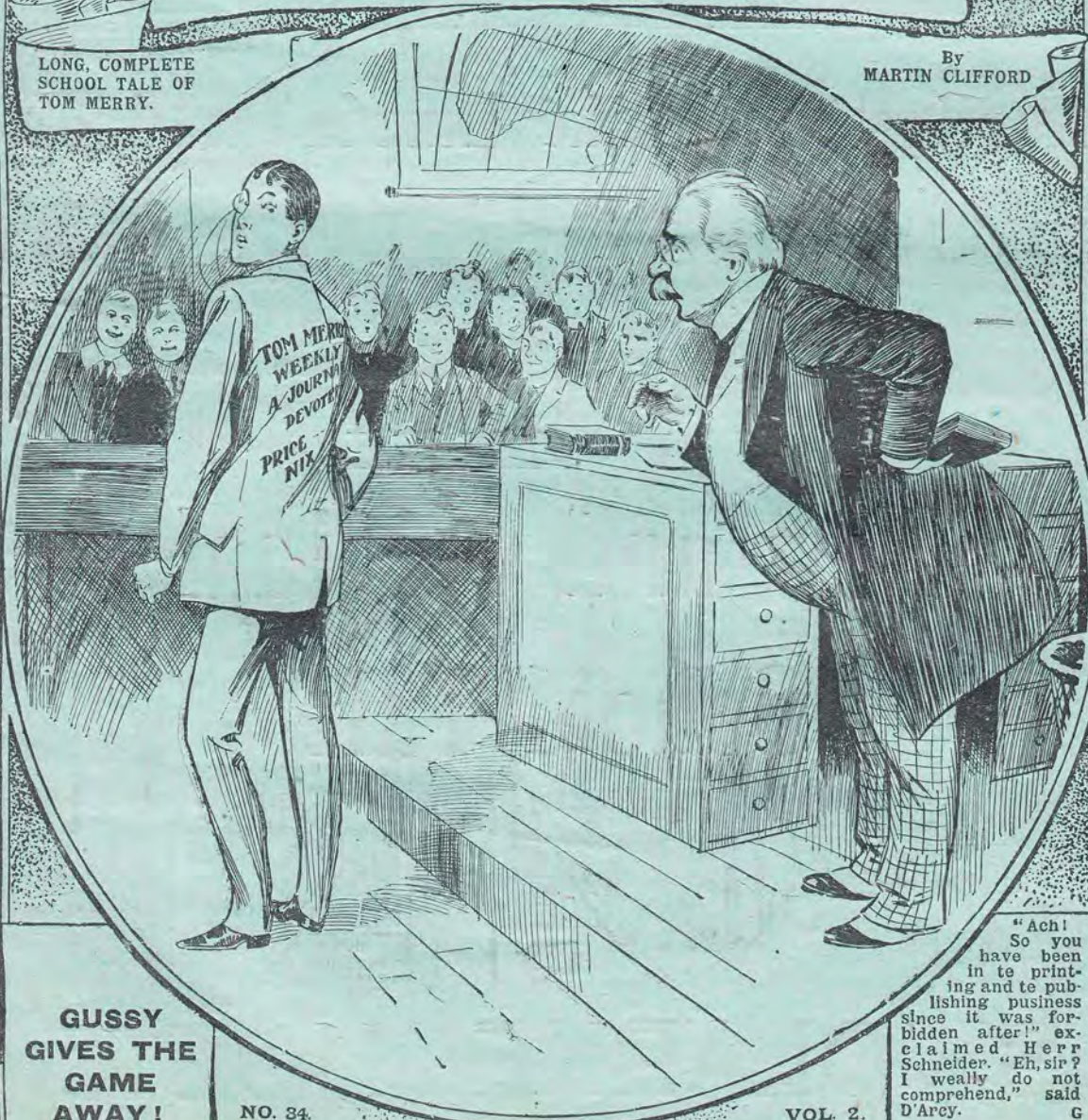
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LONG, COMPLETE
SCHOOL TALE OF
TOM MERRY.

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD



**GUSSY
GIVES THE
GAME
AWAY!**

NO. 34.

VOL. 2.

"Ach! So you have been in te print- ing and te pub- lishing business since it was for- bidden after!" ex- claimed Herr Schneider. "Eh, sir? I weally do not comprehend," said D'Arcy. G

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A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.

Tom Merry & Co., Publishers.

THE master of the Shell at St. Jim's rapped on his desk with his cane, and fixed a severe glare upon the form where Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther sat.

The Terrible Three had been whispering together, apparently oblivious of the fact that they were in the class-room and supposed to be devoting their attention to the lesson the master was imparting to them.

The buzz of whispering died away at the crack of the cane, and the Terrible Three looked as innocent as they could. But Mr. Linton could not be disarmed.

"Merry!"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, meekly.

"You were talking to Lowther."

"Yes, sir."

Tom Merry never told an untruth; but his cheerful assent to Mr. Linton's remark did not seem to please that gentleman, somehow.

"Merry, you have been whispering at intervals all through the lesson, and have paid me no attention whatever."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"Some topic of unusual interest," pursued Mr. Linton, with heavy sarcasm, "has doubtless taken your attention from the less important subject of Roman history?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom Merry, innocently.

Some of the class giggled. Mr. Linton turned red.

"Merry, I do not know whether you are stupid or impertinent. I fear the latter. You will kindly inform me what is this important topic which cannot wait till the class is dismissed. The eternal topic of football, I presume."

"No, sir, not this time," said Tom Merry, cheerfully.

"Then what was it?" snapped Mr. Linton.

"The fact is, sir—"

"Go on."

"The—the fact is, sir—"

"Speak up."

"Well, sir, the fact is—"

"Merry, I command you to explain yourself!"

"Yes, sir. The fact is, that the—the second number of 'Tom Merry's Weekly' comes out to-day, sir," said Tom Merry, meekly, "and—and we're a little bit excited about it, sir. That's all."



"BY ORDER!" The words stared in big letters from the door of the editorial office, and ere long there was a crowd of boys gathered round. "Suspended, hey?" said Gore. "Jolly good thing, too."

"Oh, that is all, is it?" said Mr. Linton, witheringly. "This—this weekly is some sort of a school magazine, I presume?"

"Yes, sir, a real ripping good one," said Tom Merry, eagerly.

"It knocks that sleepy old Sixth Form magazine into a cocked hat, sir—"

"Merry, I—"

"We're doing the second number in good style, sir," said Tom. "We are duplicating it, sir, and we shall have a dozen copies. We shall be very pleased to send you a free copy, sir, if you would like one."

There was a giggle in the class again. Mr. Linton looked severely and searchingly into the innocent face of Tom Merry. He had never been able to decide whether Tom was the simplest or the deepest boy in the form.

"Er—Merry—I am afraid that if this—er—magazine takes your attention from your work I shall have to speak to the Head, and ask him to—er—suspend the publication," said Mr. Linton.

"Oh, sir!"

"So bear that in mind, Merry. There is a time for work and a time for play. Upon the whole, you may send me a

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copy of this magazine, and I shall judge whether it will be proper for you to continue it."

"Yes, sir."

"And now, if it is really not asking too much of you, Merry, you will pay some slight attention to the lesson."

"Certainly, sir," said Tom cheerfully.

His eyes sought the clock as he sat down again.

Never had lessons seemed to him so long and so dull as they did that Wednesday morning. The second number of the "Weekly" was nearly ready, and an anxious circle of readers were waiting for it. And here he was digging into Roman history. It was too bad.

His thoughts naturally wandered again, and when Mr. Linton suddenly asked him whom Romulus was, Tom hastily replied that he was the first editor of Rome; an answer which earned him fifty lines.

But all things end, even a morning's lessons before a half-holiday. The class, to their relief and their master's, were dismissed at last, and as it was the last lesson, they were free for the rest of the day, save for the evening preparation.

"Jolly glad we're out of that," said Tom Merry, linking arms with Manners and Lowther outside the class-room. "I thought it would never end."

"You got out of it well with fifty lines, Tommy," said Monty Lowther. "Linton is in a good temper this morning. Lessons are a bore, but we must put up with 'em. I myself would like them to lessen—ahem."

"Don't!" said Manners. "Keep your rotten puns for the 'Weekly,' Monty, old son. Hallo, here's Study No. 6, in good time."

The Terrible Three arrived at their study door, and found the chums of the Fourth—Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy, already there. Tom Merry's study had been turned into an editorial office by the staff of the "Weekly."

"Hallo!" said Blake, with a nod. "We're waiting for you. I suppose you haven't forgotten that the paper's coming out after dinner?"

"Rather not," said Tom Merry. "Glad to find you in time, kids—"

"Who are you calling kids?" inquired the three Fourth-formers with one voice.

"Sorry—I mean cads," amended Tom Merry. "Come in."

"You mean what?" howled Blake and Herries.

"Tom Mewwy, I object to that remark," said D'Arcy. "To my mind it savours of wudeness."

"I mean chaps," said Tom Merry, pacifically. "Any old thing. Come in. Hallo, some silly joker has been at work here."

He pointed to the door.

It bore the inscription "Editorial Office" ever since the "Weekly" had been started, but some practical joker had lately made an alteration, chalking out some letters and substituting others. The inscription now read, "Editorial Asses."

Blake chuckled.

"That's done by somebody who knows you three," he remarked.

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It is weally extremely descriptiv of the chawactah of you three boundahs, don't you know?"

Tom Merry jerked the cardboard upon which the notice was written off the door.

"Oh, come in," he said.

They entered the editorial office. It was pretty full of the preparations for the publication of the second number. The first number of "Tom Merry's Weekly" had been written out by hand, and only one copy could be made, and when that copy fell into the hands of the youths who had been slated in it, it ceased to exist—suddenly. But with the second number the publishing firm had made a great advance. A number of copies were to be taken off upon gelatine, and so there was really no limit to the circulation of the celebrated "Weekly" this time.

The staff were soon hard at work. They had promised the paper for that afternoon, and they did not want a delay such as had happened with the first number.

"I say, Figgins and Co. ought to be here lending a hand," said Herries, looking up. "I suppose they're not coming till after dinner. That's all very well."

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy; "I am weally gwowin' quite exhausted with all this hard work. I have already stitched up three copies of the papah."

"That must have worn you out," said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah. I always find anythin' like work a feaful bore, you know."

"Keep it up, Gussy; it will do you good," said Monty Lowther, encouragingly. "You ought to be useful, if you can't be ornamental, you know."

"Ow!"

"What's the matter with him now?"

"Oh, I have wun this beastly needle into my beastly fingah."

"Ha, ha! You should be more careful."

"I weally think I shall have to stwike work now," said D'Arcy. "The pain is extweme, and a whole drop of blood has oozed from the wound. I weally—"

"Oh, keep it up!"

"Imposs. Weally, it would be a much bettah plan if you fellows did all the work, and I just stood by diweetin' you, and givin' you advice," said Arthur Augustus. "That is the pwopah occupation for a fellow of bwains, you know."

"What I like about Gussy," said Tom Merry, "is his modesty. I say, Gus, keep on with that stitching, you know. You can't leave off yet."

"I have already sewn up thwee copies of the beastly papah, Tom Mewwy, and I am feelin' extwemely fatigued, to say nothin' of this extwemely painful wound."

"Oh, go on," said Blake. "Don't be an ass, Gussy."

"I wefuse to go on. I have sustwined a painful injah, and I wefuse to go on," said D'Arcy. "I wefuse to be chawactw-ised as an ass, also, and—"

"If he's wounded," said Blake, with a wink at Tom Merry, "we ought to see to it. As he's not going to do any more work he may as well have his wound bandaged."

The Terrible Three caught on to the idea at once.

"That's so," said Tom Merry. "Come on, and let's do our best for the poor chap."

"That is weally kind of you, Tom Mewwy, and shows a vewy pwopah feelin'," said Arthur Augustus. "I—here—what—I say—"

He was seized and plumped into a chair, and Lowther and Manners pinned him there. Tom Merry seized the wounded hand, and Blake picked up a tube of seecotine.

"Wh-wh-what are you up to?" gasped D'Arcy. "I wefuse to be handled in this extwemely wuff way. I pwotest—"

"My dear kid," said Blake, "we're afraid you'll bleed to death if we don't stop up that ghastly wound. We haven't any lint at hand, but fortunately there's this sticky stuff, which will answer the purpose. Give me the wounded fin."

"I wefuse! I distinctly wefuse to—"

"Rot! It's all very well for you to bear pain and run risks in this heroic way, Gussy, but suppose the wound were to mortify—think how mortified we should be too. Look, there's another whole drop of blood gushing from the ghastly gash. Give me that finger. Now, steady while I gum up the gash."

"I wefuse! I uttably wefuse—"

It was all very well for D'Arcy to refuse, but Blake had the wounded finger in an iron grip, and he squeezed half the tube of seecotine upon it.

"That's done," he said, with a gasp of relief. "Just in time to save a valuable life. Now we must bind it up before another drop of blood bursts forth in a torrent."

"Weally, Blake, I—"

"Lint! Bandages! Quick, my kingdom for a duster!"

"Here's a giddy rag I clean my bike with," said Monty Lowther, dragging it out from a cupboard. "It's quite at your service."

D'Arcy wriggled frantically.

"Blake, if you touch me with that extwemely dirty wag I shall no longer weward you as a fwend."

"My dear chap, I am determined to save your life, even at the cost of your friendship," said Blake heroically. "Give me a string somebody."

He twisted the dirty, oily rag round D'Arcy's gummy hand, and fastened it there with a string. He gasped again with relief.

"Saved! The danger is past, kids. We can breathe again. Once more the shadow of death is averted from the noble Augustus—"

"Blake, I stwongly object—"

"He must have his arm in a sling," said Tom Merry solemnly.

"We have undertaken to cure this case, and we must neglect no precautions."

"I'll tear up his waistcoat to make a sling," offered Monty Lowther.

Arthur Augustus wriggled.

"Don't you dare to touch my waistcoat!" he shrieked; "Blake, as a fwend I appeal to you to make them leave my waistcoat alone. I can forgive anythin' but that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll make a sling of this bit of rope," said Tom Merry.

"Here you are. You'll be careful to keep this on, Gussy?"

"I shall do no such thing. I shall wemove the wiculous thing at the vewy first opportunity, Tom Mewwy."

"Ungrateful! We can't let him run such risks, chaps. We shall have to fasten it."

"And then his other fin," said Blake.

So D'Arcy's right hand was tied up in the sling, and his left fastened to his side. Then he was allowed to rise from the chair. The juniors looked at him anxiously.

"Feel better?" asked Blake, with great solicitude.

"I insist upon this absurd thing bein' wemoved at once!" said D'Arcy, with great heat. "I shall pwobably gwow extwemely angwy if you do not do so."

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"SPOOFED!"

A SPLENDID TALE OF
TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS.

"My dear chap, even your terrible anger will not move us," said Tom Merry solemnly. "We have saved your life, and we're going to go on saving it. Better go and lie down in your study for a bit, and give the ghastly wound a giddy rest."

"I weseuse—"

"Better," said Blake; and they marched the swell of the School House to the door and gently shoved him into the corridor. "Fellows who don't work ain't wanted in a busy editorial office. Go and take a run."

"Weally, Blake—"

Blake's foot came up behind D'Arcy and gave him a start. He meandered down the corridor disconsolately.

"My hat! What's that freak?"

D'Arcy stopped as the well-known voice fell upon his ears. He looked up to see Figgins & Co. coming towards him.

CHAPTER 2.

The Presentation Copy.

FIGGINS stared at Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in amazement. Kerr and Wynn, the chums of the great Figgins, known throughout St. Jim's as the Co., stared at the swell of the School House also, and cackled loudly.

D'Arcy gave them a look of great indignation.

"I fail to see any cause for this extremely wude mewwiment," he remarked.

"My hat!" said Figgins again. "What is it? Where did it dig itself up?"

"I wonder!" said Fatty Wynn. "Where did you dig yourself up, freak?"

"I have been tweated most diswesepectfully by Tom Mewwy and Blake," said D'Arcy. "They have fastened me up in this widiculous mannah."

"Ha, ha, ha! Why?"

"Because I could not do any more work as I had pwicked my fingah," said D'Arcy. "It was weally most unfeelin' of them, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You will do me a gweat service by weleasin' me," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway do so."

"Hardly," said Figgins. "If Blake thought it necessary to bandage your horrid wounds, I'm not going to risk killing you by unbandaging them."

"I assuah you that—"

"Nuff said. You're bandaged, and you're going to remain bandaged. It will probably do you good—if not in one way, then in another."

"I entweat you—"

"Can't be did. Travel along. Come on, kids."

"Then I wegard you as a set of extremely wude and beastly boundahs," said D'Arcy. "You are thwee wank outsidahs, and I wegard you with gweat contempt. You are thwee howwid New House weptiles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When I am fwee of these widiculous bonds, I shall give you a fearful thwashin'—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. walked on to the editorial office.

D'Arcy, in a great state of indignation, wandered on in search of someone to release him from his bonds; and at last succeeded in bribing Pratt, of the Fourth, with a bag of aniseed balls to perform that service for him.

Meanwhile Figgins, Kerr and Wynn had arrived on the scene of the editorial labours. Tom Merry looked up as they entered with a sniff.

"We've done most of the work," he said. "You're late."

"We stopped to feed," said Figgins. "Haven't you grubbed?"

"No. Can't you see we're busy?"

"Yes; but if you miss dinner you'll not get any, you know."

Tom Merry looked at his watch.

"My hat! I didn't know it was so late. Come on, chaps. Figgy can go on with the work while we go and feed."

"Good idea," said Lowther.

And the Terrible Three made a bolt for the dining-hall. Figgins & Co. looked about them.

"Shocking untidy place," said Figgins. "We manage things better in the New House. By the way, it seems to me rather a cheek that the editorial office should have to be in this beastly School House. I never thought of it before."

"Neither did I," said Kerr. "But come to think of it, it is a cheek. There's Tom Merry, a School House chap, editing the rag. The office ought to be over in the New House. That would be only fairplay."

"Righto!" said Fatty Wynn. "I don't see why we should be put upon. We'll insist that the next number is published in the New House, and if the School House kids don't agree, we'll start a giddy opposition paper."

"Good wheeze," said Figgins.

The New House trio set to work. There was plenty to be done, and they were industrious. They had made good progress

by the time Tom Merry returned with his chums, after a hastily bolted dinner. Then the eight wired in with a will. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came to the door and looked in, with his eyeglass screwed into his eye. Blake looked round at him.

"How is your horrible wound, Gussy?"

"Oh, don't wot, Blake," said D'Arcy. "The pwick in my fingah has stopped bleedin', and I am weady to do some more work."

"Wire in then," said Tom Merry; "It's time the paper was ready. We shall have the chaps come chivvying us soon."

The hero of the Shell was right.

Ere long there were a good many fellows in the passage wanting to know where the second number of the "Weekly" was.

"Going to be a week late, this time?" asked Mellish. "Or isn't the thing coming out at all?"

"Coming out about Christmas-time, I expect," said Gore.

"Why don't you call it 'Tom Merry's Christmas Annual'?" French wanted to know. "If you tried to bring it out once a year you might manage it."

To all which scoffs and jeers the editorial staff of the great "Weekly" paid no attention whatever.

"Gussy," said Tom Merry, looking round, "you can run along to Mr. Linton's study with that free copy. Make a little speech, and present it to him with the compliments of the staff of 'Tom Merry's Weekly.'"

"Certainly," said D'Arcy immediately.

That was just in his line. He took up the first completed copy and left the study. Some of the rude juniors in the passage tried to snatch it as he passed, but Gussy eluded them, and dashed away with it.

"After him!" muttered Gore. "Let's capture the giddy kopie—I mean, copy."

The grinning juniors dashed after the swell of St. Jim's. As many of them remained hanging round the door of the editorial office, Gore's little game was not noticed by the busy staff.

Arthur Augustus heard the pattering of feet behind, and looked over his shoulder. He gave a jump as he saw Gore, French, Mellish, and two or three more in hot pursuit. He sprinted along the passage as he had never sprinted before, and went down the steps three at a time. Of course, he lost his footing half-way, and rolled over the rest of them. There was a crack of a breaking eyeglass, but Gussy was on his mettle. He picked himself up and dashed on, with the frame of the broken eyeglass dangling behind at the end of the string.

Gore put on a spurt, and nearly reached him. D'Arcy felt a clutch behind barely miss him, and dashed frantically forward, and burst into Mr. Linton's study like a thunderbolt.

Gore stopped at the door, and slithered back in time to escape detection.

"My hat!" he gasped, as he joined the rest, and they hurried away. "I wonder what old Linton will say to Gussy coming in like that. Let's clear before there's trouble."

And they promptly cleared.

D'Arcy almost fell in his haste in entering the study. He clutched at Mr. Linton's writing-table and saved himself.

The master of the Shell, extremely startled, jumped up, scattering a shower of blots over the paper he had been writing.

"What the—how the—I—how dare you, D'Arcy? I say, how dare you enter the room in that way. How dare you, sir?"

"Pway excuse me," gasped Arthur Augustus.

"You—you rude hooligan; you—"

"Weally, Mr. Linton, you are labouwin' undah a gweat misappwehension," said D'Arcy. "I did not mean to be wuff or wude, I assuah you. I came in—"

"You—you see what you have made me do?"

"I cannot sufficiently expwess my wegwet, sir. But weally it was not my fault. I was bein' chased by some extremely wuff boundahs, and they nearly had me, weally, sir."

"What have you come here for?"

"To pwesent you with a fwee copy of the gweat papah we have pwoduced, sir," said D'Arcy, extending the copy of "Tom Merry's Weekly." "This copy, sir, is pwesented with the compliments of the editowial staff of the papah, and they hope you will gain both amusement and instwuction from the pewusal of it."

Mr. Linton gingerly took the copy of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

"It is the first complete copy," said D'Arcy. "I stitched it myself, sir. We have taken off ovah a dozen copies on gelatine, and can take off more, so the papah will have a weally extensive circulation. He have gweat pleasuah, sir, in pwesentin' you with this fwee copy."

"Thank you," said Mr. Linton.

He did not seem very grateful. He laid the free copy on his table, and took up his pen. The interview seemed to be over, and so Gussy retired from the study.

The swell of the School House returned to the editorial office. He found the publication in full swing. Copies of the "Weekly" were being passed from hand to hand, and every copy was being eagerly perused by groups of fellows.

Even the seniors of St. Jim's, though they affected to look down upon Tom Merry's editorial effort from the top of a very

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high pedestal, showed some curiosity to see the second number, and several copies were wanted for the Fifth and Sixth.

The edition was soon exhausted. But the seniors were not the only lofty persons to show some curiosity with regard to the "Weekly."

Mr. Railton, the house-master of the School House, was curious too. He looked into Mr. Linton's study a few minutes after Arthur Augustus had left it.

"Have you seen anything of this new paper, Mr. Linton?" he asked. "I confess I am curious to see a copy, but I don't know whether it would have a good effect to ask the juniors for one."

Mr. Linton smiled rather sourly.

"I have been presented with a free copy," he said. "As the editor of this great journal is in my Form, I thought I had better look into it."

"Quite right. It is very courteous of the staff to send you a copy so soon," the housemaster remarked, with a smile. "Have you looked at it?"

"No, I have not done so as yet."

"Then allow me to make a suggestion. Bring it to the masters' room, and we will all look over it together. We are all curious, and we can see what the young authors and artists of St. Jim's have to say for themselves without any infraction of our dignity."

"Certainly, Mr. Railton!"

Mr. Linton was really rather curious himself about the contents of the second number of the "Weekly." The first number had met so swift a fate that little was known of it, but the masters had an idea that it had slated everybody at St. Jim's mercilessly, not even sparing the authorities who were objectionable to the boys.

The master of the Fifth put the free copy under his arm, and walked with the house-master to the masters' room. Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, and Herr Schneider, the German master, were there.

"Gentlemen, we have here the second number of the boys' magazine," said Mr. Railton. "I have no doubt you would like to see it."

"Certainly," said little Mr. Lathom.

"Ach!" said Herr Schneider. "It is some more mischief tat Tom Merry make mit himself after. Tat poy is as pad as nefer vas after!"

Mr. Railton laid the paper on the table, and the four masters gathered round it.

"The title-page is really got up very well," the house-master remarked. "I think this shows Tom Merry's artistic hand."

The title of the paper was done in old English, very neatly.

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

Then in smaller type underneath was written the edifying announcement:

"A Journal Devoted to the Amusement of the Juniors and the Instruction of the Seniors at St. Jim's."

"Ach!" said Herr Schneider. "Tat vas very funny pefore!"

Mr. Railton smiled.

"Contributions may be sent in by anybody resident at St. Jim's," went on the announcement. "An extra large W.P.B. is kept in the editorial office for their reception. Poems are published in the 'Weekly' at ordinary advertisement rates."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Railton turned the first leaf, and even Mr. Linton looked interested.

CHAPTER 3.

The Second Number of "Tom Merry's Weekly."

THE first page of the "Weekly" was filled by an article signed "T. M.," which caused smiles to dawn on the faces of the masters as they read.

"The first number of the 'Weekly' having been sold out within half an hour of publication—"

"Why, I understand that there was only one copy!" Mr. Lathom remarked.

"That accounts for its being sold out so soon," replied Mr. Railton. "But to continue. The publishers determined to enlarge their premises and increase their plant, to be able to meet the huge demand anticipated for the second number. The readers of the 'Weekly' will be pleased to hear that a printing-press has now been established capable of dealing adequately with all demands, and of multiplying copies indefinitely. An improvement in the literary quality of the 'Weekly' will also be perceived; the editor having wielded the blue pencil more thoroughly. Personalities have been strictly prohibited, except in cases where references to them are calculated to do good to the persons concerned."

"Which covers as much ground as is necessary," the master of the Shell remarked.

"Ah, here we have something," said Mr. Railton, glancing at the next page. "It is apparently a poetic serial, a continuation of a previous instalment."

"SIR FATTED AND HIS FAYRE LADYE."

"A Romantic Poem by J. BLAKE."

(Continued from last week.)

"Note for New Readers.—The first instalment of this Grand Serial described how Sir Fatted de Fitzbooters loved the baron's daughter, but was sat on by her respected governor on account of his tinless condition."

"Dear me," said Mr. Lathom, "what can Blake mean by tinless?"

"I fancy he means moneyless," said Mr. Railton, with a laugh.

"Oh, I see! I am sorry we missed the first instalment. Go on!"

Mr. Railton read the following touching stanzas aloud, trying to keep a grave countenance the while:

"Though the fates this pair did sever they forgot each other never,
But exchanged sweet glances ever when the lover met the maid;
And at midnight's solemn hour he would stand beneath her tower,
And with lungs of wondrous power he would sing his serenade.
He would sing his loyal passion in a wild romantic fashion,
With a voice like bull of Bashan to the maid above him far,
While the stars did shine and twinkle, or the rain-drops gently sprinkle,
To the tinkle, tinkle, tinkle of his tinkling guitar."

Mr. Lathom rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Can you tell me whether that is meant to be a comic or a tragic poem, Mr. Railton?" he asked dubiously.

"I cannot quite make out. Perhaps the next stanza will tell us."

"And at times his love outpouring, while the baron bold was snoring,
He would sing his song adoring and forget the flight of time,
In his ardour never heeding how the hours were fleetly speeding,
Most pathetically pleading in most melancholy rhyme:
Keeping on through early morning e'en until the day was dawning,
While the beauteous maid was yawning as she listened high above,
Till one morn when day was breaking, the bold baron, early waking,
Heard the din that he was making with his endless tale of love."

(To be continued next week.)"

Mr. Railton laughed.

"I am quite disappointed," he remarked. "I should be glad to know what that bold baron did when he woke up and heard the serenader. I am afraid I cannot quite make up my mind as to whether it is comic or serious. Possibly Blake himself did not know."

"Here is some more poetry," Mr. Lathom remarked. "What is this? 'An Ode to the Ancient College of St. James's, by Henry Manners.'"

"Glorious ancient pile, thou standest as thou has stood for a thousand years,
Defying the cruel touch of the weather;
Grand and imposing as ever thou wert in the long past ago,
Marred only by the addition of the New House to thy ancient fabric.
So wilt thou stand in future ages I trow,
A monument to the wisdom of thy respected founders."

"Ach!" said Herr Schneider. "Is that plank verse?"

"I think it must be intended for blank verse," Mr. Railton remarked. "There is a whole page of it, but I think we can be contented with that specimen."

"For goodness' sake, yes," said Mr. Lathom.

"I do not think Manners will ever shine as a great poet."



POLLIE GREEN

IS IN

This Week's

"Girls' Friend."

PRICE ONE PENNY.

NEXT
THURSDAY.

"SPOOFED!"

A SPLENDID TALE OF
TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS.

the house-master observed. "Ah! What is this? An article by A. A. D'Arcy—'Latest Fashions.'"

"The general slovenliness of the juniors at St. Jim's, and of a good many of the seniors, too, has caused the editor of this paper to ask Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, Esquire, the well-known leader of fashion, to contribute a weekly column on this important subject. It is hoped that after carefully perusing this page, the Third Form kids will take to washing their necks not only when watched by a master, but as a matter of habit, also that they will don clean collars without being specially compelled to do so. Some of the Fifth and the Sixth, too, who dress in shocking taste, may well profit by the hints of Master D'Arcy, who will be pleased to grant a personal interview to any senior desirous of improving his personal appearance. It is a truism to say that most of them require some improving. We could give names, but refrain, and will not refer to the fact that Knox, Sefton, Bates, Skinner, and others look more like hoodlums than denizens of so respectable a school—generally speaking—as St. Jim's."

"Ha, ha! I am afraid that is an intentional slip," said Mr. Lathom.

"I fear so. Let us see the article by D'Arcy—h-m. 'Sleeve-links and studs should always be in good taste, however plain. It is better to have cheap plain ones than to sport horrid shiny imitation gold things like those worn by Sefton of the Sixth.'

"Neckties should be tied in the proper way. If a fellow cannot tie a necktie, let him buy a made-up one, though these are not so fashionable. Anything is better than going about, like Mellish for instance, looking as if one has been half-hanged, and the hangman left off in the middle of his work. The knot should in no case be allowed to travel up under the left ear."

There was a good deal more in the same strain, especial attention being devoted to the proper creasing of trousers, and the taste to be shown in selecting a fancy waistcoat. D'Arcy was in his element there, and he had run on to two full pages.

"Ah, here is some more poetry!" remarked the house-master.

"THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO."

By GEORGE HERRIES.

"On the eighteenth of June, in 1815,

The brave British troops in array could be seen ;
They marched to the battle so dauntless and true,
To lick the French army that day at Waterloo.
They played up like Trojans, their brave blood they shed,
And lots of them were wounded and dead ;
They ended by winning the terrible fight,
And poor Nap and his followers were all put to flight.
And the Prussians came up at night.
And since then the Kaiser claims that they won
The battle, though they didn't arrive till it was nearly done ;
Which is all rot, I trow. Win it they never could—
They were made in Germany, and weren't any good."
"Ach, mein Gott!" said Herr Schneider, turning as red
as a turkey-cock. "Tat is not all true pefore after."

Mr. Railton turned the leaf hastily, without finishing Herries' grand battle poem.

"Ah, what have we here?" he exclaimed, and went on reading hurriedly, to give Herr Schneider time to recover his equanimity.

"THE LADY ERMYNTRUDE,

"AN UP-TO-DATE NOVEL,

"BY MONTAGUE LOWTHER.

"The Lady Ermyntrode sat in the silk-cushioned chair in her gorgeous boudoir, and sighed. All around her were the signs of tremendous wealth and luxury, but the Lady Ermyntrode sighed. Her father was the richest duke in the United Kingdom, and the Lady Ermyntrode had the world at her charming little feet; but she sat in her gilt boudoir and sighed. And why did the Lady Ermyntrode sigh?"

"I don't think we will stop to inquire," Mr. Railton remarked, turning the page. "Ah, here is something more thrilling!"

"THE RED CHIEF,

"By G. Figgins.

"Aha!" cried the Red Chief, as he fixed his glittering, black ferocious eyes upon the pale, pallid, shrinking form of the hapless maiden. "Aha, thou lovely lily of the palefaces, aha! At last I have thee in my clutch."

"Let us leave her in his clutch," said Mr. Lathom. And the house-master nodded and turned the leaf.

"Ah, poetry again! This seems to be a parody of 'Who killed Cock Robin?'" said Mr. Railton. "And as it seems to be a slap at the staff of the paper, it is really very honest of the staff to insert it."

"Who started the paper?"

"I," said Tom Merry,

"'Twas bright of me, very,

I started the paper."

"Who wrote the piffle?
The Terrible Three,
They were dotty, you see,
And they wrote the piffle."

"Who wrote the bosh?
Said Blake, 'It was us,
With Herries and Gus,
I wrote the bosh.'"

"Who wrote the rot?
It was Figgins & Co.,
They were silly, and so
They wrote the rot."

This effusion was signed by French. Mr. Railton smiled as he read it out.

"I am afraid French forgot the rule about personalities," he remarked. "Ha, this is the football column, edited by Blake."

"We are pleased to be able to report another victory of the St. Jim's First Eleven in an out-match, this time with Redclyffe First. Kildare, our respected captain, and Monteith of the New House, played up grandly. We still think, however, that the First Eleven would be improved by the introduction of a junior element, and the captain's attention is respectfully drawn to the undoubted fact that Fourth Form football is of a far better class than that played by the Fifth or Sixth. In order to prove this, we of the Fourth are perfectly willing to put a team in the field against any team the seniors can get together, and will guarantee to beat them hands down."

The house-master laughed heartily.

"Yes, I think I can see the seniors accepting that modest challenge," he remarked. "I hope they will have judgment enough to take this as a joke and not get angry, which I am afraid would please Blake very much. Ah, what is this? A sonnet." Mr. Railton wrinkled his brows over a sonnet signed "M. Lowther." "Dear me," he said, "it reads off very grammatically, yet for the life of me I cannot make any meaning out of it."

"Read it aloud," said Mr. Lathom.

The house-master did so.

"Oh, lovely moon, that shinest in the sky.
And oft at midnight drear the lovers sigh.
On balmy zephyrs borne beneath the moon,
And where the dear, dear voice that should reply?
The moon sails on, in azure heavens high,
But oh, but oh, for that long-waited boon!
The glance no longer falls from that bright eye,
The moon sails on; but all is ended soon,
The morning sky, and then the blaze of noon."

"That is a very singular sonnet," the master of the Fourth remarked. "I am afraid Lowther belongs to the school of poets who consider that anything will do so long as it is vague enough. Ah, the next item, I perceive, is by Wynn of the New House."

It did not need the signature to show that the next item was by Fatty Wynn.

"I WOULD I WERE A BIRD!

"I would I were a bird,
That I might fly away,
And in the tuck-shop I
Would perch, and there would stay!

"I'd feed upon the tarts,
I'd feed upon the cake,
I'd pick the currant buns,
The peardrops I would take."

"Ahem!" said Mr. Railton. "That is very characteristic of Wynn. We won't go through to the end. Ah, here are the limericks."

There was rather an important announcement on this page.

"GREAT LAST-LINING COMPETITION!

"Send in your last lines and huge prizes will be awarded to the winners."

"First Prize: One gilt-edged, double-back-action, breech-loading, non-skidding Thick Ear, to be applied for in person by the winner."

"Second Prize: One first-class, unrivalled, extremely good-class Black Eye—to be applied for at the office of this paper—same as above."

"Third Prize: One really fashionable and well-done swollen nose—awarded as above."

"Heaps of consolation prizes, too numerous to mention, to be awarded at the discretion of the Editor. Every winner will be expected to treat the staff of the 'Weekly' at the tuck-shop."

JUST OUT—"HARMSWORTH HISTORY OF THE WORLD."

Competitors entering the competition can do so only upon this understanding, the Editor's decision as to the extent of the treat will be final.

"This week's limericks to which last lines are to be added :

"There's a fellow who don't care a pin
For whatever he cannot cram in,
He's a member, you know,
Of Figgins and Co.,
And the name of the gourmand is —"

"There's another about on a par,
Who hails from a country afar,
An unspeakable Scot
More than half off his dot,
And the name of the bounder is —"

"There's another who shares the same diggin's
Or to be more exact, the same piggin's,
He's the chief of the Co.,
So I fancy you'll know
That the long, lanky freak's name is —"

Mr. Railton smiled, and Mr. Linton looked shocked.

"How extremely personal," he said.

"Oh, I fancy Figgins and his friends take it in the right spirit," said Mr. Railton. "Yes, indeed, here are some more limericks, evidently a rejoinder to the Editor's effusions."

"There's a chap who's impertinent, very,
Whose poems we'd all like to bury,
When I say he's a freak,
With unparalleled cheek,
Then you'll know that his name is —"

"Ah, that is a return compliment for Tom Merry," Mr. Lathom remarked. "By the fact of its appearance in the paper, I suppose it is taken in good part."

"No doubt whatever about that," said the house-master. "Ah, here is an announcement of the Editor's regrets."

"An article on the subject of hygiene, by Miss Priscilla Fawcett, which has been promised for the columns of the 'Weekly,' had unfortunately not come to hand at the time of going to press. We hope to insert it next week."

Mr. Railton laughed.

"That is Tom Merry's former governess," he said. "A great authority, I believe, on the subject of the care of the health. I should be glad to see that article."

"Ah, here is the photographic page, conducted by Manners. Manners is an enthusiast on that subject," Mr. Linton remarked. "Rather dull, I am afraid. What is this?"

It was a poem, in the style of "I give thee all, I can no more."

"I'll tell thee all about the mag,
Produced in Study X,
Nine juniors write up the rag—
Nine intellectual wrecks.
At work in class or eke at prep,
They're never known to swot,
But they work like Trojans to produce
The 'Weekly'—weakly rot!"

There were a dozen more stanzas, which Mr. Railton passed over. The last paragraph on the page caught his eye, and he glanced at it.

"NOTICE!—A certain freak at St. Jim's, having threatened to come down heavily upon the 'Weekly,' he is hereby warned that the editorial staff regard him with profound contempt. He is such a rank outsider, and such an extremely disreputable person, that we wonder he has the cheek to make his voice heard at all. This individual has had the nerve to threaten the staff of the 'Weekly'—as if we should take any notice of him. We shall pay no regard whatever to—"

The house-master had come to the bottom of the page, and he lifted his eyes to the top of the next to continue the paragraph. Then a dark shade went over his brow.

Mr. Linton, who was also reading, turned crimson. For this is how the paragraph went on :

"—Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, to whom a free copy of the magazine was despatched immediately upon publication."

Mr. Railton laid down the paper. There was silence in the master's room. It was broken by Herr Schneider.

"Ach! Mein Gott! Tat vas pad—too peastly pad after!" Mr. Linton was trembling with rage.

"I am sure, Mr. Railton," he said, "that you will take proper steps to punish this astounding insolence to a Form-master."

Mr. Railton nodded.

"I leave the culprit entirely in your hands, Mr. Linton," he said. "You will deal with him, and with the publication, in whatever manner you deem best."

"Thank you, sir."

"Very impertinent and unpleasant," said Mr. Lathom, as the house-master left the room, looking gravely annoyed. "I cannot understand it of Tom Merry. But here it is, quite unmistakable."

"Quite," said Herr Schneider. "Mein Gott!"

Mr. Linton set his thin lips hard.

"I shall stop this publication," he said. "It is certainly not fit to appear. The junior who wrote that paragraph deserves a severe flogging, but it might be hard to discover which one was guilty."

"Mein Gott! Tat is true, dey will not betray vun anoder before."

"I shall stop the paper," said the master of the Shell; "and I shall confiscate the copies already published."

He crumpled up the copy of the "Weekly" in his hand and strode from the room, straight towards the editorial office of the "Weekly."

CHAPTER 4.

Suspended—By Order.

TOM MERRY was looking, and feeling, extremely pleased with himself and with his staff. The publication of the "Weekly's" second number had gone off without a hitch.

Twenty copies had been issued, and had been handed out of the editorial office to the eager crowd, and were now being perused by dozens of readers in every corner of St. Jim's. The Editor and his staff rested from their labours.

"That's gone off jolly well," said Tom Merry. "We're getting into the way of it now. I think the third number will be better still."

"I wonder what Linton thinks of it?" Monty Lowther observed. "It was a good dodge to send him a presentation copy; sort of disarm his wrath beforehand. By the way, we ought to let Sefton have a copy."

"I've seen to that," grinned Figgins. "I put a copy in his study, with the leaf turned down at the paragraph referring to him."

Sefton, a senior of the New House, was at loggerheads with Tom Merry & Co. He never got on well with the juniors, being a great deal of a bully, and their references to him in the first number of the "Weekly" had been far from complimentary. The senior had heard of them, and had lost his temper, and threatened to forcibly stop the publication of the "Weekly." To which Tom Merry had replied in an article in the present number, expressive of the most profound contempt and scorn for the New House senior.

"We've given it to him strong," said Blake. "I hope it will do him good. If he likes to pay a visit to the editorial office to remonstrate, we're ready for him."

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy. "If the boundah attempts to westwain the freedom of the Press, we shall come down upon him vewy heavily. I weally think—"

"Hallo, here's somebody in a hurry!" exclaimed Figgins, as heavy and rapid footsteps sounded in the corridor. "That must be Sefty."

"Stand ready!" exclaimed the Editor of the "Weekly." "All hands stand ready to repel boarders. Man the inkpots and draw stumps."

In a moment the staff of the "Weekly" were on the defensive. Cricket stumps and inkpots were to the fore, ready to meet the expected attack.

The door of the study was flung open.

"Give him socks!" yelled Tom Merry. "Give him—Oh, crumbs! Hold on, it's Linton!"

The staff lowered their weapons, all except Arthur Augustus, who was armed with an inkpot, and was too excited to notice that it was not Sefton who had thrown the door open.

"Take that, you boundah!" he exclaimed. "Take that, you wank outsiders!" And he jerked the contents of the inkpot towards the new-comer.

"You ass!" roared Blake. He struck up D'Arcy's arm in time, and the ink splattered on the wall. Only a few drops went upon Mr. Linton, but those few drops were enough.

"You—you—you—" The master of the Shell was stammering with fury. "So this is the way in which you receive your master."

"I am weally sowwy, sir," said D'Arcy, turning pale. "I thought it was that cad Sefton, I did weally. I am extremely sowwy, and I apologise pwofoundly."

"I—I—"

"I assuah you that I did not know it was you, sir, weally. As one gentleman to another, I give you my word of honah."

"Take five hundred lines, D'Arcy!" shouted Mr. Linton. "But weally, my dear sir, havin' apologised as one gentleman to—"

"Take a thousand lines!"

"But, weally, as one gent—"

"Two thousand lines!"

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"SPOOFED!"

A SPLENDID TALE OF
TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS.

"But——"

"Five thousand lines!" roared Mr. Linton.

Arthur Augustus relapsed into silence. The lines were going up at such an alarming rate that his spare time would have been booked for whole terms ahead if Mr. Linton had gone on.

The editorial staff of the "Weekly" looked at one another in surprise and dismay. Mr. Linton's reception in the study had been rather an awkward mistake; but after all, D'Arcy had explained, and a few drops of ink were not such a terribly serious matter. What was the cause of the Form-master's evident temper?

Mr. Linton looked at the staff with a withering expression.

"I have no doubt that you are proud of this production!" he exclaimed, holding up the crumpled copy of the "Weekly."

Tom Merry looked amazed. He did not know of anything in the paper to which Mr. Linton had a reason to take exception, unless some mistake had been made.

"Yes, sir," he replied respectfully. "We think we've turned it out pretty well, sir."

The Form-master appeared to choke.

"And you think this paragraph is quite in good taste!" he ejaculated, pointing to the one which had caused such remark in the masters' room.

Tom Merry glanced at it.

"Well, you see, sir——"

"Yes, I see; I see insolence, sir—impertinence, sir—black-guardism, sir——"

"But——"

"Not a word. You can make no excuse—you can make no explanation."

"But——"

"Silence! Mr. Railton has left me to deal with this matter. I forbid you to keep on the publication of the paper."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed nine dismayed voices simultaneously.

"If another number should be published in spite of this order, the punishment will be severe. You understand? The 'Weekly' is to cease, and the copies already issued are to be brought to me to be destroyed!"

"But, sir, if——"

"Not a word. You will obey me. I will keep this copy, Merry—this extraordinary, unparalleled example of insolence."

"But I don't——"

"No more! Every copy must be sent to me, and will forthwith be destroyed. You understand?"

"Yes, sir, I understand, but——"

"That is enough. Obey me, or you will suffer!"

And the Form-master, with the crumpled copy of the "Weekly" clutched in his hand, turned and strode majestically from the study.

The editorial staff looked at each other in blank amazement and dismay.

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, at last. "What's the meaning of that?"

"Don't ask me," said Blake. "He's mad—mad as a hatter—mad as a whole shopful of March hares—mad as Colney Hatch and Bedlam rolled into one."

"Right off his rocker," said Herries, shaking his head. "That's the only possible explanation."

"But he says that Mr. Railton is backing him up in this."

"Then Railton's off his rocker, too."

"I can't understand it," Manners exclaimed. "He must be wandering in his mind, Tom."

"Anyway, he means what he said."

"That we are to stop the magazine?" said Figgins, wrinkling his brows thoughtfully.

"Yes."

"Are we going to do it?" said Figgins, looking round.

There was rebellion in every face.

"No," said Tom Merry; "we're not. We can't buck against authority, of course, and we shall have to give in outwardly. But all the same——"

"Something will have to be done. It's unjust."

"Tyrannical!"

"Rotten!"

"Beastly!"

"Caddish!"

"It's all that," said Tom Merry. "I'm not the chap to disregard a master if he's just. But to come down heavy on us for nothing at all——"

"Is it possible there's a mistake?" said Lowther. "Let's have another look at the article."

"Here you are."

Tom Merry opened a copy of the magazine at page 10. He put his finger on the bottom paragraph, and read it aloud.

"NOTICE!—A certain freak at St. Jim's, having threatened to come down heavily upon the 'Weekly,' he is hereby warned that the editorial staff regard him with profound contempt. He is such a rank outsider, and such an extremely disreputable person, that we wonder he has the cheek to make his voice heard at all. This individual has had the nerve to threaten the staff of the 'Weekly,' as if we should take any notice of him. We shall pay no regard whatever to——"

Here the paragraph was continued on page 11.

"——the idiotic threats and extremely impertinent remarks of Sefton, and shall go on our way as if no such insignificant person existed."

"Well, that's rough on Sefton," said Figgins. "But it's no business of Linton's. I don't see why he should get his rag out over that."

"Let's look at the paragraph on Linton himself," suggested Kerr. "Something may have gone wrong with that."

"That's page 12," said Arthur Augustus; "concluded on page 13."

Tom Merry turned to page 12, and read aloud.

"The publication of the 'Weekly' has caused great interest in the school, and we hope to extend the circulation amongst the Upper Forms, and thereby to bring about a needed improvement in many respects. Some of the powers that be have kindly taken an interest in the paper, including——" Tom Merry looked up to the next page, where the paragraph was continued—"——Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, to whom a free copy of the magazine was despatched immediately upon publication."

"Nothing wrong with that," said Figgins.

Tom Merry laid down the magazine.

"Nothing that I can see, kids."

"Oh, the fellah is evidently wight off his wockah!" said D'Arcy. "He can't weally expect us to take any notice of him."

"He was in deadly earnest, though," Figgins remarked. "We shall have to keep up appearances, and if the 'Weekly' is published again it will have to be kept dark."

Tom Merry nodded.

"That's so. Meanwhile, like good little boys, we're going to give in—outwardly. I'll put a notice on the door to that effect."

And a little later the boys of St. Jim's could read the following announcement on the door of the editorial office:

"The publication of Tom Merry's 'Weekly' has been suspended. By order."

CHAPTER 5.

Leaving a Good Impression Behind.

"BY ORDER!" The words stared in big letters from the door of the editorial office, and ere long there was a crowd of boys gathered round.

"Suspended, hey?" said Gore. "Jolly good thing, too."

"It was awful rot, of course," Mellish observed. "But I wonder why the Head took the trouble to suspend it?"

"It wasn't the Head," said Jimson, who had learned some of the facts from Figgins; "it was Mr. Linton."

"The master of the Shell. What had he got to complain about?"

"Nothing that I know of."

"Like his cheek to interfere."

"Righto! But Tom Merry won't knuckle under, I expect."

Gore stared at Jimson.

"What do you mean? He can't keep on the paper if it's forbidden."

Jimson grinned.

"Mum's the word. I fancy next week's number will come out as usual. Wait and see."

"Well, he's got nerve enough for anything," said Gore. "I shouldn't wonder."

And the crowd, having satisfied themselves with staring at the notice on the door, dispersed. Questions were asked of Tom Merry & Co. by hosts of inquirers. They had no information to give.

"Are you really going to stop the paper, Merry?" Mellish asked bluntly.

"You'll see if you live long enough," was the non-committal reply.

"When will the next number be out?" Gore asked.

"When it's published," replied the Editor.

"There is one coming out, then?"

"You'll see on Wednesday."

"Oh, you won't have nerve enough to do it, I know that, with old Linton hot on your track!" said Gore.

But even that did not move Tom Merry. He only smiled.

"Wait and see," he remarked.

And the juniors had to wait and see.

Mr. Linton happened to pass the door of Tom Merry's study, and read the notice there, and smiled grimly. It did not occur to him that the prominent announcement might be simply a blind to disarm suspicion.

Tom Merry & Co. were busy. In a matter like this the rivals of St. Jim's pulled together like one man. The Terrible Three and Study No. 6 forgot that the leadership of the School House was in dispute between them. Figgins & Co. never

JUST OUT—"HARMSWORTH HISTORY OF THE WORLD."

remembered that they were at deadly war with the School House.

Peace such as had seldom been seen before at St. Jim's reigned between School House and New House, for all the New House juniors backed up Figgins & Co.; while when the Terrible Three and Study No. 6 were in accord, they were easily able to keep order on their side, and put a stop to house rows.

As Tom Merry said, it was a time when all small disputes should be forgotten, and true Britons should stand shoulder to shoulder against tyranny. So shoulder to shoulder School House and New House stood, and the preparation of the third number went on apace.

The announcement on the door of the study having served its purpose was taken down, and the inscription "Editorial Office" no longer appeared there. But the staff were busy all the same.

They neglected their usual pursuits, everything except football, to put in their leisure time at the paper. There were no house rows, and hardly a row with the neighbouring Grammar School. They were too busy. That the third number of the paper was really coming out, in spite of the "By Order," was an open secret, which gradually spread through the lower forms.

Of course, there was no one to give it away; and Mr. Linton went on in blissful unconsciousness of it. The master of the Shell had judiciously forgotten the five thousand lines he had in a moment of heat imposed upon D'Arcy. It was an impossible imposition, and better left unremembered. And needless to say, the swell of the School House was only too willing to forget all about it too.

Gore and his set showed great curiosity as to the progress of the third number, but the staff were not inclined to take the bully of the Shell into their confidence. There was, in fact, very little room for an editorial staff numbering nine in the study, and all outsiders were strictly barred.

"No room for asses," Tom Merry said, when Gore appeared at the door and looked in. "No admittance except upon business. No hands required. Seat!"

"You'd look pretty green if I let drop a hint to Linton!" sneered Gore.

Tom Merry looked at him steadily.

"Even you couldn't be cad enough for that, Gore."

"Don't be so beastly sure about it," said Gore.

"If you did, my pippin," said Monty Lowther, "it would mean a Form licking; and one you wouldn't get over in a hurry, Gore."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus, looking up from the copying-press. "Yaas, indeed. If you were to play the twaitah in such an extremely tweechevous way, Goah, I should take it upon myself to administah to you a feahful thwashin!"

Gore sniffed.

"Oh, you couldn't thrash a white mouse!" he replied. "You're no good, ass."

The swell of St. Jim's coloured with indignation.

"What did you wefer to me as, Goah?"

"I referred to you as an ass," said Gore deliberately. "To be more precise, you are a silly ass—a most exceptionally silly ass—of the most asinine description possible!"

D'Arcy laid down the papers he had in his hand.

"Goah, I am extremely busy just now, but I cannot allow that remark to pass uncriticised. You have alluded to me in terms which I can only chawactahwise as disrespectful."

"Go hon!" said Gore.

"Yaas, wathah. I require you to withdwaw those obnoxious expressions, as othahwise I shall have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin' to you on the spot!"

"What spot?" asked Gore.

"I ask you," said D'Arcy, with marked emphasis, "I wequest you, Goah, to withdraw these remarks. Are you goin' to do so, Goah?"

"No; I am not going to do so, ass."

"Then I shall chastise you."

"Come on!" said Gore, pushing back his cuffs.

"Here, chuck it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "You're not going to fight in my study. Gore, get out. Gussy, go on with your work."

"I am sowwy, Tom Mewwy, that it is imposs. for me to continue my work until I have chastised Goah," said Arthur Augustus. "Undah the cires, I have no alternative but to administah a feahful thwashin'."

"Chuck it, I tell you! There's no room for fighting here; there's no room to breathe as it is. Stop it!"

"Go out into the passage and thwash him, Gussy," said Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah. I am willin' to do so. Goah, kindly step back into the passage, and I will chastise you there."

"Not much," said Gore, who was in a mood for mischief, and thought it would be funny to start a general scrap in the crowded editorial office. "I'm not going, and you can't shift

me, Gus. You can't, really, Algy. You couldn't shift one side of me, Adolphus. You—"

"I will show you whethah I cannot shift you, you wude boundah!" said Arthur Augustus indignantly. "Pwepare to take a feahful hidin', you outsidah. I am goin' to give you a severe lesson."

"I'm waiting for it, Gustavus."

Gore was quite ready. As the swell of St. Jim's rushed at him brandishing his fists, Gore closed with him, and they went reeling right and left through the study. A chair laden with a ream of paper went over with a crash, and a table where two of the staff were writing lurched, and blots were the result. The staff were all on their feet now, wrathful, and bent on vengeance.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gore. "You're doing some damage, Gussy. Hallo, Lowther! Sorry!"

They staggered against Lowther, and sent him flying.

"You wuff bwute!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "I will put you out of the study, and administah the most feahful thwashin' you evah—"

"There you go, Gussy!"

Gore gave the swell of the School House a twist and sent him flying. D'Arcy staggered blindly and helplessly away, and sat down. Tom Merry gave a yell of warning—too late.

"Look out! You're sitting in the gelatine!"

Too late! Arthur Augustus, thinking probably more of his trousers than of the property of the great publishing firm of Tom Merry & Co., made a desperate effort to save himself, and, instead of sitting down, he fell upon his back full upon the gelatine.

Tom Merry gave a shout of wrath.

"You ass! That's my title-page, and you've mucked it up!"

"I weally could not help it!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "It was the fault of that extremely wude and wuff boundah, Goah."

The editorial staff were already upon Gore. He was seized by half-a-dozen pair of hands, and hurled forth into the corridor. At the same moment a bell began to ring.

"Hang it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "That's first lesson. Come on! It's old Schneider first this afternoon, and it means a row if we're late."

And the staff, leaving their work just where it was, hurried away to the class-room. Herr Schneider was not a master to be trifled with. He was taking the Shell and the Fourth together in German that afternoon, so the whole staff rushed off together. D'Arcy was the last to go to his place, and as he did so a giggle rose from the class.

D'Arcy, as it happened, was wearing a light jacket, and the impression had come off the gelatine surface with great exactitude upon the cloth. As D'Arcy walked to his place a dozen pair of eyes saw his back, and it was not surprising that the class giggled when they read on the back of Arthur Augustus's light jacket the curious announcement:

"TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE AMUSEMENT—

Edited by Tom Merry. No. 3.

Price Nix. No reduction—

Arthur Augustus, all unconscious of the cause of the general merriment, took his place, and Herr Schneider entered the room the next moment and went to his desk.

CHAPTER 6.

Arthur Augustus Gives the Game Away.

HERR SCHNEIDER was in a good temper. The German master, as a matter of fact, was rather sorry for the staff of the great Weekly, and as he thought there must have been some mistake about the disrespectful paragraph, he thought Mr. Linton had been rather hard upon the enterprising journalists.

"Now, poys, ve vill work hard dis afternoon mit ourselves," he said, cheerfully. "I am glad to see tat you are all here before. Silence in te class."

There was silence for a few moments, while the German master opened his book.

But when he looked up again the juniors were giggling.

The curious announcement upon D'Arcy's back, and his unconsciousness of it, tickled the juniors immensely.

The German master looked puzzled.

"Vat is it tat you was laff at after?" he inquired. "Vy are you not grave before, in te class-room, mein poys?"

The giggling died away.

"Ve vill now take to second pook of Schiller's great poem—vat you smile at, Pratt?"

Pratt started.

"Did I smile, sir?"

"Yes, sir, you did, sir. Vat you was smile for after?"

"N-n-nothing, sir."

NEXT
THURSDAY:

"SPOOFED!"

A SPLENDID TALE OF
TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS.



"The door of the study was flung open.
"Give him socks!" yelled Tom Merry.
"Give him— Oh, Christopher! Hold
on, it's Linton."

"Ten you take twenty lines for smiling at noting, Pratt."

The German master was looking very severe now. He did not quite understand his class. He put on his spectacles and looked at his book.

"Hier unter diesen Felsen lasset uns," he commenced, and the lesson proceeded, the class now and again breaking out into chuckles, instantly suppressed as the master's eye wandered round towards the chucklers.

The state of Gussy's jacket was soon known to the whole class, the information being passed in whispers, only Gussy remaining in ignorance of it.

Tom Merry wore a worried look.

He had seen the inscription on Gussy's back, and he knew that if the master saw it the secret would be given away at once.

It would be an unmistakable proof that the copying press had been in use only a short time before, and that in point of fact the publication of the suspended weekly was going on the same as usual.

How was Gussy to be warned? Even if warned, how was he to prevent the German master from seeing his back when the class were dismissed?

That was a question of tactics which seriously exercised the brain of Tom Merry, and left him little leisure to attend to the lesson.

His random answers when he was spoken to caused the German master to look at him searchingly more than once, as if he suspected that something was "on," as doubtless he did.

Tom Merry and his chums did not happen to be near Gussy, and so it was impossible to speak to him, and the intermediate juniors could not be relied upon as a channel of communication, with the German's master's keen eyes upon them.

"Merry!" rapped out Herr Schneider.

"Yes, sir," said Tom, with a start.

"Vat vas you looking towards D'Arcy so much for pefore?"

"Was I looking towards him, sir?"

"Yes, you vas, Merry. If you pay not attention I gif you some imposition, aint it, after."

Tom Merry exchanged glances with Manners and Lowther.

What was to be done?

The lesson was drawing to its close, and ere long Gussy would have to leave his place, and then the master would be bound to see what was the cause of the suppressed merriment of the German class.

Tom resolved upon a desperate attempt. Anyway, it could not make matters worse. He whispered to Lowther, who passed the whisper on to Jones.

Jones stared at him inquiringly.

"Eh? What's that?"

"Pass the word to Gussy to be careful not to show his back to the Herr."

"Oh, I see," grinned Jones. "Right you are."

"Lowther! You was spick to Jones. Take fifty lines."

"Yes, sir," said Monty Lowther, as cheerfully as he could.

Jones waited a few minutes, and then passed the whisper on. It came to Blundell, who was probably the stupidest boy in the Fourth Form. It had to be repeated thrice to him before he understood, and then he whispered to D'Arcy, who sat next to him.

"I say, D'Arcy, don't turn your back on the master, you know," Arthur Augustus looked at Blundell frigidly.

"I am not likely to tweek my teachah with such extweme diswespsect," he replied. "I am surprised at the wemark, Blundell."

And he turned his attention to his book again.

"But I say, D'Arcy, you know, don't be an ass—I mean—"

"Pway do not chawactewise me as an ass, or I shall be compelled to thwash you, Blundell, aftah the class is dismissed."

"Oh, rats. Can't you understand, you silly ass—"

"Pway address me no more. I desiah to hold no communication with you whatevah," said the swell of St. Jim's with a great deal of dignity.

"But your back, you know—you mustn't turn your back on Herr Schneider—"

"I shall begin to think that you are off your wockah," said Arthur Augustus. "Pway make no moah of these idiotic wemarks, Blundell."

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The German master tried to keep a grave face, but in spite of himself a slow smile crept over his fat visage.

"Ach! So you have been in te printing and te publishing business since it vas forbidden, after," he exclaimed.

"Eh, sir? I weally do not compwehend," said D'Arcy.

"Take off your jacket, D'Arcy, and look at it, after."

The bewildered D'Arcy removed his jacket, and gazed at the impression. Then he understood at last. His expression changed; but he was not thinking of Tom Merry's Weekly, or of the discovery that had been made.

"My jacket! That nasty howwid ink has spoiled my jacket!" he exclaimed, in dismay. "Tom Mewwy, this is the last stwaw. I wesign fwom the staff."

Tom Merry looked daggers at him.

"Shut up!" he said, in a stage whisper.

"Merry, you vil not speak to D'Arcy. D'Arcy, you may replace your jacket. It seems tat tere is some more printing of tat paper, ain't it, pefore?"

The staff of the famous periodical were silent.

As "No. 3" formed part of the impression upon D'Arcy's jacket, denial would not have been of much use, even if any of the juniors had been inclined to prevaricate, which they were not.

"Mein gootness! I must look into tat matter pefore," said Herr Schneider. "Now ve vill go on mit te lesson, ain't it, after?"

The lesson was not long in finishing. After the class were dismissed, D'Arcy changed his jacket. That was the most important matter of the moment to the swell of St. Jim's.

The rest of the afternoon was a worrying one to the staff of the "Weekly." That the German master knew the truth was certain, and they could only expect the strong arm of authority to descend upon Study X and the half-prepared third number now reposing there.

"My hat!" murmured Tom Merry. "If the third number busts up over this we'll slay D'Arcy! We'll torture him! We'll boil him in oil!"

A proposition to which the rest of the staff heartily assented.

CHAPTER 7.

A Change of Quarters.

WHAT will Schneider do?

That was the question that agitated the minds of the staff of Tom Merry's "Weekly," as they gathered again in the editorial den.

They could not make up their minds about it. The German master had apparently said nothing so far either to Mr. Linton or to the house-master, and the staff were in a state of suspense. What would Schneider do?

"He'll come along to the study himself," said Blake gloomily. "He'll demand to see all we've done so far of the third number, and he'll confiscate it."

"That's it," Lowther assented. "We sha'n't give the papers up, I suppose?"

"We shall have to give up something," said Tom; "but not all, of course. They may confiscate our machinery—ahem!—but we'll get a new rig-out. We're going to stick to this."

"We've put all the things out of sight," said Figgins, looking round. "Nothing here to catch the eye. But, of course, he knows all about it, the beast!"

"Of course, owing to that image."

"Tom Mewwy, I stwongly object to bein' weferred to as an image."

"Oh, dry up! You make me tired!"

"I wefuse to dwy up. I distinctly wefuse to—"

"If Schneider confiscates the mag," said Figgins, "we are going to torture Gussy to death. That's agreed, isn't it?"

"Quite," said Tom Merry.

"I wefuse to be tortured to death," said D'Arcy. "I untably—"

"Ring off. You talk too much. You've given us away, and you've got to die the death. We'll pour oil over your waistcoat—"

"You howwid wuffian—"

"We'll stamp on all your silk hats—"

"You—you feahful beast—"

"We'll dip all your ties in ink—"

"Oh, you outwageous savage—"

"We'll scorch all your white shirts—"

"Howwid wascals—"

"We'll—Hallo, here's the fairy footstep of the one and only Schneider! I'd know that ten-ton tramp anywhere. Quiet!"

There was a knock at the door—the masters always knocked at St. Jim's—and Herr Schneider came into the study.

The juniors all rose to their feet respectfully. They eyed

"Look here, you silly cuckoo."

"I wefuse to be called a silly cuckoo. I—"

"D'Arcy, you vas talking, aint it? Take feefty lines pefore."

"Weally, sir, I was simply wemahking—"

"Take vun hundred lines."

"Certainly, sir; but I weally—"

"Silence, poy!"

"Serve you right," whispered Blundell. "You silly ass, you are the biggest lunatic—"

"Pway be silent," said D'Arcy, considerably ruffled. "I shall chastise you in the vewy pwesence of the mastah if you persist in annoyin' me."

"You ass, you dummy!" said Blundell. "You duffer!"

That was too much for the dignity of Arthur Augustus.

He reached over and took Blundell's nose between his thumb and forefinger, and Blundell gave an involuntary howl. Herr Schneider's eye was upon them in a moment.

"D'Arcy! Blundell! How dare you?"

"I am sowwy, sir, but I was compelled to punish this wude person's extweme diswespsect," said D'Arcy. "Undah the cires I—"

"Did Blundell speak to you?"

D'Arcy hesitated. He released Blundell's nasal organ, which the sufferer proceeded to nurse affectionately. D'Arcy could not speak, nor could he tell an untruth, so he was in a quandary.

"I weally would pwefer not to answer that question, sir," said the swell of St. Jim's, after some reflection.

Herr Schneider's face set grimly.

"You can take your choice, D'Arcy, between replying to tat question and writing out two hundred lines of Schiller."

"Thank you, sir. I will w'ite the lines, sir," said Arthur Augustus.

"Ve vill now continue," said Herr Schneider, "and if tere is any more nonsense, I shall not gif te lines but te cane, aint it, pefore?"

Tom Merry could have scalped D'Arcy upon the spot, but as that was not practicable, and as it wouldn't have done any good anyway, he had to think of something else.

"Got it!"

He murmured the words as a new idea came into his mind.

While Herr Schneider's attention was otherwise occupied, Tom scribbled a few words on the flyleaf of his Schiller, and quietly tore it out and folded it up. It was passed with a whispered explanation along the form.

But Herr Schneider was on the alert, as it happened, and watching Tom Merry out of the corner of his eye. He came down upon the delinquents suddenly.

"Manners!"

"Yes, sir."

"You haf just received a note from Lowther, who received it from Tom Merry."

"Have—have I, sir?" stammered Manners.

"Ja, mein poy. Gif it to me at vunce, pefore."

Manners reluctantly handed over the note. Herr Schneider opened it with a grim smile, and Tom Merry gave an inward groan.

Herr Schneider read the note.

"Mind you don't turn your back to Schneider when you leave your seat. You've got the impression from the gelatine upon it. T. M."

Herr Schneider smiled grimly.

"For whom vas tat note intended, Merry?" he asked.

It was useless to beat about the bush. There was no chance of keeping the secret now.

"For D'Arcy, sir," said Tom, reluctantly.

"D'Arcy, you vill kindly come out pefore te class, after."

"Certainly, sir," said Arthur Augustus, with his usual politeness, and he came promptly out before the class, and stood before the German master.

"You vill turn your back to me, D'Arcy."

Arthur Augustus stared at him in amazement.

"Pway pabdon me, sir, but I do not think I fully appwehend," he said. "Did you wequest me to turn my back to you?"

"Ja, I did, so do so quickly, mein poy."

D'Arcy stared at the master, and then at the class, who were giggling. In spite of their dismay, the staff of Tom Merry's Weekly could not help smiling at the expression of D'Arcy's bewildered face.

"Do you hear me, poy?" exclaimed Herr Schneider, impatiently.

"Yaas, wathah," said D'Arcy, "I mean, yes, sir. But I still fail to compwehend. It would be the height of diswespsect foh me to turn my back upon a teachah, and I weally do not see—"

"Turn round, sir!" thundered Herr Schneider, in a voice that made Gussy leave off his remonstrance in the middle, and whirl round as if on a pivot.

The German master fixed his eyes on the back of D'Arcy's jacket.

Clear on the light grey cloth showed the impression of the title-page of Tom Merry's Weekly; that part of it on which Gussy had pressed when he fell.

NEXT
THURSDAY.

"SPOOFED!"

A SPLENDID TALE OF
TOM MERRY'S SCHOOLDAYS.

the German master's face with keen anxiety. He had never erred on the side of being too lenient; but they knew he had a good heart underneath, though his temper was hasty.

He had always been down on Tom Merry, yet certainly the scamp of the Shell had deserved it often enough. At the present moment there was a grim look on the fat face, but a twinkle of humour in the eyes.

"Mein poys, I haf come to speak to you."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom Merry. "That's very kind of you indeed, sir."

"Merry, I tink tat you have started vunce more to publish tat baper, ain't it, vich te house-master have forbidden."

"Not the house-master, sir. Mr. Linton."

"He haf te house-master's authority, and his order must be obeyed, ain't it?" said the Herr severely. "I haf discover py accident tat you still do vat you must not do, and come here mit myself to speak to you. I not like to get you all te cane, but I not allow you to preak te orders. You must stop tat baper, ain't it."

The juniors were silent.

It was not the German master's intention to give them away, that was something. But about stopping the paper, that was another matter.

"I say noting," said Herr Schneider. "I say noting; but te baper must not be brinted. I not vish to get you poys into trouble, ain't it. I gif you tat warning, tat is all. Better take advice from me, mein poys."

And the German master turned to go.

"Thank you very much, sir," said Tom Merry, sincerely enough. "You are very kind."

"I mean to be kind, mein poys, t'ough some of te juniors do not like deir old Sherman master," said Herr Schneider.

"Oh, sir, we all like you, really!" said Tom Merry. "We respect you very much, sir, and we are very grateful to you for your kindness now."

"Tat is goot. Take heed of te warning, Merry."

The German master left the study.

The staff of the "Weekly" broke into smiles of satisfaction. "We're well out of that," said Tom Merry. "It's uncommonly decent of old Schneider to let us down so lightly. I dare say we've never done him justice. His bark is worse than his bite."

"He's like the egg in the story, good in parts," said Monty Lowther, shaking his head. "He's in a good temper to-day. Still, he's not a bad sort. Some masters would have made us promise not to print the paper. He hasn't."

"I never knew a better way to make a liar of a boy than to make him promise things he hates doing," said Tom Merry. "We're not bound by any promise. It's simply a case of risking a licking, and I think none of us is afraid of that."

"Not much."

"We'll let Gussy off, as the Schneider bird has played up so decently," said Tom. "Gussy, your waiscoats and ties and silk hats are safe."

"I did not weally believe you could be so bwutal, Tom Mewwy."

"Rats! Let's go on with the printing!"

"Hold on!" said Figgins. "Schneider will be bound to keep an eye on us now, even if he doesn't tell Linton. He must do something, for the sake of discipline, you know. Besides, something may get to Linton's ears about that joke in the classroom. The whole school is talking about the impression on Gussy's jacket."

"Yaas, wathah. I was tellin' Gibson about it, and Knox heard me, and—"

"Ass! You see, kids, it won't be safe to carry on the publication in the study any more," said Figgins seriously. "It's no good running risks."

There was a long silence.

"Figgys's right," said Tom Merry, at last. "It would be like Linton to pay us a sudden visit to take us by surprise."

"And then all the fat would be in the fire."

"But what are we to do?" said Manners uneasily. "We're not going to give up publishing the 'Weekly'?"

"Not much."

"We shall have to find another editorial office, that's all," said Figgins, "and carry on the work at night."

"Phew!"

"It's the only plan."

"Yaas, wathah," said Arthur Augustus. "And I've got a weally good, wippings-ideah, kids; a weally good, first-wate wheeze."

"Oh, we know your ripping ideas," said Tom Merry suspiciously. "But out with it."

"Let us meet in the ruined castle at midnight," said D'Arcy, looking round. "It's only a few miles from St. Jim's, and it will be awfully wometric, don't you know. We can all have our things there in the vaults, you know, and—"

"Well, of all the silly ass ideas I ever heard of," said Figgins, "I think that's about the silly-assiest!"

"I must request you to express yourself more politely,

Figgins. I weally think that my idea is a wippin' one, and I think it should be adopted."

"If you think we're going to spend every night walking to and fro from the ruined castle, Gussy," said Blake, "you must be a bigger lunatic than I ever took you for."

"But it will be so wometric, like a lot of conspiwathas—"

"Gussy, your ideas are simply rotten, and you are requested to shut up," said Monty Lowther. "All who are of that opinion, please signify the same in the usual way."

"Shut up!" said eight voices in unison.

"Oh, vewy well," said D'Arcy. "That's the last wippin ideah I shall waste upon you stupid boundahs, so I warn you."

"The question is," said Tom Merry, running his fingers through his curly hair, "where can we do the publishing business? We're all agreed that ruined castles are off, but where—where is the new editorial office to be found?"

"Oh where, and oh where can it be?" said Monty Lowther thoughtfully.

"What price the disused box-room on the top floor?" suggested Manners. "There are rats there, but we could have a lock-up box for the properties, and they couldn't get at the things if we took care."

Tom Merry's face brightened.

"Good idea!" he exclaimed. "The very place."

"That bars off going on with the work in the daytime, though," said Lowther. "The fellows would know where we were, and there would always be a lot of them coming up and down to and from the room, and the seniors would soon smell a rat. Some beastly prefect would be bound to be down upon us in next to no time."

"Oh, we shall have to work after lights out," agreed Tom Merry. "That's settled. We must be prepared to make sacrifices in the cause of liberty."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But what about Figgins & Co?" said Blake. "They'll have to get out of their house, and get into the School House, if they're going to help."

"And we are, rather," said Figgins emphatically. "We'll come out of our dormitory by a rope, and you fellows can let us in at one of your lower windows, or let a rope out for us from the dormitory window."

"It will be risky, old Figgys."

"We don't care, do we, kids?"

"Not a bit," said the Co. together.

"Then it's settled," said Tom Merry decidedly. "After lights out to-night we'll come out of the dormitories and let in Figgys, and then take the things up to the old box-room, and get on with the work."

And the plan being unanimously adopted, the meeting of the editorial staff broke up.

CHAPTER 8.

More Trouble for Gussy.

BOOM! Tom Merry sat up in bed.

The clock was striking from the tower of St. Jim the first stroke of eleven.

Boom!

The sound echoed through the silent night again and again till the eleven strokes had been told. It wanted an hour to midnight, and St. Jim's was dark and silent, and most of its occupants safe in the arms of Morpheus.

Most, but not all. The enterprising Editor of Tom Merry's "Weekly" was wide awake. Tom Merry had not closed his eyes since going to bed, and, at the stroke of eleven, the time agreed upon, he slipped out of bed.

The hour was late, and the bed warm and attractive in the late October night; but Tom Merry was keen and determined.

The publication of the "Weekly" had to go on, though the heavens fell, and a night's rest wasn't much to sacrifice in the cause of the freedom of the Press.

"I say, Lowther, are you awake?"

"G-r-r-r-r-r!" was the reply of Monty Lowther.

Tom jerked the bedclothes off his chum, and Monty Lowther started up shivering.

"Hallo! Grooooooh—oooh! What's up?"

"I am, and it's time you were; get a move on you."

"What a determined beast you are, Tom! Wake Manners."

"Manners, old man, it's time to get up."

"Groo—groo—ooooh!"

Tom Merry shook his chum by the ears, and Manners started out of his slumber. His first impression was that someone was playing a trick on him, and he hit out wildly, and caught Tom Merry a rap on the nose that brought the water to his eyes.

"Ow!" gasped the Editor of "Tom Merry's Weekly." "Ow! what the dickens—"

"Hallo, is that you, Tom? Sorry, I thought it was one of those Fourth Form kids. Is it time to get up? I think I must have fallen asleep."

JUST OUT—"HARMSWORTH HISTORY OF THE WORLD."

"I think you must," growled Tom, rubbing his nose ruefully. "Up with you. We've got to call those kids in the Fourth Form dormitory, and let in Figgins & Co."

"Right you are, Tommy. Hope I didn't hurt you," said Manners, jumping briskly out of bed. "Where are my togs? Sha'n't keep you a minute."

The Terrible Three were quickly dressed. None of the other boys of the Shell had awakened, and the three chums stole from the dormitory without any questions asked. The corridor without was very dim and dark. The chums felt the way along cautiously, and stopped at the door of the Fourth Form quarters.

"You two go and let Figgins in," whispered Tom, "while I wake up Blake. You know the window. Figgys was to be there at sharp eleven, and it's five minutes past now."

"Good! We'll meet you on the landing."

Manners and Lowther stole away in the darkness, and Tom Merry quietly entered the Fourth Form dormitory.

The long, lofty apartment was very dark and gloomy, only a faint light glimmering in at the high windows from the stairs.

But Tom Merry knew his way about. He made his way directly to Blake's bed, and found the chief of Study No. 6 fast asleep. He shook him by the shoulder, and Blake instantly awoke. He blinked up at Tom Merry.

"Hallo! Is it eleven? I didn't hear the clock strike!" "I did," said Tom Merry, "up you get. Figgins & Co. will be waiting for us."

"Right you are, wake up Herries and Gus."

Blake got up, and Tom Merry went to Herries' bed. Herries was always a heavy sleeper, and it required two or three vigorous shakes to rouse him. He yawned and mumbled.

"Ger-r-r-r! Go'way! 'Tain't rising-bell! Gerroff!"

Tom grinned, and shook him more thoroughly, till the bed shook too. Then Herries slowly opened his eyes and stared up at the hero of the Shell.

"I say, Merry, 'tain't eleven yet; 'tain't more'n ten! Lemme alone."

"Get up, lazybones."

"I say, it's jolly cold. I say, it's late in the year for this sort of thing, Tom Merry. I—I say, don't you think we'd better leave it till to-morrow night? I say, I—ow! ooch!"

Herries might have gone on with his "I say-ing" for an indefinite length of time, but Tom Merry squeezed a sponge over his face, and the contact of the cold water cut him short.

"Ow! Beast! Oooch! If you do that again—"

"Get up, or I'll pour the jug over you," said Tom Merry.

"Now, then, one, two, three, and—"

"Stop! I'm getting up."

Herries bounded out of bed. Tom chuckled as he set down the jug again. He crossed over to Arthur Augustus's bed. The swell of the School House was fast asleep, and appeared to be dreaming, for he was muttering in his sleep. Tom grinned as he caught the words.

"Double-bweasted, of course; light gwey—blue stripes—pink spots—picked out with yellow and green."

D'Arcy was evidently dreaming of the pattern of a new and gorgeous waistcoat. Tom Merry shook him, and he opened his eyes and blinked.

"Light gwey cloth, please," he said; "and I was not quite satisfied with the fit of the last one. It was a twifle tight in the back—hallo, Tom Merry!"

"Get up," said Tom, "I'm not your giddy tailor, fathead. Time to get up, we're waiting to be off to the editorial office."

D'Arcy squirmed under the warm clothes. The October night was chilly, and the draught from the open door was suggestive of cold and discomfort.

"Pway excuse me, Tom Merry," he said, pulling the clothes about his ears. "I have changed my mind, old fellow—"

"Well, that's a jolly good thing. Your mind was a rather cranky one, and any change must be for the better," said Tom Merry heartily.

"Pway don't wot, Tom Merry. It's too cold to cawwy out that ideah about the box-woom, and I weally wish to be excused. I have no objection to you fellahs goin' if you like. But I pwefer to stay in bed. Tom Merry, I insist upon your leavin' off shakin' me in that wude and howwidly wuff mannah."

"I'm not going to leave off shaking you, Gussy, till you've got up," said Tom Merry. "So the sooner the quicker, you know."

"I wepeat, Tom Merry, that I have changed my mind, and that I do not desire to get up now," said Arthur Augustus, with emphasis. "I must request you to leave me in peace, or I shall get angry and pwooked, and then I shall lose my tempah."

"Horrid! Are you going to get up?"

"Certainly not. I wefuse to do so. I am very comfy where I am, and undah the cires I pwefer to remain here. If you shake me again, Tom Merry, and force me to waise, I shall instantly pwoceed to give you a feahful thwashin'."

"Do you pwefer to get up wet or dry, Gussy? You can take your choice. If you're not out of bed in two seconds, this jug goes upside down over you."

Tom Merry lifted the jug out of the basin of the washstand

beside Gussy's bed. The swell of the School House gave him a glare.

"Tom Merry, I wefuse, I uttally wefuse to waise. It is now a question of dig., and I must considah that. I wefuse to waise."

"Then here goes," said Tom Merry cheerfully, and he turned the jug a little on its side so that a thin stream of water descended upon the countenance of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"How do you like it done? Say when." Gussy did not say when. He gave a gasp of fury and leaped from the bed, unfortunately knocking his head against the jug and getting a splash that wetted him to the skin.

"Clumsy!" said Tom Merry.

"I will thwash you feahfully," howled D'Arcy, and he skipped over the bed and plunged headlong at Tom Merry.

Tom was just replacing the half-emptied jug in the basin when D'Arcy came at him like a mad bull. The hero of the Shell dropped the jug into the basin, and there was a crash of smashing china. Tom fell on top of the wreckage, but D'Arcy soon dragged him off again, and got his head into chancery.

Tom was taken by surprise, which was how Gussy gained such an advantage, but in a few moments he jerked his head free. But Gussy still clung to him, pommelling away with all the energy imparted by ruffled dignity. The crash had awakened every boy in the dormitory, and they stared in amazement at the struggling figures. Exclamations were heard on every side.

"You—you ass!" gasped Tom Merry. "You'll have the masters down on us. I say, some of you get hold of this idiot, or I shall have to hurt him."

Blake and Herries dragged D'Arcy off.

"My hat!" exclaimed Lowther, coming into the dormitory with Manners, followed by Figgins & Co. "What's the row? Do you want to wake the house?"

"It's that ass Gussy," gasped Tom Merry. "You howling idiot, be quiet—"

"I wefuse to be quiet! I distinctly wefuse to be quiet! I will not be quiet until I have administahed a feahful thwashin' to Tom Merry."

"You cuckoo! You will wake the house," hissed Blake, dragging D'Arcy back as he made a frantic effort to tear himself loose and rush at Tom Merry, who was nearly doubled up with laughter.

"I shall be extwemely sowwy to wake the house," said D'Arcy, "but I cannot allow such an insult to my dig. to pass unpunished. I insist—"

"Look here, we shall have Linton or Schneider up here in a minute—"

"That is a minah mettah, compared with a question of personal dig. Blake, I shall no longer wegard you as a friend if you do not welease me at once."

"Better kill him," gurgled Herries. "He won't be happy till he gets it. Better knock him on the head with a cricket-bat and have done with him!"

"I wefuse to be knocked on the head with a ewicket-bat. I distinctly wefuse. I request you to welease me, in ordah to administah a thwashin' to Tom Merry."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorled Tom Merry. "He'll be the death of me, I know he will. We shall have to slay him, he's too funny to live."

"Welease me—I—"

The staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" fell upon the swell of the School House and pinned him down. Figgins picked up a jug of cold water.

"Now, Gussy, promise to make it pax, or this little lot goes over your physiognomy," said Figgins.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the kind—I wefuse—ooch! If you thwow that watah ovah me, Figgins, I shall thwash you when I have thwashed Tom Merry. Ow! don't! I—I pwomise—I'll make it pax. Ow! leave off, I pwomise."

About a pint of water had trickled over D'Arcy's upturned face, sufficient to make him not want any more.

Figgins took the jug away, grinning, and the staff allowed the limp and wet swell of the School House to rise. He wrung out his pyjamas.

"I wegard this conduct as wuff and ungentlemanly," he said. "I am sewiously inclined to cut the acquaintance of all you wude, wuff beasts."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cave!"

It was a sudden whispered warning from Blake. He had caught a glimmer of light under the door of the dormitory, which Figgins had closed after entering.

For a moment the juniors were stricken with dismay.

It was evident that the noise had caught the ears of some master who had not yet gone to bed, or who had perhaps been awakened from his sleep by the disturbance, and that he was coming with a light to investigate.

"My hat!" muttered Tom Merry. "We're in for it this time. But there's a chance—under the beds, quick, kids!"

Never was an order obeyed more promptly. The six visitors

to the Fourth Form dormitory disappeared into the gloom beneath as many beds in a twinkling, and at the same time Blake, Herries and D'Arcy jumped back into bed and pulled the clothes over themselves.

The door opened, and a lamp glimmered into the dormitory. Tom Merry, venturing a peep from under Blake's bed, recognised Mr. Railton standing in the doorway, looking into the room. He was fully dressed.

"Boys!" The house-master's voice was low but very clear, and it penetrated to every part of the great room. "Boys! Are any of you awake?"

Several snores answered from different quarters. Mr. Railton smiled slightly. Perhaps those snores sounded a little too emphatic to be quite genuine.

The house-master advanced into the dormitory. The swamp of spilt water on the floor could not fail to catch his eye, and almost immediately afterwards his glance lighted upon the broken jug and basin on D'Arcy's washstand.

"Ah, some skylarking after lights out!" he murmured. "After all, boys will be boys. I am afraid you are only affecting to be asleep, my lads," he went on aloud. "You know you must be quiet after lights out. Pray do not let there be any further disturbance."

And Mr. Railton walked to the door and went out, closing it behind him.

Tom Merry came out from under the bed, with a gasp of relief. The rest of the invaders of the dormitory followed suit.

"Well, that was a narrow shave!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "What an awfully decent chap Railton is, kids! He remembers that he was a boy once himself; and that's a thing a master never will do, as a rule. I approve of Railton."

"That's nice of you," said Blake. "He would feel awfully proud if he heard that. Lucky he never thought of looking under the beds. He just took it to be a dormitory row. Gussy will have to pay for that crockery, but as he has heaps of money that doesn't matter, and if it prevents his buying another new waistcoat, why, that will be a good thing."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Oh, don't talk, Gussy! You've nearly spoiled everything as it is. We'd better wait a bit till Railton settles down again, kids."

"Beastly luck that he should be sitting up late," said Figgins. "I hate a fellow who never knows when he's had enough work. We shall have to wait."

The editorial staff of the "Weekly" waited till the half-hour chimed out from the school tower; and then Tom Merry opened the door and looked forth, and listened.

All was quiet and still. Not a sound broke the silence of the night, save for the scuttling of a mouse behind the wainscot.

"All serene!" said Tom Merry, looking round. "Come along—and don't make a noise! Mind how you carry your feet, Herries."

"You let my feet alone," growled Herries.

"I'm not going to touch 'em—they're a bit above my weight. Don't get waxy, kid; but come along. Follow the man from Cook's."

And Tom Merry led the way up the dark, deserted stairs to the top landing, and then into the musty, disused box-room, the future scene of the editorial labours of the staff of the "Weekly."

CHAPTER 9.

Caught in the Act.

TOM MERRY paused in the doorway of the large, dark room, and bent his head as if to listen.

"What's the matter?" muttered Blake. "Have you seen a gh-gh-ghost?"

"I believe I heard something."

"In the room?" asked Blake, peering into the blackness before them, which was broken only by the glimmer of starlight in the uncurtained window of the disused room.

"No; downstairs," said Tom Merry. "I fancied I heard a sound like a door opening or shutting. I suppose it was only fancy."

"Of course it was! Get on, and let's get a light; this darkness makes me creepy," said Blake. "I've got the lamp ready. Let's get inside."

The nine juniors crowded into the box-room. Figgins closed the door; and then Blake scratched a match and lighted the lamp he carried. It was a bicycle lamp, and he flashed the rays over the box-room as soon as he had lighted it.

Save for a few old, useless articles of furniture, the box-room was quite empty—except for a leather-bound trunk that had lately been placed there. This trunk had been carried secretly to the box-room by the juniors, and it contained all the paraphernalia used in the publication of Tom Merry's "Weekly."

Several others of the party carried bicycle lanterns, so that there was soon a good illumination for the work to be done.

Blake glanced rather doubtfully at the window.

"I say, there's no blind or curtain to that," he said. "The light will shine right out over the quad. I never thought of that."

"What does it matter?" said Kerr. "I suppose nobody will be taking a constitutional in the quadrangle at a quarter to twelve at night."

"And the light couldn't be seen across in the New House," said Figgins confidently. "The distance is too great, and the trees are in the way, even if anybody happened to be up in our house; and I believe they were all asleep. There wasn't a single light to be seen when we slithered out of the dormitory, I know that."

"Oh, I suppose it's safe enough," agreed Blake. "Anyway, we've got to risk it. Let's get to work! We oughtn't to stay here more than an hour or so. We shall have to get some sleep, or we shall be nodding in class to-morrow."

"An hour every night will do the trick, I think, and we shall be ready for publication on Wednesday," said Tom Merry. "Wire in."

The staff wired in, and they were soon very busy.

The old boxes in the room served as tables and chairs, and the juniors had not forgotten anything that was required for the work, and so the business of preparing the third number of the "Weekly" went forward without a hitch.

With earnest faces and inky fingers the staff laboured, the silence broken only by an occasional remark.

Suddenly Tom Merry gave a violent start.

"Hark!"

The others suspended their work, in alarm, and looked at him. Tom Merry raised his hand; and the juniors all listened intently.

Upon the stairs leading up to the box-room the sounds of footsteps were clearly audible!

"Someone's coming!" whispered Blake tensely.

The staff were stricken with utter dismay.

It was not likely to be a boy coming up to see them; besides, the footsteps were too heavy. Was Mr. Railton on the prowl again? Was it Herr Schneider—or, worst of all, Mr. Linton?

What was to be done?

"Douse the glim," muttered Blake.

The advice was promptly acted upon. It was not likely to be of much good, but there was a chance. The lamps were blown out. Immediately a fearful smell pervaded the box-room. One of the lamps was of the acetylene variety, and on being blown out, the evil-smelling carbide gas escaped, and proceeded to fill the room with odour.

Blake sniffed; and Figgins sniffed; and the others sniffed in chorus. In the midst of the sniffs the door of the box-room opened. The juniors left off sniffing, and sat or stood quite still in the darkness, with beating hearts.

"Dear me, what a terrible smell!" It was the voice of Mr. Railton, the master of the School House. "Ah, it is the smell of calcium carbide! Boys you may light your lamps again. I am perfectly aware that you are here."

Tom Merry groaned. He struck a match and lighted his lamp; and the other juniors disconsolately followed suit.

The smell of the carbide died down as the lantern was lighted again.

Mr. Railton stood revealed. He looked round the room, with a grim smile.

The juniors looked at one another, and at the house-master. They did not know exactly what to say. Even Tom Merry was at a loss.

"Good-evening!" said Mr. Railton calmly.

"Good-evening, sir!" said Tom Merry, recovering some of his coolness. "It's—it's a mild night for the time of year, sir."

Figgins gave a slight chuckle. But he became as grave as a judge again as the eye of the house-master turned in his direction.

"I see you are busily employed," said Mr. Railton. "I am sorry to interrupt your labours. I see that some New House boys are here. This is rather an unusual departure, I think."

"An—an unusual arrival, sir," ventured Figgins.

Mr. Railton did not appear to hear.

"Please explain yourself, Tom Merry. I suppose you are at the bottom of this, as usual. Is this the first time you have played this extraordinary prank?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom dismally. "The first, and, I suppose, now the last."

"You may be quite sure of that," said the house-master. "It was quite by chance that I have discovered you. I have been working late, and I took a turn round the quadrangle before going to bed. That was how I saw the glare of light from this window. I fancied it must be burglars at first, till I saw your shadows on the window. It was really a little reckless of you, Merry. Now, what are you doing here?"

ANSWERS

JUST OUT—"HARMSWORTH HISTORY OF THE WORLD."

"Editing, sir. Preparing the third number of the 'Weekly' for publication."

Mr. Railton's brow darkened.

"But the publication of this periodical has been forbidden, Merry."

"Has it, sir?" asked Tom Merry meekly.

"You know perfectly well that it has, Merry," exclaimed the house-master, raising his voice a little. "Mr. Linton told you so plainly enough."

"Well, you see, sir, we—that is—I—I mean—that is to say—"

"I am afraid that I cannot regard that explanation as either lucid or satisfactory, Merry," said Mr. Railton, as Tom halted.

"If you cannot give a better one—"

"Pway allow me to speak, sir," said Arthur Augustus, who had been looking very thoughtful. "I weally think I could satisfactorily explain the circs—"

"Shut up, ass!" came in a fierce whisper from the rest of the staff. They were certain that Gussy would, as usual, make a "muck" of it.

"I wefuse to shut up," said D'Arcy. "I weally think that I can convince Mr. Wailton—"

"If you have anything to say, D'Arcy, I will hear it, but you must be quick."

"Certainly, sir. The fact is, Mr. Linton suspended the publication of the magazine under a misapprehension. He fancied that we weferred to him disrespectfully, which, of course, would not have been good form, and therefore we did not weally do so. If Mr. Linton had allowed us to explain—"

"I do not understand you, D'Arcy. I myself read—"

"Pway allow me to finish, sir. We nevah weferred to Mr. Linton except with gweat respect; and as we considahed that the papah had been suspended unjustly, we determined to continue the publication in the sacred cause of freedom. That is our excuse, sir," said D'Arcy, with a graceful bow.

Mr. Railton's features relaxed a little.

"If this were really the case, D'Arcy, I might be inclined to pardon even this gross infraction of the rules," he said.

"But I myself read the publication, and came upon terms of the grossest disrespect applied to Mr. Linton."

The staff of the "Weekly" exchanged glances.

"There is a mistake somewhere," said Tom Merry. "I give you my word of honour, sir, that we said nothing of the kind. It would have been foolish, as we sent a copy of the paper to Mr. Linton, as well as being bad taste."

"But I tell you, Merry, that I read the article myself."

"There is some mistake. In the first number of the paper Gussy mixed up an article, and made it sound as idiotic as if he had written it himself—"

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Something of the sort may have happened again," went on Tom. "I don't see how, as the pages have all been printed off from the same copy. But it may have happened. Will you look at the paper, sir—we have a copy here—and tell us what it was Mr. Linton objected to?"

Mr. Railton was looking decidedly puzzled himself.

He had never known Tom Merry tell a lie, and yet he had the evidence of his own eyes to go upon. He nodded assent as Tom Merry produced a copy of the second number of the "Weekly," and opened it at page 10.

"There is the article, Merry," he said, pointing to the paragraph headed "Notice!" "Can you deny that it contains expressions that ought never to be even thought of towards a master?"

Tom Merry looked astounded.

"But that paragraph doesn't refer to Mr. Linton!" he exclaimed. "It's about Sefton of the Sixth."

"Sefton! Impossible. Mr. Linton's name is mentioned."

"It isn't, sir, really. It's a mistake. We slated Sefton in the first number; you know he's an awful cad, sir," said Tom ingenuously. "He got into a fearful wax, and threatened to put a stop to the paper, and this paragraph was written to show that we didn't care a button for him, sir. And we don't! Mr. Linton pointed out this paragraph when he came to our study that day, but he never said anything about imagining it referred to him."

"His name is mentioned in it, Merry," said Mr. Railton sternly.

"Impossible, sir! Read it for yourself."

Mr. Railton looked through the paragraph and its conclusion on the next page. The name of Sefton was there; but the Form-master's name did not appear.

"Has there—has there been any alteration made here?"

"None at all, sir. You can see for yourself that all the numbers were taken off the same copy," said Tom Merry.

Mr. Railton was quite able to see that. He was distinctly puzzled. It was clear enough to him that the juniors were telling the truth; yet—

"The paragraph closed in a very different way, as I remember it," he said. "Something like this: 'To Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, to whom a free copy was sent.'"

Tom Merry gave a jump.

"That line occurs in the paragraph on Mr. Linton," he exclaimed. "Let me show it to you, sir!" He opened the magazine at page 12, and pointed out the paragraph in question. "You see, sir, it begins on page 12, and finishes on 13, in the words you say. But there's nothing in that paragraph for Mr. Linton to complain of."

Mr. Railton read it through.

"No, certainly there is nothing wrong there," he said, the puzzled look deepening on his face. "Some strange mistake has been made, I am now convinced. It appears that the conclusion of the paragraph referring to Mr. Linton was somehow placed after the commencement of the paragraph dealing with Sefton in the copy sent to Mr. Linton."

Tom Merry's eyes flashed.

"That is it!" he exclaimed. He turned the leaves hastily. "Yes, yes, that's it! It was all through trusting it into the hands of that ass D'Arcy! He must have put the magazine together wrongly in stitching it up."

"Oh, weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Dry up! You're to blame, as usual. You're enough to turn an editor's hair grey, and no mistake. You've stitched up the paper wrongly, and placed page 13 next to page 10, so that the last bit of one article reads like a conclusion to the first bit of a previous one."

Mr. Railton rapidly ran through the two paragraphs, comparing them.

It was evident, now that he had the clue, that this explanation was correct, and that the insult to Mr. Linton had been purely imaginary.

The house-master's face cleared.

"Did you think of looking at the numbers of the pages, sir?" asked Figgins.

"No, I naturally did not think of that at the time," said Mr. Railton. "I shall do so in the morning, however, as I believe Mr. Linton still has that copy of the paper. If it proves that the numbers do not follow in correct sequence, this explanation will be proved to be correct. I fully believe it myself, and I am very glad, my lads, to be able to exonerate you from intentional disrespect towards a master." He put the copy of the paper in his pocket, and turned towards the doorway. "I will show this to Mr. Linton in the morning, with an explanation, and I have no doubt that he will forgive you. Meanwhile, your proper place is bed. Mind, no more of these midnight pranks. If I overlook this offence, on account of the misunderstanding which caused it, it must be understood that nothing of the kind happens again."

"Yes, sir," said the juniors together, only too glad to escape so cheaply.

"I will see you back to your quarters, boys. Come!"

The editorial staff of the "Weekly," rather glad than otherwise of the happenings of the night, followed the house-master down the stairs.

The Terrible Three were seen into the Shell dormitory; and then Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy were taken to the Fourth Form room. Then Mr. Railton saw Figgins & Co. across the quadrangle into their own house.

The next morning the staff of the "Weekly" waited in considerable anxiety to hear the result of Mr. Railton's explanation to the Form-master. They were very sleepy over their breakfast, and yawned over their lessons, and lines fell pretty thickly during the morning.

After morning school, Mr. Linton, who had been unusually amiable, and had thereby raised the hopes of the Terrible Three, stopped Tom Merry as the boys left the class-room.

"By the way, Merry, I have something to say to you," he began. "I have seen Mr. Railton this morning. He explained to me the mistake which has occurred. On examining the copy of the magazine which was sent to me, and comparing the numbers on the pages, I discovered that owing to a blunder in putting the copy together, page 13 had been made to follow page 10, and thence arose the unfortunate mistake. I am sorry it occurred, and I acquit you of any intention to be impertinent towards me."

Then Mr. Linton hesitated.

Tom Merry glanced at Manners and Lowther.

"I am glad of that, sir," he said. "We couldn't understand why you were so angry."

Mr. Linton smiled.

"Well, Merry, I am glad all is cleared up too," he said. "And now, if you like, you have permission to continue the publication of this magazine."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" broke out the Terrible Three at once.

"Only I should advise you," said Mr. Linton drily, "to take a little more care in the binding in the future, in case of further misunderstandings."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!"

And the chums of the Shell went forth in search of the rest of the staff to impart the glad news. They found Figgins and Co. discussing the subject with Blake, Herries, and D'Arcy in the

quadrangle, and the news was soon told. Blake tossed his cap into the air, and then, in the exuberance of his spirits, snatched off the silk hat that D'Arcy happened to be wearing and tossed that into the air also.

"Oh, weally, Blake—"

D'Arcy dashed in pursuit of his hat. It had come down at some distance, and a couple of Third Form youngsters were gleefully kicking it across the quadrangle.

Blake laughed.

"Serve him jolly well right!" he exclaimed severely. "He got us into the scrape; and he's got off cheaply with a busted silk topper. I say, Tom Merry, what about the next number of the 'Weekly'?"

"Yes," said Figgins, "what about the next number? I

shall be glad, on second thoughts, to do my whack by daylight, and snooze at night. I've been half-asleep all the morning, and I've got fifty lines."

"And I've got a hundred," said Tom Merry. "Never mind, it's all in the day's work. The next number of the 'Weekly,' my pippins, will be out in due course, and it will be a ripper. No need to fag at night in a ratty old box-room: we return to the original editorial office. Come on, and let's get some of the work done now! The third number of Tom Merry's 'Weekly,' my sons, is going to fairly knock everything!"

THE END.

(Another tale dealing with Tom Merry next Thursday. Order your copies in advance. Price One Halfpenny.)



READ
THIS
FIRST

Stormpoint

A School Tale. By MAURICE MERRIMAN.

Rex Allingham, Jim Fisher, and Bob Bouncer are three well-known chums at Stormpoint College. Hal Trehearn, the captain of the school, favours them; but they are bullied by Jardon and Symes, two Fifth-Formers, who play many spiteful tricks upon them. A new boy named Albarton comes to Stormpoint, and the chums object to his swaggering disposition, so nickname him "Swipes." A paper-chase is arranged by the Head, and Bob and Rex are chosen for the hares. The chums draw well ahead, and finally decide to climb Stormpoint. The hounds get cut off by the tide. "They will have to wait till the tide goes down," said Rex. "They can't possibly get off that plateau now. The sea that is running would dash them on the rocks."

(Now go on with the story.)

After the Paper-chase.

Then away the chums ran to make themselves presentable before they reported themselves to the doctor.

That gentleman was just about to have tea with his family, and he invited the chums to join them; while Lily brought out several things from the sideboard that she imagined would appeal to their feelings.

"I am glad you were successful!" exclaimed the doctor, helping them to some ham. "You must be famished; but I dare say we shall be able to get over that difficulty. Are the hounds very far behind?"

"No, sir," answered Bob. "I think we gave them a good run. Hal mapped out our course. We only altered it a little when we got to the bridge."

"Well, you have made excellent time, especially as you have been to change your clothes; and, as you see, you could not have arrived at a more opportune moment. Let me see, it would have been five o'clock when you came in, would it not?"

"Yes, sir; it struck the hour just as we were talking to Porker."

"Ahem—Porker!"

"One and the same, sir. Nice man—rather too fat; but we all have our faults."

"You can scarcely call it a fault being stout," observed the doctor, glancing at his daughter, who was laughing. "A man cannot help that, you know."

"No, sir. It would be quite impossible for Porker to help it, seeing the awful amount he eats, and the little work he does. Now, I can eat a good lot. You will notice that just directly, sir, if Lily keeps piling my plate; but I couldn't equal Porker. You don't know what that man costs you to keep, Mrs. Andale. I feel confident you could keep half a dozen old sows on the food Porker consumes, and the pigs would be useful for turning into bacon. I don't see the use of Porker."

"You would prefer having no one to mark you late, I suppose?" exclaimed the doctor, passing his cup.

"Well, sir, it would be nicer. You don't really need a timekeeper. Porker is quite useless in that respect. No doubt you keep him as an ornament. He is rather handsome about the nose, isn't he, Lily? Then look at his waistcoat—"

"Will you have some more bread-and-butter, Bob?" inquired Lily.

"Thanks, if you think it won't make me like Porker about the nose and the waistcoat!"

This was too much for Lily. She put the plate down, and

shook with laughter. Bob said it so innocently, and he pretended not to know that the doctor's eyes were fixed upon him.

"We must time the hounds directly the first of them come in," said the doctor, with a view to turning the conversation. "Of course, you had ten minutes' start, so we must give them credit for that."

"There are some of those hounds who will need all the credit you can give them, sir," observed Bob, "and then they won't have such a nice account. They resemble me in that respect. Still, the hounds won't be in yet."

"Perhaps they will by the time you have finished tea."

"All I can say is that, if I keep on eating till they arrive, you will have no difficulty in finding a fat boy to take Porker's place, in the event of his dying of spontaneous combustion! Mind you don't upset your tea, Rex! You will if you gurgle at it like that."

The meal was finished, and as the hounds did not arrive, Lily suggested that she should show the chums round the grounds; and, as her parents raised no objection, this is what she did, and they then confided to her the secret concerning those hounds.

"Oh, you bad boys!" she exclaimed. "You might have broken your necks. I have a good mind to tell my father. I do hope Jardon is kept a prisoner there, too! It serves him right! He was most insolent to me the other day. But we must tell father, Rex. There will be trouble. Besides, supposing they got into danger?"

"They are as safe as limpets on the rocks," declared Rex. "All the same, we will tell your father. Here he comes. You break the news, Bob."

"I omitted to mention that the hounds who followed us can't return till the tide turns. It is high tide now, so they won't be in till about ten. But they are quite safe. You see, sir, they are on the Stormpoint plateau. We led them up there, and then climbed to the summit of the height, but they were afraid to follow."

"You mean to tell me you climbed that height?" gasped the doctor, who knew it well.

"Quite easy, sir. Little practice, and mind you don't slip."

"But how can those boys be rescued?"

"They can't, sir, till the tide goes down. They will not come to the slightest harm, though it is just possible that they may get a little hungry, and tired of waiting. Still, they did not catch us, and that was all we were concerned about."

"Don't worry yourself about the fellows, sir," growled Bob, when the doctor had learnt all that there was to

STORMPOINT (continued).

be learnt concerning that extraordinary paper-chase.

"They will be as right as rats in a trap."

"You seem to forget, boy, that they might be drowned!"

"Oh, of course, you could do that with them, sir; and I'm not at all sure whether it would not be the best thing, in one case. We won't mention names, because it would be sneaky. But, unless you drown or shoot them, they can't possibly come to any harm. No; all they have got to do is to wait till the tide goes down. They can't get off before, because, even if you took a boat, the sea is too rough to get near the face of the cliff. You see, when the tide runs down, they will do the same, walk along the foreshore, and come up the gully; and you can mark 'em late. I wish you would not laugh, Rex! It gives the doc. a wrong impression, and makes him think we are not sorry."

"Do you wish me to infer from that remark that you are sorry?" demanded the doctor.

"No, sir; only I wouldn't like you to think that we are so jolly glad as is the case! You see, you might cane us, and that is a thing we would like to avoid."

"I beg your pardon, sir!" exclaimed Hal Trehearn, the captain of the college, entering the room in an excited manner.

"All right, Trehearn! Sit down! Have you heard what has occurred?"

"Yes, sir. Jader, the innkeeper, called on me, and told me that there had been foul play with this paper-chase. How he learnt it, I do not know; but I have my suspicions that he has been betting, and that he has lost. That is only surmise. But two men were placed at the bridge, and they stopped those lads coming across."

"Just so!" exclaimed Rex. "All the same, we got in first. Crossed the river, you know, and climbed Stormpoint."

"Well done, youngsters—well done, indeed!" cried Hal. "Only don't do it again, because it's fearfully dangerous. I climbed it once myself with another fellow. He's a soldier now, and—and— Look here, if you ever climb that cliff again, I'll flog you! No; that's not fair, because the doctor did not flog me."

"The only reason for that, Hal, was because I never knew of it!" said the doctor, smiling. "You are too big to flog now; besides, you have convicted yourself. But some of the hounds are on the ledge."

"No risk, sir. The highest tide could never reach them," said Hal. "I'm sorry I let that out about climbing the cliff, because it is a bad example for these two. You notice, sir, none of the hounds dared to follow them?"

"Quite so, Hal, which shows me how dangerous—well, I learnt in my father's time how dangerous it was. My lads—"

"I believe the doc. has climbed it; I'm jolly certain he has!" cried Bob. "He can't lick us, Rex. We are all right this journey."

"Well, my lads," exclaimed Dr. Andale, after a short pause, "I am going to place you on your honour. You must remember that boys and men are quite different. Boys do not consider danger, and—and neither do some men at duty's call. You have taken a wrong view of this matter. You made up your minds not to be caught. That appears to be a very trivial matter to me; to you it was so important that you risked your lives, and climbed that fearful height. It was stupid. But as in my youth, I admit I did the same for the love of climbing—why, that was worse; but I got a flogging for it, so, you see, you can't bring it up against me. Eh? Very well, we will let the matter drop."

Now, Hal, we ought to go to the imprisoned lads, and—it would comfort them if they are in fear."

"Let Rex and me go and comfort them, sir!" cried Bob. "And lend us your garden-engine. With that engine at the top of the cliff, and Rex pumping, while I did the squirting, I'll guarantee I'd comfort them!"

"Don't talk nonsense! What should be done, Hal?"

"The only thing that can be done, sir—leave them there till the tide turns."

"I believe you are right," said the doctor, ringing his bell, which Parker answered. "Parker, go to the top of Stormpoint, and on the ledge you will find some boys. Tell them that there is no risk, that they are perfectly safe, and that—"

"If you please, sir, it's raining heavens hard!" growled Parker.

"You need not tell them that," said Rex; "they will notice it!"

"So shall I, if I go out in this pouring rain!" growled Parker. "Of course, any orders my master gives me are going to be obeyed. It ain't for that kind-hearted gentleman to know that I'm suffering from a severe sore throat and a fearful pain in my lungs. I don't mind. There's no one on earth as cares for me, and—I will go, sir, and tell the young gents what you say. I'll do my dooty, even if it causes my death!"

And Parker was so touched with his own pathos that tears actually came to his eyes. Perhaps he was also sorry for himself, because he had lost such a frightful lot of money over the paper-chase.

"I am sorry you are not well, Parker," said Dr. Andale quietly. "You are to go out to-night on no account. You had better get to bed at 1/2, and tell the cook to make you some gruel, or, if you prefer it, some hot beef-tea. You had better sleep between blankets, and have plenty over your bed. If you are no better in the morning, I will send for the doctor. I will go to Stormpoint."

"May we come, sir?" inquired Rex.

"Do let us, sir!" cried Bob. "We should be no end comforting to those chaps!"

"I hope you will let us all come, sir!" said Hal.

"Very well," answered Dr. Andale, "go and get your coats on! I want to have a few words with you, Robert Bouncer. I do not know whether Rex is cognisant of your secret way of making money?"

"No one knows but you, sir."

"Well, you told me in confidence, and I shall not speak to you to-night."

"Well, sir, I don't want to get chaffed. Speak to me to-morrow in confidence, and then we can keep it to ourselves."

"Come, my lad! There is nothing to be ashamed of. Suppose we three are taken into the confidence. I have the assurance that neither Hal nor Rex would mention a word. Your stepfather knows. He is coming down this week. At

least, I think by the tone of his letter he knows. How he found out I cannot imagine. It was not through me, because I made a stipulation with you at the time. It was to the effect that if I considered your action wrong in any way, I should inform your stepfather, and that if I considered your action right—we did not mention the word honest, because I had the feeling that you would do nothing dishonest—well, I gave you my word that I would keep your secret. Now, Bob, that secret is at an end, because your stepfather knows it. Well, I would like Hal and Rex to be in the secret. We know that a secret is not safe with three; but, after all, I have an idea that there will be a great change in your life this week when your stepfather calls. And, mind you, my lad, I shall speak very plainly."

(Another long instalment next Thursday.)



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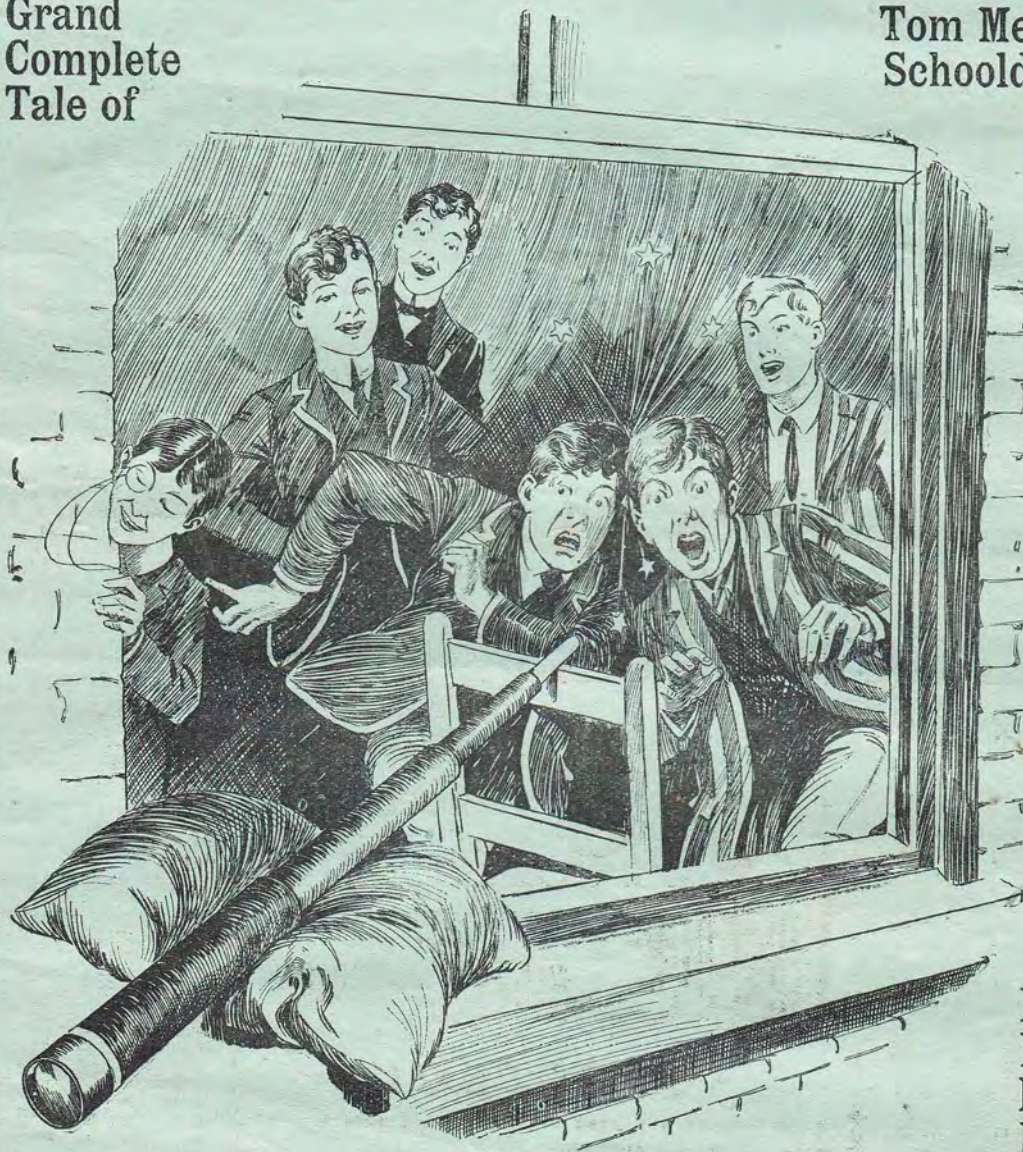
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